FAITH AND REASON

Faith and Reason

A COMPENDIUM OF FIFTY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
RELATED TO ISLAMIC THEOLOGY, JURISPRUDENCE
AND OTHER THEMES



Compiled by
The Porch of Wisdom Cultural Institution

Translated by
A Group of Muslim Scholars

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 1-898449-84-8

© Copyright 2006 the World Federation of KSIMC

Published by:
The Islamic Education Board of the
World Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Muslim Communities
Registered Charity in the UK No. 282303
Islâmic Centre - Wood Lane
Stanmore, Middlesex, United Kingdom, HA7 4LQ
www.world-federation.org/ieb
ieb.world-federation.org
ieb@world-federation.org

Canada Sales and Distribution:
Islamic Humanitarian Service
81 Hollinger Crescent
Kitchener, Ontario
Canada, N2K 2Y8
Tel: 519-576-7111 · Fax: 519-576-8378
ihs@primus.ca · www.al-haqq.com

USA Sales and Distribution:
Darul Tabligh North America
786 Summa Avenue
Westbury, NY
USA, 11590
Tel: 516-334-2479 · Fax: 516-334-2624
www.darultabligh.org · info@darultabligh.org

Africa Sales & Distribution:
Tabligh Sub Committtee
K.S.I. Jama'at Dar Es Salaam
P.O. Box 233
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Tel: 255-22-211-5119 · Fax: 255-22-211-3107
tabligh@raha.com · www.dartabligh.org

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright holder, except in the case of brief quotations quoted in articles or reviews.

Printed in Canada
By Friesens Corporation – www.friesens.com

Contents

Foreword i

Biography of Ayatullah Hadavi Tehrani iii

1. Divine Will and Human Will 1
    Brief Answer 1
    Detailed Answer 2

2. Free choice and the Divine seal and lock upon the hearts of the perverse 13
    Brief Answer 13
    Detailed Answer 14

3. The possibility of knowledge of Allāh 19
    Brief Answer 19
    Detailed Answer 20

4. Misguidance from Allāh 31
    Brief Answer 31
    Detailed Answer 32

5. Being Allāh's servant 35
    Brief Answer 35
    Detailed Answer 36

6. Nearness to Allāh 41
    Brief Answer 41
    Detailed Answer 42

7. Friends of Allāh not having fear 49
    Brief Answer 49
    Detailed Answer 50

8. Allāh – fear or love? 53
    Brief Answer 53
    Detailed Answer 54

9. Asking one's needs from other than Allāh 61
Brief Answer 61
Detailed Answer 62

10. The Light of the Heavens and the Earth 69
Brief Answer 69
Detailed Answer 71

11. Divine Tests 77
Brief Answer 77
Detailed Answer 78

12. Allāh's Will in human guidance 83
Brief Answer 83
Detailed Answer 84

13. Non-Muslims and Hell 89
Brief Answer 89
Detailed Answer 89

14. Self-confidence and Trust in Allāh 93
Brief Answer 93
Detailed Answer 94

15. Attaining Perfection 101
Brief Answer 101
Detailed Answer 103

16. The Angels and free-will 109
Brief Answer 109
Detailed Answer 109

17. Satan's influence 115
Brief Answer 115
Detailed Answer 116

18. The power of Satan and Jinn 121
Brief Answer 121
Detailed Answer 122

19. Resurrection 129
Brief Answer 129
Detailed Answer 131

20. Heaven and Hell 137
Brief Answer 137
Detailed Answer 138

21. The infallibility of the Prophets in the Qur'ān 143
Brief Answer 143
Detailed Answer 145

22. The Original Sin of Ādam and Eve 157
Brief Answer 157
Detailed Answer 159

23. The purpose of religion 165
Brief Answer 165
Detailed Answer 166

24. The purpose of creation 173
Brief Answer 173
Detailed Answer 174

25. The signs for the re-emergence of Imām Al-Mahdī 179
Brief Answer 179
Detailed Answer 180

26. Issues such as marriage, place of residence, etc… concerning the life of the Twelfth Imām 185
Brief AnswerR 185
Detailed Answer 186

27. The qualities of human society after the reappearance of Imām Al-Mahdī - the state of justice, oppression, poverty and sin 193
Brief Answer 193
Detailed Answer 193

28. The role of women in the government of Imām Al-Mahdī 201
Brief Answer 201

Detailed Answer 202

29. The Reason for Imām al-Zamān's prolongued age 207
Brief Answer 207
Detailed Answer 209

30. Possibility of a decline in Imām Al-Mahdī's government 217
Brief Answer 217
Detailed Answer 217

31. The difference between the blood money of a woman and that of a man in Islāmic Jurisprudence 219
Brief Answer 219
Detailed Answer 220

32. The difference between the inheritance of men and women in Islāmic Jurisprudence 225
Brief Answer 225
Detailed Answer 226

33. The role a person plays in obtaining his sustenance 231
Brief Answer 231
Detailed Answer 232

34. Treatment of illness and supplication 237
Brief Answer 237
Detailed Answer 238

35. The canonization of the Qur'ān 243
Answer 243

36. The names of the Imāms in the Qur'ān 245
Brief Answer 245
Detailed Answer 247

37. Imāmate at childhood 255
Brief Answer 255
Detailed Answer 256

38. Those conditions the fulfilment of which guarantees the acceptance of a prayer 261
Brief Answer 261
Detailed Answer 262

39. Sins and its repercussions 269
Brief Answer 269
Detailed Answer 270

40. Magnanimity 277
Brief Answer 277
Detailed Answer 277

41. Pure Wine in the Noble Qur'ān 283
Brief Answer 283
Detailed Answer 284

42. The prerequisites for understanding the Qur'ān 289
Brief Answer 289
Detailed Answer 290

43. A question regarding verse 80 of Suratul Kahf 297
Answer 297

44. The existence of the spirit within animals and its difference from that of the human being 305
Brief Answer 305
Detailed Answer 306

45. The number of the Ahlul Bayt 313
Brief Answer 313
Detailed Answer 314

46. Religion and Politics 319
Brief Answer 319
Detailed Answer 319

47. Governance of a Jurist and Jurisprudence 323
Brief Answer 323
Detailed Answer 324

48. Legal imitation of a Jurist (Mujtahid).....329
Brief Answer 329
Detailed Answer 329

49. The Ḥukm and the Fatwā.....331
Brief Answer 331
Detailed Answer 332

50. Religious Pluralism and different interpretations of religion..... 333
Brief Answer 333
Detailed Answer 334

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

The method of transliteration of Islāmic terminology from the Arabic language has been carried out according to the standard transliteration table mentioned below.

ء	ʾ	ض	ḍ
ا	a	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	ʿ
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	و	w
س	s	ي	y
ش	sh	ه	h
ص	ṣ		

Long Vowels		Short Vowels	
ا	ā	ـَـ	a
و	ū	ـُـ	u
ي	ī	ـِـ	i

ﷻ - Free from Imperfections and Exalted is He

ﷺ - Prayers be upon him and his family

عليه السلام - Peace be upon him

عليها السلام - Peace be upon her

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the Name of Allāh, the
Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

FOREWORD

By Hasnain Walji

Islām espouses an enlightened mind and hence, it has been termed as the path of *knowledge*. In the Qur'ān the number of verses in which *'ilm* (knowledge) or its derivatives and associated words are used is 704. The aids of knowledge such as the book, pen, ink, etc. amount to almost the same number while other words associated with writing occur in 319 verses.[1]

By responding to the call of the Qur'ān to ponder over creation in order to understand the greatness of Allāh ﷻ and reflecting this honored the pursuit of knowledge, considered a meritorious duty, Muslim scholars have amply demonstrated that knowledge elevates the sincere seeker.

In response to a person who posed him a difficult question, Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ said: "Ask in order to understand, and do not ask in order to find fault, for surely the ignorant man who wants to learn resembles a man of knowledge, and surely a man of knowledge who wants to be difficult resembles an ignorant man who wants to find fault."

This then should be the spirit of inquiry as we are faced with many challenges in this day and age. In particular, young Muslims growing up in Western societies are crying out for rational and convincing explanations in matters of their faith. In schools and colleges they are confronted by their peers as much as professors, who engage them on debates about reason and faith - in particular, whether faith is a valid

[1] Dr. Sayyid Wahid Akhtar, *The Islāmic Concept of Knowledge*, al-Tawhīd, vol. xii, no. 3

means for acquiring knowledge or the limits of reason in explaining one's faith.

This book, aptly named *'Faith and Reason – A Compendium of Fifty Questions and Answers Related to Islāmic Theology, Jurisprudence and Other Themes'* is timely, in offering some explanations.

The questions on such diverse topics as Divine Will and Human Will, free choice Allah's ﷻ Will in human as well as Angels and free-will give enlightening answers. In particular, questions relating to Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام, address issues such as his marriage, place of residence, as well the role of women in the government of Imām al-Mahdī's عليه السلام and the possibility of a decline in Imām al-Mahdī's عليه السلام government.

It is hoped that this latest offering by the Islamic Education Board of the World Federation will enhance the readers' understanding of some critical and relevant issues, which are rarely discussed in general.

As Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام has said: "The man of knowledge is the one who recognizes that what is known is very little compared to what is not known, and as a result he considers himself ignorant, and accordingly he increases his efforts to know more by going out in search of knowledge."

رَبِّی زِدْنِی عِلْماً

"My Lord! Increase me in Knowledge"

Hasnain Walji
Plano, Texas
July 4th, 2006 CE / 7th Jumada II, 1427 AH

BIOGRAPHY OF AYATULLAH HADAVI TEHRANI

Āyatullāh Mahdī Hādavī Tehrānī was born in 1961 in the city of Tehran. After finishing elementary and middle school, he proceeded to high school. He graduated from Kharāzmī High School, which was a well known and accredited high school at that time, in mathematics and physics as an honor roll student. In the SAT's, he scored a high rank and was accepted at Sharif University of Technology where he studied Electrical Engineering.

He first started his Howza studies unofficially and in 1980, he started his official Howza studies in the Holy City of Qom. He went back to Tehran where he studied ʿArabic literature and logic under Āyatollāh Khoshvaqt. After his return to Qom, he finished the Sath (intermediate level studies) in five years, during which he was many times ranked top student in the Howza exams. He then started his advanced studies under great scholars such as Āyatullāh al-ʿUẓmā Shaykh Jawād Tabrīzī, Āyatullāh al-ʿUẓmā Sayyid Waḥīd Khorasānī, Āyatullāh al-ʿUẓmā Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Bahjat, Āyatullāh al-ʿUẓmā Shaykh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī, Āyatullāh Mirza Hāshim ʿĀmulī and Āyatullāh Shaykh Jaʿfar Subḥānī. Moreover, he mostly studied under Āyatullāh Sayyid Kāḍim Hā'eri, and benefited from his classes.

In philosophy, he studied under eminent figures such as Āyatullāh Anṣārī Shīrāzī, Āyatullāh Ḥasan Zadeh Āmoli, and Āyatullāh Miṣbāḥ Yazdī and for many years he picked off the branches of Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmoli's wisdom. In addition, since the early days of his stay in Qom, he started his relationship with Āyatullāh Baha'o Dini, the great ʿArif. Eventually, he gained a closer relationship which he maintained until Āyatullāh Baha'o Dini's demise. Not only did he practice ʿIrfān and Akhlāq under Āyatullāh Baha'o Dini, but he also studied Fiqh, Tafsīr and Ḥadith under this great ʿArif and Faqih.

Āyatullāh Hādavī has had the chance to teach all the beginner and intermediate level courses in the Howza. He has been teaching advanced level courses of Fiqh and Usūl since 1990. His method of teaching, a new method in which he compares the topics and discussions in Islāmic jurisprudence with that of modern law, has attracted much attention from numerous scholars and researchers. In addition, he has been and still is teaching different issues of Logic, Philosophy and Theology. Some of his written works are a product of the research which is in your hands.

Other than teaching in the Howza, Āyatullāh Hādavī has kept up an academic relation with the different universities and institutions of higher education. He is a member of the Council for Revising Humanities Text Books in the Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology. He is the chairman of the Jurisprudence and Law Group in this council. In the Sharif University of Technology, he is a member of the Postgraduate Scholarly Council of the Philosophy of Knowledge.

Āyatullāh Hādavī has done extensive studies and research on modern sciences such as economics, modern theology, philosophy of knowledge and philosophy of art. Some of his studies and research has been published in the form of books and articles.

The Āyatullāh is fluent in English and Arabic and knows French and German to a great extent. His knowledge of English and computers has enabled him to be the first scholar in Iran to answer questions on Islāmic issues on the InterNet.

Āyatullāh Hādavī has been in contact with and visited Islāmic centers all over Asia, Europe and Africa. In addition, he has participated in the founding of Islāmic Organizations such as the Ahlul Bayt Association in Switzerland, the Mohammadia Association in Thailand, and the Islāmic Center of Holland. He has also participated in the establishment of the World Council of Religious Leaders (WCRL).

He is a member of the Supreme Council of the Ahlul Bayt World Assembly, the Islāmic Banking and Finance Consulting Committee, the WCRL's Board of Directors, and the head of the Academic Staff of Āyatullāh Khamenei's delegation to ḥajj.

Āyatullāh Ayatollah Hadavi currently has 10 books published in the fields of Logic, Rijāl[1], Modern Theology, Qur'ānic Sciences, Economics, Islāmic Political Thought, Principles of Islāmic Jurisprudence, Ethics and Education. These books are:

1. The Chest of Wisdom (two volumes)
2. Taḥrīrul Maqāl Fī Kulliat 'Ilmul Rijāl ('Arabic)
3. Wilāyatul Faqīh (principles, proofs and jurisdiction)
4. The Theological Bases of Ijtihād (Recognized as book of the year in 1999 by the Howza in Qom)
5. Islām's Economic Doctrine and System,
6. Governance and Religion: Essays on the Islāmic Political Thought
7. Beliefs and Questions
8. The History of the Principles of Jurisprudence
9. To the Heavens with the Youth
10. The Green Tryst

He also has a number of works that have not yet been published and are in the process, such as Hermeneutics and Religious Scripts, New Horizons in the Howza, Al-Hidayah: A Commentary on Bidayat-ol-Hikmah, The Laws of Property and Ownership, The Laws of Contracts, Art and Religion. These books have been written on topics in the fields of Theology, Philosophy, Principles of Jurisprudence and its history, The History of Ḥadīth, Jurisprudence and Law.

The scholar can be contacted at m_hadavi@yahoo.com or ravaq_hekmat@yahoo.com. For more information on Āyatullāh Hādavī, you can refer to his website at www.hadavi.info.

[1] The study of transmitters who have narrated the sayings of the Noble Prophet ﷺ and the Imāms عليهم السلام.

1

DIVINE WILL AND HUMAN WILL

Question: What is the relationship between Divine will and human will?

Brief Answer

The human being is a contingent existent who derives his existence and existential qualities from Allāh ﷻ. Allāh ﷻ has, by His generative will *(irāda takwīnī)*, created him as a volitional creature and has thus distinguished him from all other creatures. Hence, the human being is the highest being addressed by Allāh's ﷻ legislative will *(irāda tashrīʿī)* and as such, has been given permission to choose between obedience and disobedience, to determine his way of life, and to mould his own fate.

The human being is the chosen creature who is able, by making the right choice, to obey the injunctions of Allāh ﷻ; to ascend the levels of perfection by conforming to the legislative will of Allāh ﷻ, and submitting his desire to the generative will of Allāh ﷻ thereby reaching the station of Divine regency - that level which in paradise, entitles him to receive whatever he wishes. Because he has chosen Divine satisfaction, Allāh ﷻ is satisfied with him and will provide for him so profoundly that he will in return be pleased with Him and satisfied with his own conduct.

But the human being can also make the wrong choice by taking up the path of disobedience and aversion to Divine injunctions, descending to the pits of *saqar*. This would be the result of not making his will conform

to the legislative will of Allāh ﷻ. However, this disobedience does not signify that he has overcome the Divine will, for the Divinity Himself has willed that he should choose his path.

In other words, Divine will encompasses the entire world of existence - including the human being and his actions - and as such, transcends the human will, hierarchically. This is not the same as the concurrence of two independent, complete, and parallel causes in generating a single effect, which is impossible. Rather, in accordance with the principle of "unity of Divine Acts", the only independent agent in the cosmos is Allāh ﷻ, and thus all other existents are dependent on Allāh ﷻ in their existence and their agency. Thus, their will, which is an aspect of their agency, is not independent or detached of the Divine will. Therefore, we [as *Shī'ites*] neither approve of determinism as the *Ash'arites* do - who believe that the only will at work is the Divine will, thus considering all other agents sterile and merely tools for Allāh ﷻ. Neither do we accept the concept of delegation which is held by the *Mu'tazilites*, who assume that Divine will should be abstracted from human will, thereby considering the human being a sovereign agent in his volitional acts. Rather, we, in following the teachings of the Qur'ān and the infallible Imāms ﷺ, consider the human being to be a willing and volitional agent, but at the same time we know him to be under the dominion of Divine will and governed by the authority of Allāh ﷻ - being essentially in need of the will and power of Allāh ﷻ.

Detailed Answer

Human will is vertically inferior to Divine will and as such is dependent on Divine will and cannot exist independently and without need of Allāh ﷻ. This is confirmed by many Qur'ānic verses, among them the following: "…but you do not wish unless it is wished by Allāh, the Lord of all the worlds."[1]

[1] *Sūrat al-Takwīr* (81), Verse 29:

But this in no way contradicts the human being's volition and his accountability for his thoughts, intentions, and actions. For it is he who is the direct agent of his will, choice, and conduct, but this is possible only through the power and permission that Allāh ﷻ has granted him in making his choices.

Thus, in many verses [seemingly contradicting the aforementioned verse which reserves authority solely for Allāh ﷻ] the actions of natural agents, including human beings, are attributed to themselves, thereby considering the human being responsible for his own conduct. And it is in this light that the Qur'ān establishes certain responsibilities for him, giving him various encouragements and warnings. Two such verses read, "…and that nothing belongs to man except what he strives for"[2]; and, "Whoever acts righteously, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is to its detriment, and your Lord is not tyrannical to the servants."[3]

Accordingly, on the one hand, the issue concerns the assumption that the human being's independence is in contrast to the principle of unity of Divine Acts and also to the essential need of existents for Allāh ﷻ. On the other hand, there is the supposition that the human being is totally predetermined and hence powerless, undermining the rationale for all Divine injunctions, encouragements, warnings, and consequently negating Divine justice and wisdom. Hence, the seemingly contradictory verses of the Qur'ān must be reconciled by realising that some of those verses merely clarify the meaning of the others (and do not contradict

---

﴿ وَمَا تَشَآءُونَ إِلاَّ أَنْ يَشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

also see *Sūrat al-Insān* (76), Verses 30-31:

﴿ وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلاَّ أَنْ يَشَآءَ اللّٰهُ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيماً حَكِيماً. يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَآءُ فِـي رَحْمَتِـهِ وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَاباً أَلِيماً ﴾

[2] *Sūrat al-Najm* (53), Verse 39:

﴿ وَ أَنْ لَّيسَ لِلإِنْسَانِ إِلاَّ مَا سَعَـى ﴾

[3] *Sūrat al-Fuṣṣilat* (41), Verse 46:

﴿ مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحاً فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَ مَنْ أَسَآءَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَ مَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلاَّمٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ ﴾

them) so that we are able to avoid being entrapped by either determinism or delegationism.

For a better understanding of this matter, attention must be paid to two points:

1. The different ways in which various causes concur in creating an effect;

2. The various ways in which the Divine will can be conceived of.

The concurrence of causes in generating an effect can transpire in two ways:

1. One possibility is that in the occurrence of a phenomenon only one cause is responsible; such as the Divine Act of creation in which Allāh ﷻ produces directly and without the mediation of any other existent, or like the dependency of human conceptions on the mind [in which case, it is solely the mind that generates the mental concepts and images without the mediation of any other agent].

2. The other possibility is that several causes are responsible in the creation of a phenomenon. This possibility can itself be conceived in several ways:

a. The various causes are responsible in a collective manner. In this case, each cause is referred to in technical terms as an "incomplete cause" and all of them considered collectively are referred to as the "complete cause." An example is the interaction of water, light, heat, seed, soil, farmer's work, etc. in the growth of a plant. In this case, not only is the concurrence of multiple causes not impossible, it is a necessary prerequisite for the production of the effect.

b. The various causes are responsible in an alternating manner. Such as if a certain machine had three motors, but they had to operate one at a time, hence one motor would come into operation only after the previous one had stopped, thereby providing the machine with a constant and uninterrupted movement. [Hence, the constant motion being the effect of three alternating causes.] In this case also, the cooperation and combination of all the causes is necessary for sustaining the effect.

However, in this case, there is no particular dependency between the causes as there is in the third case.

c. Certain causes are dependent on other ones in efficacy but without such a dependency in their existences such as the roles that human volition, the motion of the hand, etc. play in producing writing [in which case the will to write propels the hand into motion, which in turn moves the pen, and which in turn makes ink marks on the paper that constitute the writing] or such as the soldier's obeying his superior [in which case, the soldier's will to perform a certain action depends on the superior giving an order but the soldier's existence itself does not depend on the superior's existence].

d. Two sets of causes are at work in generating one effect in the same mode *(haythīyyah)* and from the same aspect *(jahah)*—which is technically referred to as "the concurrence of two complete causes in generating one effect." An example of this would be a single piece of writing on one specific corner of a sheet of paper, written by two writers writing simultaneously. Or if one particular plant were to grow by the work of two [distinct and independent] groups of causes—e.g. soil, farmer, seed, etc.—simultaneously. In this case, "mutual exclusion" would result, and thus [the actualization of] this case is impossible. For, the agency [i.e. the work, the acting] of each set would bar the agency of the other set, resulting in either one rendering the other ineffective (which would mean that two complete causes have not actually concurred and only one has produced the effect unilaterally) or both mutually hindering the agency of one another (which would mean that neither of the complete causes has been actualized so as to take part in creating an effect). Therefore, as this case is impossible, there is no actual instance of it.

e. Several sets of causes, vertically associated, generate a single effect, in such a manner that the inferior cause is dependent upon the superior in its existence as well as in its agency [or efficacy]; such as, the relation between the grandparents and the parents in the procreation of the latter's children.

Considering the above-mentioned classification, it must be clarified under which of the aforementioned categories the concurrence of Divine causation, agency, and will with those of His creatures—including human beings—falls.

If this concurrence were of the first, second, or third types, the result would be the existential independence of the human being and the rest of the creatures from Allāh ﷻ, which would contradict the unity of the Divine Acts. Thus on careful examination, the possibility of such instances would prove unacceptable. It cannot be of the fourth category either, as this does not have any occurrence in reality. Furthermore, it is erroneous to consider the concurrence of human will with Divine will impossible as the human being would not even exist without his connection to Allāh ﷻ, and thus his complete agency as parallel to Allāh ﷻ is not possible[4] so to give rise to the potentiality of parallel and simultaneous concurrence in generating one effect.[5]

Thus the only category plausible is the last one; that is, the human will and agency being vertically inferior to Divine will and agency.

However to understand how the concurrence of Divine and human will in such a vertical manner does not contradict man's free will, attention must be paid to the different types of Divine will.

In a general classification, Divine will is understood in two ways:

1. The will of essence;

2. The will of action.

The latter is subdivided into the generative will and the legislative will.

---

[4] For this would mean that the human being is independent of Allāh ﷻ in his existence. (Tr.)

[5] The reason why this is being said here is that those who have refuted the *concurrence* of Divine will with human will have first assumed that the only manner in which two causes can concur is if they were parallel in their agency and causation. And because this type of concurrence is obviously impossible, they concluded that the human being is independent in his will. While their mistake stems from their lack of conceiving two or more causes related in a vertical and hierarchical manner; i.e. cause B receiving its existence and efficacy from cause A; and cause C in turn receiving its existence and efficacy from cause B, and so on. (Tr.)

The Will of Essence: It is the Divine will that is assigned to Him without the need to consider the creatures or Allāh's ﷻ relation to them. Hence, it is identical with the Divine Essence and is the necessary requirement of Divine volition, of His not being restrained by any other agent, of His not being overpowered by anything, and of His needlessness in relation to all creatures. The human being and his relation to Allāh ﷻ have no role in this sense of Divine will.

The Generative Will of Action: This is Allāh's ﷻ will in establishing the objective destiny and portion; that is, it pertains to the systems governing the cosmos, how things come about and operate, and their certain and definite ends This is manifested in the creation of creatures in different shapes, different ways, and in different times.

In the world of being, the Divine generative will governs the entire corpus of existents, including human beings, and as such, no creature has the will or choice to violate it, as is pointed out in the following verses: "Then He turned to the heaven, and it was smoke, and He said to it and to the Earth, 'Come! Willingly or unwillingly!' They said, 'We come heartily.'"[6]; and, "There is none in the heavens and the earth but he comes to the All-beneficent as a servant."[7]

The human being has been created as a willing and volitional creature based on the Divine generative will of action and thus cannot divest himself of free choice and will. So whether he likes it or not, he must act on his own accord, choose the path he desires to follow and determine his own fate. He has no choice in being a volitional creature, just as he has no say in choosing his parents, his gender, or his appearance.

---

[6] *Sūrat al-Fuṣṣilat* (41), Verse 11:
﴿ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَآءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعاً أَوْ كَرْهاً قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ ﴾

[7] *Sūrat Maryam* (19), Verse 93:
﴿ إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلاَّ آتِي الرَّحْمٰنِ عَبْداً ﴾

The Legislative Will of Action. This will is identical with Divine legislation for the willing and volitional human being.[8] In the very act of lawmaking for humanity, no one can share the authority with Allāh ﷻ and no one is capable of changing the laws before they reach the people.

Therefore, the angels, prophets, and successors to the prophets are duty bound to convey to the people the exact rules revealed to them without the slightest change and to interpret and clarify them only in the framework designated by Allāh ﷻ. It is in the stage of implementing these injunctions that the human being has been given the capacity to obey or disobey [on his own accord].

Hence, by making the right decision, the human being can conform his will to the will of Allāh ﷻ, the Supreme, and being satisfied with the Divine generative will, can decide to abide unconditionally by the Divine legislative will thereby securing his final felicity and meriting the leisure and serenity of Paradise—to such an extent that Allāh ﷻ will satisfy his wishes, whatever they may be, very quickly; "…but those who have faith and do righteous deeds will be in the gardens of paradise: they will have whatever they wish near their Lord. This is the greatest grace."[9]

As they preferred Divine satisfaction over their own, Allāh ﷻ will in return be pleased with them and will reward them so abundantly that they would be happy with what they have done and with their Lord.[10]

---

[8] That is, this concept is abstracted from the act of legislation itself and externally has no instance but the legislation itself. However, the human mind abstracts it from the concept of legislation itself and treats it as a different entity, although externally both concepts refer to the same thing. (Tr.)

[9] *Sūrat al-Shūrā* (42), Verse 22:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ لَهُمْ مَا يَشَآءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الكَبِيرُ ﴾

Also see: *Sūrat Qāf* (50), Verse 35; *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16), Verse 31; *Sūrat al-Zūmar* (39), Verse 34; *Sūrat al-Furqān* (25), Verse 16

[10] *Sūrat al-Bayyinah* (98), Verse 8:

﴿ جَزَاؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَداً رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ ﴾

Therefore, the human being can, on his own accord, will that which Allāh ﷻ wills and be satisfied with Allāh's ﷻ existential and legislative satisfaction—refusing to want or to seek anything but that which Allāh ﷻ wants from him and that which He pleases.[11] In so doing, the human being has willed in accordance to the Divine generative and legislative wills, although the human will and potency themselves have been bestowed to the human being by this same Divine generative will, and as such his existence and will is an extension of the will and existence of Allāh ﷻ. This concurrence entails no contradiction and thus is not impossible for it is not the concurrence of two complete causes in the generation of one effect.

At the same time, the human will and volition has not been denied to him. Rather, because Allāh ﷻ has given him the permission to will and choose, he determines what path he wants to follow and in doing so ends up willing what Allāh ﷻ has willed.

If the human being disobeys and violates the legislative will of Allāh ﷻ, doing what Allāh ﷻ dislikes, he has done so on his own accord and as such, has headed towards an awful fate. But this disobedience is not a violation of Allāh's ﷻ generative will, for He has, through His own generative will, created the human being willing and volitional, and as such has given him the capacity to defy His legislative will. Accordingly, this defiance does not signify the human being's overcoming the will and power of Allāh ﷻ. He can deprive the hopeless human being of his will and power whenever He desires and it is concerning this that He says, "Do those who commit misdeeds suppose that they can out-manoeuvre Us? Evil is the judgment that they make."[12]

Also see: *Sūrat al-Mujādalah* (58), Verse 22; *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), Verse 100; *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5), Verse 119

[11] *Sūrat al-Insān* (76), Verse 30; *Sūrat al-Takwīr* (81), Verse 29:

﴿ وَمَا تَشَآءُونَ إِلاَّ أَنْ يَشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ﴾

[12] *Sūrat al-'Ankabūt* (29), Verse 4:

﴿ أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّـــيِّـــئَاتِ أَنْ يَسْبِقُونَا سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴾

Also see: *Sūrat al-Zumar* (39), Verse 51:

To sum up: In the realm of generative will and the act of Divine legislation itself, the human will cannot exert any influence whatsoever, and hence the question of the concurrence of Divine will and human will does not arise at this stage.

When it comes to the level of abiding by the legislative will, the human will is ontologically an extension of Divine will. If he obeys the Divine injunctions, he has on his own accord aligned his desire to what Allāh ﷻ desires and as such, is pleased with the Divine generative will, and with this correct decision, has secured a felicitous end for himself. If he disobeys, if he does not make Allāh's ﷻ desire his own desire, he has acted only to his own disadvantage, without in any way damaging the creation or harming Allāh ﷻ for Allāh ﷻ has through His generative will, granted him the capacity to defy and disobey but has at the same time, through His legislative will, warned him of the consequences.

Thus by making the wrong decision of disobeying Allāh ﷻ, he has incurred Allāh's ﷻ wrath. Although, he might arrogantly think that in doing so he has overcome Allāh's ﷻ will, the reality of the matter is that the creature can never, even while disobeying, escape the Divine domain, power, and will. The creature is always in need of that Most Sacred Essence.

It is to this that the following verse speaks: "Whatever good befalls you is from Allāh; and whatever ill befalls you is from yourself."[13]

Although in essence, everything is from Allāh ﷻ for nothing can occur without His consent, but the issue is that He does not deem misdeeds and evil appropriate for the human being, and it is the human being himself who, in misusing his free will, chooses evil.[14]

﴿ فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّـئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَالَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ هٰؤُلَاءِ سَيُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَمَـا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴾

[13] *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), Verse 79:
﴿ مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّـئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ...﴾

[14] *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), Verses 78-79:

However we do admit that to conceive and comprehend the relationship of human volition to Divine will- i.e. the immutable cosmological system- is difficult. It is precisely for this reason that those who are not in touch with Divine revelation and the school of Ahlul Bayt ﷺ have strayed to antipodal extremes in this regard.

One group, the Mu'tazilites, concluded that the human being has been granted absolute autonomy, and as such is the only agent involved in his actions—and for this they have been termed *The Delegators*[15]; another group, the Ash'arites, saw the human being as lacking any role in conducting his actions, hence being compelled in his actions, without free will and the right to choose- and for this they have been termed *The Compelled Ones*. But the truth and the right path is the intermediate path, that is, neither the theory of compulsion nor delegation.

The generative will of Allāh ﷻ concurs with human will in a vertical manner. If the human being obeys, the Divine legislative will and the human will are in harmony, but if he disobeys, his will and action are despised by Allāh ﷻ. But the latter does not imply liberation from Divine dominion and sovereignty or the overcoming of the will and power of Allāh ﷻ. Such disobedience only signifies being removed from Divine mercy as a result of the individual's own misuse of volition and free will.

﴿ ...وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هٰذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هٰذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ... مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ... ﴾

[15] The name arises from the fact that they assume that Allāh ﷻ has delegated His authority to the human being in the realm of his volitional actions and so He does not take part in human actions. (Tr.)

2

FREE CHOICE AND THE DIVINE SEAL AND LOCK UPON THE HEARTS OF THE PERVERSE

Question: Isn't there a discrepancy between Islām's view of the human being as a creature endowed with free choice and assertation of the Qur'ān that Allāh ﷻ shuts the hearts, ears and eyes of some to the truth?

Brief Answer

In many verses there is mention of the unbelievers' and hypocrites' hearts, eyes, and ears being sealed and of the sinful and perverse being misled. *Khatm* and *tab'* [both meaning "seal"] denote ending, stamping a seal, imprinting, printing, and rendering things in certain shapes.

Heart in some instances denotes the particular organ of the body—i.e., the corporeal heart—and in other instances it is used to denote the human spirit, soul, etc.,—the psychic and spiritual heart.

Allāh's ﷻ sealing the spiritual and inward hearts of some human beings indicates their inability to be guided, their hearts being shut to the understanding and comprehension of Divine knowledge and their failure to turn to good and virtue. The sealing of their hearts, ears, and eyes by Allāh ﷻ is the result of their own volitional conduct and their ignoring the repeated admonitions of Allāh ﷻ. In addition, although their hearts, ears, and eyes are sealed—this seal encompasses various levels and degrees. If it is such that the darkness of sin and malice has pervaded their hearts completely, they will never return to virtue and guidance. Of course this does not mean that it would be impossible for them to return to the light of faith and guidance, for the possibility of change and transformation exists till the very brink of death. Therefore, they are not deprived of free

choice. They can by their free choice either remain on their same perverse ways, or they can choose with a firm and resolute decision, though it be difficult, to change their ways, and by finding the way of guidance and hearkening to the Divine instructions, attain to ultimate felicity.

In other words, to the extent that one's heart is stained by the dross of sin, one is proportionately sealed off from the path of truth and deprived of understanding the Divine Signs and benefiting from His light and guidance. It should also be noted that perversion and the shutting of the heart is not exclusive to the unbelievers and the hypocrites.

Detailed Answer

At the outset, we will consider two Qur'ānic verses, thereafter elucidating the answer to the above question.

In the first verse, we read: "As for the faithless, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith. Allāh has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight and there is a great punishment for them."[1]

In the second verse we read: "Allāh has set a seal on their hearts, so they do not know."[2]

The meanings of Khatm, Tab', and Qalb

Khatm is contrasted to *fath* (to "begin" or "start") and means "to complete something" or "to reach the end". The reason why *khatm* is

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verses 6-7:
﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَ أَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ. خَتَمَ اللّهُ عَلَى قُلُـــوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴾
Also see *Sūrat al-An'ām* (6), Verse 46; *Sūrat al-Shūrā* (42), Verse 24; *Sūrat al-Jāthīyah* (450), Verse 23

[2] *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), Verse 93:
﴿ إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءُ رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطَبَعَ اللّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

translated as "sealing" is that the seal in a letter indicates its end. A letter is sealed when it is finished, barring the addition of new material.[3]

Tab' also denotes the act of sealing (in which sense it is close in meaning to *khatm*) as well as sketching, imprinting, and forging metals into coins.[4]

Qalb is employed in the Qur'ān in different senses, such as soul, heart, self, intellect, knowledge, etc.[5] Nevertheless, it can generally be said that the human being possesses two types of heart: the corporeal heat and the spiritual heart. The corporeal heart is, in physiological terminology and in the vernacular, a muscular organ with the peculiar shape, whose function is the circulation and purification of blood, and in most human beings rests in the left section of the chest. The spiritual heart is one and the same with the spirit and the psyche of the human being. However in the ethical and gnostic terminologies and also in the vocabulary of the Qur'ān and the hadiths, *heart* is used in the latter sense, and as such is the conduit for the conveyance of Divine inspirations and Revelation and the means of achieving Divine knowledge and witnessing the epiphanies of the Truth. It is the locus of human emotions and the root of the exalted human intentions and aspirations.

The point in common between the two usages of *qalb* (heart) has been expounded as follows. *Qalb* literally means change and transformation. The muscular heart derives its name from the responsibility to change the blood and purify it. Similarly, as human emotions and intentions are in constant flux and change, their locus has been termed *qalb*.

Allāh's ﷻ seal on the hearts

In the Qur'ān, various terms have been used to refer to the incorrigibility of the hearts of the unbelievers, hypocrites, and the spiteful; among them *khatm* (sealed), *tab'* (sealed), *sarf* (turned away), *qufl* (locked), *marad* (ill),

---

Also see *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), Verse 155; *Sūrat al-A'rāf* (7), Verse 100; *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), Verse 87; *Sūrat Yūnus* (10), Verse 74; *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16), Verse 108; *Sūrat Muḥammad* (47), Verse 16

[3] *Majma' al-Bayān*, vol. 1, pg. 129

[4] Ibid.

[5] *al-Mīzan*, vol. 2, pg. 223-224

rayn (tainted), etc. Of course, the shutting of the heart and its corruption is not exclusive to the unbelievers and hypocrites. The heart of the human being—including the believer—is twisted and sealed and deprived of comprehending the Divine Signs in proportion as it is contaminated with the dross of sin.

Thus, sealing the heart refers to the shutting of this conduit for receiving Divine knowledge and inspiration, and the means of this sealing can be inferred from the hadiths mentioned below.

Zurārah has narrated that Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir عليه السلام as having said: "There is not a servant but that his heart contains a white slate. When he commits a sin, a black dot appears on it. Thereafter, if he repents, that black dot will disappear, but if he continues the sin, the blackness will expand, such that it will ultimately cover the entire whiteness. After the white slate has been entirely covered, the possessor of that heart will never return to good and virtue. And this is the meaning of the word of God where He says, 'No indeed! Rather their hearts have been sullied by what they have been earning.'"[6 and 7]

There are certain factors that cause the accumulation of dross in the heart. In the Noble Qur'ān the following issues are enumerated as accounting for the sealing of the heart: disbelief[8]; heedlessness and continuous indifference[9]; vow-breaking and brazen sinfulness[10]; obstinacy

---

[6] *Sūrat al-Mutaffifīn* (83), Verse 14:

﴿ كَلاَّ بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴾

[7] *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 273:

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عليه السلام قَالَ: مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ إِلاَّ وَفِي قَلْبِهِ نُكْتَةٌ بَيْضَاءُ، فَإِذَا أَذْنَبَ ذَنْباً خَرَجَ فِي النُّكْتَةِ نُكْتَةٌ سَوْدَاءُ، فَإِنْ تَابَ ذَهَبَ ذٰلِكَ السَّوَادُ وَإِنْ تَمَادىٰ فِي الذُّنُوبِ زَادَ ذٰلِكَ السَّوَادُ حَتَّىٰ يُغَطِّيَ الْبَيَاضَ لَمْ يَرْجِعْ صَاحِبُهُ إِلـىٰ خَيْرٍ أَبَداً وَهُوَ قَوْلُ اللّٰهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿ كَلاَّ بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴾

[8] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 88:

﴿ وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلاً مَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾

[9] *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf* (7), Verse 179:

and distorting the Divine Word[11]; self-willedness and acting against one's knowledge[12]: causing corruption, dishonouring family ties[13]. Thus, the veils that cover one's heart and the obstacles that impede the function of the spiritual heart, hearing, and sight are the results of one's own volitional conduct. The Divine seal is set by way of punishment and not gratuitously. For, there exists a necessary and definite link between one's conduct, intentions, and thoughts and their effects, which is inescapable. The reason that this scheme is attributed to Allāh ﷻ is that the causal relationship between human conduct, intentions, and thoughts and their effects is a Divinely destined and decreed process which is immutable, except in cases where other factors—such as repentance, Divine alerts,

---

﴿ وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لاَ يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لاَ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُوْلٰئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُوْلٰئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ﴾

[10] *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5., Verse 13:

﴿ فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلاَ تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

also *Sūrat al-A'rāf* (7), Verse 102:

﴿ وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لِأَكْثَرِهِمْ مِنْ عَهْدٍ وَإِنْ وَجَدْنَا أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفَاسِقِينَ ﴾

[11] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verses 67 & 74:

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقَرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴾ ﴿ ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

[12] *Sūrat al-Jāthīyah* (45), Verse 23:

﴿ أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللّٰهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللّٰهِ أَفَلاَ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴾

[13] *Sūrat Muḥammad* (47), Verse 22:

﴿ فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ ﴾

tribulations, or the help of a Possessor of the Breath, i.e., a friend of Allāh ﷻ—affect the human being, bringing about his spiritual transformation, purging his heart of the dross of sin, and once again rejuvenating him with the capacity to be guided.

In other words, Divine destiny and decree are but a part and parcel of the regulations governing the cosmos and the necessity of an effect following its complete cause. And in the case of the volitional acts of the human being, will, decision, and intention are among the essential components of the complete cause and hence are necessary to bring about his volitional acts. When the human being performs a certain action, its effects inescapably leave their impression on the human soul and psyche. In this light, if the human being himself prepares the grounds for Allāh ﷻ sealing his heart, by the Law of the cosmos, its effects will haunt him.

In the light of what has been said the following points can be highlighted:

1. Allāh ﷻ sealing of the heart is the direct outcome of the volitional conduct of the human being.

2. As the sealing of the heart is part of the cosmic scheme of Divine destiny and decree, it is attributed to Allāh ﷻ.

3. The human being whose heart has been tainted by the dross of sin can add to his spiritual contamination by repeating the past mistakes. It should be noted that this perpetuation of sin is on his own accord.

4. Although it is very difficult for the sinful human being whose heart is covered with the dross of sin to return to the path of righteousness and is very unlikely, it is not impossible. He can choose with a firm resolution to embark on purging his heart of the darkness of sin. In other words, if the soul and heart of the unbeliever and hypocrite become sealed and dark and debased such that no bright space remains, he is, to employ the words of the Qur'ān, finished and there is no hope of his redemption. He has intentionally removed himself from the path of guidance and light and thus has shut the door of repentance on himself.

3

THE POSSIBILITY OF KNOWLEDGE OF ALLAH

Question: Is it possible for humankind to know Allāh ﷻ? If yes, to what degree and what is the value of such knowledge?

Brief Answer

The human being can attain knowledge of Allāh ﷻ through various ways. This knowledge can come about through the medium of the intellect or of the heart. At times he—as in the case of the sage and the philosopher—reasons and understands through conceptual knowledge and with recourse to sense perception and the intellect, whilst at other times he—as in the case of the gnostic—through immediate intuition, gazes at the Beloved, witnessing Him directly.

Knowledge of Allāh ﷻ is analogous to knowledge of a fire. An individual at times realizes the existence of a fire by witnessing its smoke from afar. At other times, he might realize its existence by seeing the fire itself. Yet at other times, he might comprehend and feel the fire as if a part of his body is burned by it.

In any case, in both ways—i.e. conceptual knowledge and immediate knowledge—sometimes the path, the traveller, and the goal are one and the same, as when one concludes the existence of Allāh ﷻ by reflecting on Divine signs and the existing order pervading them. In other instances, only the traveller and the path might be identical, as when one comprehends Allāh ﷻ through understanding his own soul. The path and the goal can also be the same, as where one comprehends Allāh ﷻ by contemplating on the Divine Names and Attributes.

Of these types, the case where the path and the goal are identical, where one spiritually experiences what he has conceptually realized is of great value, for the goal is to see and to taste.

In the Qur'ānic verses and the corpus of narrations these three ways have been articulated. It has especially been emphasized that nothing is more evident than Divine existence and manifestation and hence He must be reached through Himself. He is the Light, the apprehension of which is needless of anything else. If we are deprived of seeing Him, it is because of the veil of our negligence that covers our conceptual and immediate knowledge - we lack awareness of our knowledge.

In order to attain this complex knowledge *('ilm-e murakkab* [i.e. awareness of knowledge]*)* we must remove the veils of darkness and of light from our souls. It is for this reason that it has been said that knowing Allāh ﷻ is innate and inherent to the human being, and as such, the arguments provided in proving the existence of Allāh ﷻ and the knowledge of Him serve only as reminders, not proofs. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the core of Divine Essence and Attributes are neither comprehensible to the philosopher nor to the gnostic. However, other aspects of the Divine are accessible to both the intellect of the philosopher and the spiritual experience of the gnostic.

Detailed Answer

In responding to this question, first the media of understanding must be introduced. The media of understanding are the physical senses, the intellect, and the heart. The external senses merely deal with the appearances and the accidents of things without being able to delve any deeper, and despite the variety and abundance of knowledge they provide to the human being, they are limited by time and space.

The intellect is a special faculty, the major role of which is the comprehension of universal concepts and in this sense possesses many aspects - among them reasoning. But the media of understanding are not restricted to these two. The human being can reach great degrees of knowledge through the medium of the heart. By this way, the human

being can spiritually witness [the reality of] what others understand [only theoretically] through reasoning. The gnostics' endeavour is to comprehend Allāh ﷻ in this way.[1]

From another perspective, knowledge can be divided into two general categories: conceptual knowledge and presential or immediate knowledge. Conceptual knowledge is obtained through mental concepts and the implementation of rational and philosophic reasoning. Presential knowledge is the knowledge arrived at without the mediation of concepts and mental pictures; that is, the reality of the known object is present within the knower. Presential knowledge is a type of gnostic and intuitive knowledge, in which the external reality [and not the mental concept] of an object is witnessed.

Of course, in the obtainment of rational conceptual knowledge, sensory and empirical premises can be employed. For instance, by reflecting on the signs of Allāh ﷻ and the existing order in the cosmos, one can achieve an understanding of Allāh ﷻ that is rendered by a simple reasoning. But in cases where one desires to achieve a greater understanding, purely rational premises are required.

In any case, it must be borne in mind that firstly, Allāh ﷻ cannot be proven nor refuted by exclusive recourse to laboratory experiments or scientific, empirical principles for the grasp of sensory experimentation is far shorter than to be able to pierce into the supernatural. Therefore, sensory knowledge alone cannot solve the problem, it must be employed in the premises of rational reasoning [if it is to be useful]. Secondly, despite the fact that in Islāmic texts, studying the extroversive *(āfāqī)*[2] signs of Allāh ﷻ has been encouraged,[3] which is in a sense considered a

[1] Though it is possible to reach understanding and certainty based on traditions and authority as well; but in this case it is necessary to have previously proved both the fact that the traditions in question were in fact quoted correctly from the holders of authority, such as the Immaculates ﷺ, and the fact that such traditions have cognitive value. It is only then that they can be used as the standards by which to judge the findings of either the intellect or the heart.

[2] Or macrocosmic signs. That is, the signs outside of the human mind and body.

[3] *Sūrat al-Fuṣṣilat* (41), Verse 53:

﴿ سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِـــنَا فِي الآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ ﴾

rational method since it involves reasoning, it must not be overlooked that studying the creatures, the signs of Divine creativity and wisdom, only reveals that there is an omnipotent and omniscient being governing the world; but other than that, this method fails to render the attributes of that being; for instance, whether it is self-sufficient.

As for intuitive and immediate comprehension, it can be conceived in three ways: a cause's immediate knowledge of its effect, an immaterial existent's immediate knowledge of its own essence, [and finally] an effect's immediate knowledge of its cause. The creatures' awareness of Allāh ﷻ is of the third type. And the human being's weakness in comprehending Allāh ﷻ is in proportion to his [existential] weakness. Thus, although that Sacred Essence is proximate to everything, but their proximity to Him depends on their existential degree and limit.

Muḥaqqiq Tūsī provides a good analogy regarding the degrees of knowledge of Allāh ﷻ. He says one's knowledge of Allāh ﷻ resembles one's knowledge of fire, the most limited form of which is being told the qualities of fire by somebody else who has seen it. A more advanced awareness of fire is when one observes its smoke. The third degree is feeling the heat and witnessing the light it radiates. The final degree of knowledge of fire is being inflamed and burned to ashes.

A point necessary to mention at this stage is that in speaking of knowledge of Allāh ﷻ, we might either be referring to proving His existence or to contemplating His attributes. In both cases we can have recourse to the intellect to employ conceptual knowledge in order to understand intellectually, or we can go through the path of the heart, to embark on immediate intuitive knowledge in order to behold. The former is termed *burhān*, the latter, *ʿirfān*. Without question, the method prevalent in philosophic reasoning is not as valuable as gnostic revelations.

In any case, regardless of whether we traverse the path of the intellect or the heart, there are three ways for acquiring knowledge of Allāh ﷻ. In other words, the intellectual or gnostic journey of the philosopher or the spiritual wayfarer [respectively] could fall under one of three categories:

1. The traveller *(sālik)*, the path *(maslak)*, and the goal *(maslk ʿilayh)* are distinct; such as if one reaches the conclusion [that Allāh ﷻ exists] by observing and contemplating the order and harmony of the universe, by realizing that all things are needy and so there must be something needless they depend on, hence the Originator. Some Qur'ānic verses encourage people to take up this method.[4]

2. The traveller and the path are one and the same; such as if one contemplates the world within himself, addressing questions such as, "Who am I?"; "Where am I from?"; "Why aren't my inclinations, my allegiances under my control?"; "Why can I not tame my wild mind so as to control what memories it recalls?"

Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ alludes to this method in the following words: "I came to know Allāh by observing the strong wills that trembled, the difficult entanglements that were disentangled, and the decisions that were crushed."[5] In another instance he says, "Whoever comprehends himself has indeed comprehended his Lord."[6]

3. The path and the goal are one and the same. That is, the traveller—the philosopher or the spiritual wayfarer—by contemplating the destination discovers the object of his desire *(maqṣūd)*. This is the most profound way of understanding, for it transcends the levels of extroversive and introversive journeys, thereby realizing, through contemplating the Absolute Witness, that Allāh ﷻ is the Absolute Witness.

---

[4] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 164:

﴿ إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْـيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴾

[5] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Short Saying 250:

عَرَفْتُ اللّٰهَ سُبْحَانَهُ بِفَسَخِ الْعَزَائِمِ وَحِلِّ الْعُقُودِ.

[6] *Jawāhir al-Saniyyah*, pg. 116:

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ.

The Qur'ān states: "Is it not sufficient that your Lord is witness to all things?"[7] First, He is witnessed and comprehended, and then [in His light] all other things, for He is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth. The Essence of Unicity [i.e. Allāh ﷻ] is the clearest witness to and proof of Himself and as such, renders unnecessary any intermediary for comprehension of Him.[8]

So it is that in addressing His messenger He says, "You were certainly oblivious of this. We have removed your veil from you, and so your sight is acute today."[9] The veil is removed from the individual, not from the reality or from Allāh ﷻ.

In the Supplication of ʿArafah, Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī ؑ deals with this third method. He says, "O Allāh! Do others possess a light that You lack so that they must shed light upon You? When have You been absent so as to be needy of proof? When have You ever been distant so that Your effects and creatures should move us close to You?"[10]

The same theme resonates in the following couplet: "You have never distanced Yourself so that I should seek Your presence. You have never been hidden so that I should make You manifest."

And again in the words of Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī ؑ, "Blind be the eye that does not behold You … It is You whom I beseech in seeking union with You, and it is Your own existence that I seek as proof for Your

---

[7] *Sūrat al-Fuṣṣilat* (41), Verse 53:

﴿ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴾

[8] *Sūrat Ibrāhīm* (14), Verse 10:

﴿ قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ﴾

[9] *Sūrat Qāf* (50), Verse 22:

﴿ لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ هٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ ﴾

[10] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 95 pg. 226; also *Mafātiḥ al-Jinān:*

أَيَكُونُ لِغَيْرِكَ مِنَ الظُّهُورِ مَا لَيسَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونَ هُوَ الْمُظْهِرَ لَكَ؟ مَتَىٰ غِبْتَ حَتَّىٰ تَحْتَاجَ إِلَىٰ دَلِيلٍ يدُلُّ عَلَيْكَ؟ وَمَتَىٰ بَعُدْتَ حَتَّىٰ تَكُونَ الآثَارَ هِيَ الَّتِي تُوصِلُ إِلَيكَ؟

existence." In this phrase, it is expressed that for the spiritual wayfarer, Allāh ﷻ is more manifest than the sky, the earth, the leaves of trees, etc.

Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq ﷺ alludes to this point in the following words: "When someone is present and manifest, we first know him through his self, then we get to know his attributes. But in the case of something absent, knowledge of its attributes precedes knowledge of its essence … Just as in the case of Yūsuf's brother, they studied Yūsuf himself and recognized it was him. They asked him, 'Are you really Yūsuf?' They did not formulate their question the other way around[11]; meaning, they reflected on the qualities of the person whom they were confronted with and realized that he was Yūsuf. They did not ask others to identify Yūsuf for them."[12]

Based on the aforementioned explanations, it has been concluded that contingent existents are realities whose existence is nothing but their relation to the Necessary Existent. Otherwise, they would be needless in their essences which would in turn mean that they would be necessary by their essences, which is obviously false.

Thus, they are in their entire existence dependent on the Necessary Essence and it is impossible to view the *relation* [i.e. the creature, for as previously mentioned the contingent existent is nothing but that relation] without the object to which it is related *(marbūt ʿilayh)*. That is, comprehending the effect independent of its cause is impossible. Thus,

---

[11] It must be pointed out that in Farsi and ʿArabic in asking if the person being addressed is the same one the former had heard about or known previously, he can put the question forth in two ways. He can say, in the case of ʿArabic, *a anta fuln* (lit. Are you ...?) or *a fuln ant* (lit. Is... you?). The latter case is not used in English. Therefore, the reasoning forwarded in the text should be understood in the context of the ʿArabic language. (Tr.)

[12] *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqul*, pg. 327:

إِنَّ مَعْرِفَةَ عَيْنِ الشَّاهِدِ قَبْلَ صِفَتِهِ وَمَعْرِفَةَ صِفَةِ الْغَائِبِ قَبْلَ عَيْنِهِ. قِيلَ: وَكَيْفَ نَعْرِفُ عَيْنَ الشَّاهِدِ قَبْلَ صِفَتِهِ؟ قَالَ عليه السلام: تَعْرِفُهُ وَتَعْلَمُ عِلْمَهُ وَتَعْرِفُ نَفْسَكَ بِهِ وَلاَ تَعْرِفُ نَفْسَكَ بِنَفْسِكَ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ. وَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مَا فِيهِ لَهُ وَبِهِ كَمَا قَالُوا لِيُوْسُفَ: ﴿إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ يُوسُفُ قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ وَهٰذَا أَخِي﴾ فَعَرَفُوهُ بِهِ وَلَمْ يَعْرِفُوهُ بِغَيْرِهِ.

the comprehension of every thing, even purely material existents, is concomitant with comprehending the Necessary Existent.

Although knowledge is of two types: simple knowledge and compound knowledge, even as ignorance is of both types. Simple knowledge is one's knowledge of an issue without being aware of the existence of that knowledge. Compound knowledge is when one's knowledge is realized; that is, when one knows that he knows. We are of the opinion that a knowledge of Allāh ﷻ exists in all human beings; it could be conceptual or presential and the object of that knowledge could be anything. That is, when one comprehends something, whether through conceptual knowledge or presential knowledge, he has comprehended Allāh ﷻ along with it.[13] The Qur'ān states, "He is known to every one ignorant of Him."[14] Even the person in doubt comprehends Allāh ﷻ prior to comprehending his doubt for Allāh ﷻ is the cause of his doubt and so the doubt is nothing but a relation to Allāh ﷻ. So yes it is true; some are unaware of their knowledge of Allāh ﷻ and as such are oblivious to this necessary comprehension.

Therefore, when Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ said, "I do not see anything but that I see Allāh prior to it" or "I do not worship a Lord I do not see"[15] he was aware of his knowledge. He had grasped the truth of the verse, "…so whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allāh."[16] The face cannot be beheld without beholding the possessor of the face. He was a gnostic who through voluntary extinguishment witnessed, in this world that other-than-Him is hidden and it is He, the Creator, Who is manifest,

---

[13] *al-Tawḥīd* by Shaykh Ṣadūq, pg. 143:

لاَ يُدْرِكُ مَخْلُوقٌ شَيئاً إلاَّ بِاللّهِ وَلاَ تُدْرَكُ مَعْرِفَةُ اللّهِ إلاَّ بِاللّهِ.

[14] *al-Tawḥīd* by Shaykh Ṣadūq, pg. 58:

...مَعْرُوفٌ عِنْدَ كُلِّ جَاهِلٍ...

[15] *al-Kāfī,* vol. 1, pg. 98

مَا كُنْتُ أَعْبُدُ رَبًّا لَمْ أَرَهُ.

[16] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 115:

﴿ فَأَيْنَمَا تَوَلُّو فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّهِ ﴾

and it was because of this that he said, "If the veils were to be lifted, my certainty would not increase."[17]

Whatever serves as an obstacle to sight or understanding is referred to as a veil. A veil is either of darkness or of light. Regarding the veil of darkness which is the veil of materiality, there are three elements: the subject from whom the matter in question is hidden, the veil, and the veiled [i.e. the object that is hidden]. But regarding the veil of light there are only two elements: the veiled and the subject from whom the matter in question is hidden. Obscurity in the latter case is the result of the intensity of the brightness of the veiled, or more accurately as the result of the weakness of perception on the part of the subject. As an analogy, one is incapable of seeing the sun in some cases, because of an obstacle, such as a wall or dust, or at other times because of the intense brightness of the sun, which is actually the result of the weakness of one's vision.

A poet has said: "The veil that conceals Your face is Your face, at all times; You are hidden from the world as You are so manifest."

Between Allāh ﷻ and His creatures, there are no obstacles except His creatures.[18] If the human being succeeds in removing the veils of darkness, of egocentrism, and of desire, only then can he turn to removing the veils of light.

It is for this that in the *Sha'bānīyyah Supplication*, one pleads to Allāh ﷻ for the rending of the veils of light.[19] Other than the Prophet ﷺ and the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ no one is capable of rending all the veils of light. Of course, the core of the Divine Essence and Attributes is impregnable even

---

[17] *Sharh Mi'ah Kalimah*, pg. 52; *Matlub Kulli Talib*, pg. 3; *'Uyun al-Ḥikam wa al-Mawa'izh*, pg. 415:

لَوْ كُشِفَ الْغِطَاءُ مَا ازْدَدْتُ يَقِيناً.

[18] *al-Tawḥīd* by Shaykh Ṣadūq, pg. 170:

لَيْسَ بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ خَلْقِهِ حِجَابٌ غَيرَ خَلْقِه...

[19] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān:*

وَ أَنِرْ أَبْصَارَ قُلُوبِنَا بِضِيَآءِ نَظَرِهَا إِلَيكَ حَتَّى تَخْرِقَ أَبْصَارُ الْقُلُوبِ حُجُبَ النُّورِ فَتَصِلَ إِلَى مَعْدِنِ الْعَظَمَةِ وَ...

to them.[20] Therefore, they are themselves veils of light for viewing the Divine Essence and since a contingent being cannot escape being limited, they also gaze at Allāh ﷻ from the outlook of their own [limited] existences; "'Unqā[21] is not the game to be ensnared, so remove your net."

Hence, the knowledge of every knowing being is limited to the framework of its existence and to the extent that it lacerates the veils. Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ in this regard says, "The intellects will never have the capacity to reach to the core and circle of His Attributes. Nevertheless, there is no veil to obstruct anyone in comprehending the necessary level [of knowledge of Allāh]."[22] That is, on the one hand, all the existents of the world of contingency are Divine signs and as such serve as mirrors[23] reflecting a true image [of the Divine] but at the same time, they are not separable from the Divine. Basically, they have no other role but to reflect the beauty of the Divine, although "children" [i.e. intellectually and spiritually immature persons] might perceive them as separate entities.

On the other hand, "[those standing at] the apices of [intellectual] resolve cannot comprehend Him, and [those who have] dived in [the depths of] acuity cannot reach Him."[24] His Essence neither yields to the intellection of the sage[25], neither to the spiritual experience of the gnostic[26], thus they

---

[20] *Sūrat Āli ʿImrān* (3), Verse 30:

﴿ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَـــهُ ﴾

[21] A giant but beautiful bird in Persian mythology, also called *Simurgh*. In this line of poetry however, it is a metaphor for comprehending the core of Divine Essence. (Tr.)

[22] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 49:

... لَمْ يَطَّلِعِ الْعُقُولَ عَلىٰ تَحْدِيدِ صِفَتِه. وَلَمْ يَحْجُبْهَا عَنْ وَاجِبِ مَعْرِفَتِه...

[23] In his debate with ʿImrān al-Ābi'ī, Imām al-Riḍa ﷺ says: "Neither He is in the creation nor is the creation in Him. Just like the mirror: neither you are in it nor it in you. And the mirror is not like a mirage that portrays a deceptive view. At the same time, it has no truth in it other than the image of the person standing in front of it." *Al-Tawḥīd* of Shaykh as-Sadiq, pp., 434-435

[24] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, First Sermon:

...لاَيُدْرِكُهُ بُعْدُ الْهِمَمِ وَ لاَيَنَالُهُ غَوْصَ الْفِطَنِ...

[25] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 71 pg. 21, no. 1:

مَا عَرَّفْنَاكَ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِكَ.

[26] *Mir'at al-'Uqūl*, vol. 8 pg. 146:

both admit their incapability. This incapability arises because comparing what a contingent being can comprehend of Allāh ﷻ with what it cannot comprehend is to compare finitude with infinity.

At the end, the point that must be mentioned is that in the Islāmic corpus of narrations there is mention of an innate knowledge of Allāh ﷻ. Innate knowledge is of the intuitive, presential knowledge, which was explicated previously.

There are two types of innate qualities in the human being: innate understandings (which every human being possesses prior to any education) and innate inclinations (which are part and parcel of the nature of every human being). The former are referred to as "innate knowledge of Allāh ﷻ" and the latter as "innate worship of Allāh." But, as mentioned previously, they are not present at a conscious level of the human mind so as to render a rational endeavour [to understand Allāh ﷻ] unnecessary. Nevertheless, since knowledge of Allāh ﷻ is innate, the arguments presented in favour of Allāh ﷻ serve actually as reminders and not real proofs. In the process of proving something, one realizes that he has acquired a knowledge which he formerly lacked. But being reminded is to become aware that one has had something all along, albeit unknowingly. Thus it is that in Qur'ānic verses and in narrations, what is always mentioned is the removal of the veils of obliviousness. And what rids one of a state of obliviousness is a reminder not a proof.

مَا عَبَدْنَاكَ حَقَّ عِبَادَتِكَ.

4

MISGUIDANCE FROM ALLAH

Question: What is the meaning of Allāh's ﷻ misguidance in the Qur'ān?

Brief Answer

Misguidance is a non-existent entity. Since guidance means to lead someone to a goal, then misguidance is the absence of guidance. In the parlance of the logicians, the relation between guidance and misguidance is privatives and positives *('Ādam wa malakah)*. In other words, if guidance were to exist in a certain place, then it is impossible for misguidance to exist there (from the same aspect); but if guidance were not there then the absence of guidance is misguidance. Because of this it is not possible to attribute misguidance to Allāh ﷻ since it is not possible to give or take something that does not exist. Unlike guidance, which relates both to existence and the law, misguidance relates only to existence and has no relation with the law. This is because Allāh ﷻ is essentially the Guide, since if this were not the case then the evildoers would bring an excuse before Allāh ﷻ saying, "We wanted your guidance but you lead us astray."

Therefore, at the outset, Allāh ﷻ leads everyone towards felicity, happiness and the right path and in this stage there can be no misguidance. But if someone wilfully does not accept this call and turns his back towards it, then in this case he incurs Allāh's ﷻ existential misguidance. Therefore Allāh's ﷻ misguiding someone simply means that He cuts off His guidance from him and leaves him to fend for himself, the result of which is that man becomes lost on the path of

guidance. Man's being lost then, is caused by not having Allāh's ﷻ guidance - and this is the meaning of existential misguidance.

Detailed Answer

When we pay attention to the verses of the Noble Book, we find that there are two kinds of Divine guidance: one that is related to the law and the second that is related to existence. Man has both kinds of guidance. This is in contrast to misguidance, which is only existential and does not exist with relation to the Law. This is because Allāh ﷻ is essentially the Guide, since it is impossible that He be essentially the Lord, the Worshipped, and the Refuge, but not be the Essential Guide. If this were not the case then the evildoers would bring forth an excuse, saying to Allāh ﷻ, "We wanted your guidance but you lead us astray."

It is impossible for Allāh ﷻ to lead someone astray initially since this goes against His wisdom and since nothing comes from Allāh ﷻ except goodness and mercy, He does not lead anyone on an incorrect path from the outset. Rather, His misguidance is a type of punishment. In other words the bad people have gone astray and have been afflicted with misguidance by there own choice. Therefore in reality, initial misguidance is ascribed to the creatures, and the misguidance that is a punishment pertains to the Creator.

In conclusion we can say that Allāh's ﷻ misguidance means that He cuts off His mercy and blessings from a person and leaves him to fend for himself; and it is this that results in man becoming lost on the Path. If someone does not accept the guidance of the Law, Allāh ﷻ will exclude him from His existential guidance. In other words, it is the actions of a disbeliever or an oppressor which cause him not to have Divine guidance. This is in line with the order of creation, which is based on cause and effect. Consequently Allāh ﷻ has said that He will not guide the unbeliever[1], oppressor[2], or the sinner.[3]

[1] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 264:

﴿ ...وَاللّٰهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

See also: *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5), Verse 67; *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), Verse 37

[2] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 258:

﴿ ...وَاللَّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

See also: *Sūrat āl-i 'Imrān* (3), Verse 86; *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5), Verse 51

[3] *Sūrat āl-i 'Imrān* (3), Verse 86:

﴿ ...وَاللَّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

See also: *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5), Verse 108; *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), Verse 80

5

BEING ALLAH'S SERVANT

Question: Who is a "slave" and what is slavery? How can we become the slaves of Allāh ﷻ?

Brief Answer

A true servant of Allāh ﷻ is he for whom obedience to Allāh ﷻ is sweet and Allāh's ﷻ love is delight; he is intimate with Allāh ﷻ and relies on Him for all his needs.

Servitude can be summed up in three things. First is that the servant doesn't consider himself to own any of what has been bestowed upon him, for slaves own no property. They see all property as Allāh's ﷻ and when He commands, they spend it; second, a servant doesn't plan for himself; and third, a servant is preoccupied only with Allāh's ﷻ prescriptions and proscriptions.

With the aforementioned definition, we can understand the essence of servitude and how to achieve it. Servitude is the key to sanctity and "servant" is the best of names. A perfected human is a servant of Allāh ﷻ and is effaced in the Divine Identity and the Divine Names.

Worship *('Ibādah)*, has been defined by lexicographers as utmost of modesty and humility. They say since "'ibādah" (worship) is the highest level of humility; it wouldn't be fitting except towards the highest being, possessing the greatest perfections and the highest level of generosity. This is why worshiping other than Allāh ﷻ is false worship tantamount to polytheism, especially since sincerity in worship hasn't materialized.

Detailed Answer

As Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام has explained, the word ʿabd is composed of three letters: ʿayn, bā', and dāl. "'Ayn" indicates *ʿilm*, knowledge and certainty that a servant has of Allāh. The "bā'" indicates *buʿd*, the separation and distance he has from other than Allāh. And the letter "dāl" points to *dunuw*, his closeness to Allāh.[1]

The slave is indebted to Allāh ﷻ for not only all of his perfections, but indeed for his very existence. It is because of this that he submits to Him. By not looking at himself and his own desires, he takes on the colour of his Master and His perfections to the extent that according to the saying of the Noble Prophet ﷺ, "The true slave of Allāh Almighty is he for whom the obedience and love of Allāh becomes sweet. He presents his needs to his Lord and becomes intimate with Him. He puts all his trust in Him and has hope in no one else."[2]

According to the saying of Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام, the reality of slavery is in three thing, the first is the fact that "The slave does not think that he owns anything that Allāh has given him. This is because slaves do not own anything for themselves. They consider all their wealth to belong to Allāh. They place whatever they have wherever Allāh tells them to. The second is the fact that the slave of Allāh does not weigh what is good and bad for himself. Thirdly, he spends all his activity in that which Allāh had commanded him to do, and does not do what He has forbidden him from. Because he does not consider himself to own what Allāh ﷻ has given him, giving it away is easy for Him. Since the slave of Allāh ﷻ has relegated his affairs to Allāh ﷻ, the problems of the world become easy for him. And since he spends all his time doing what Allāh ﷻ has told him to do or staying away from what he has been prohibited from; he has no time left to be ostentatious. Thus, Allāh ﷻ honours His slave by means of these three things and by means of this,

---

[1] *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharīʿah*, chapter 2:
وَحُرُوفُ الْعَبْدِ ثَلاَثَةٌ (ع ب د) فَالْعَيْنُ عِلْمُهُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْبَاءُ بَوْنُهُ عَمَّنْ سِوَاهُ وَالدَّالُ دُنُوُّهُ لِلّٰهِ تَعَالَى بِلاَ كَيْفٍ وَلاَ حِجَابٍ.

[2] *Arbaʿīn*

his response to Satan's challenges and his interaction with the other creatures of Allāh ﷻ becomes easy. He does not go after the world in order to hoard wealth or show off in front of people. He does not seek any wealth and power that he sees in the hands of others, nor does he spend his days in vain pursuits."[3]

Slavery is the key to sanctity. The title "slave" is the best of titles and it is because of this that the name of the Prophet ﷺ was 'Abdullāh and on the night of ascension he asked Allāh ﷻ to grant him servanthood.

The perfect man is the servant of Allāh. He has all the manifestations of Divine Names. He is effaced in the Divine Essence.

The lexicographers have defined worship as the pinnacle of humility. They have said that since worship is the highest level of humility, it does not befit anyone other than one who holds the highest levels of existence, perfection, grace, and generosity. Because of this, the worship of other than Allāh ﷻ is false worship that is tantamount to polytheism.

Worship has three levels: Some people worship Allāh ﷻ with the hope of getting other worldly rewards or because they fear His punishment[4] -

[3] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 1, pg. 224, no. 17:
أَنْ لاَ يَرَىٰ الْعَبْدُ لِنَفْسِه فِيمَا خَوَّلَهُ اللّٰهُ مِلْكاً لِأَنَّ الْعَبِيدَ لاَ يَكُونُ لَهُمْ مِلْكٌ يَرَوْنَ الْمَالَ مَالَ اللّٰه يَضَعُونَهُ حَيْثُ أَمَرَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِه وَ لاَ يُدَبِّرُ الْعَبْدُ لِنَفْسِه تَدْبِيراً وَ جُمْلَةُ اشْتِغَالِه فِيمَا أَمَرَهُ تَعَالَىٰ بِه وَ نَهَاهُ عَنْهُ فَإِذَا لَمْ يَرَ الْعَبْدُ لِنَفْسِه فِيمَا خَوَّلَهُ اللّٰهُ تَعَالَىٰ مِلْكاً هَانَ عَلَيْه الْإِنْفَاقُ فِيمَا أَمَرَهُ اللّٰهُ تَعَالَىٰ أَنْ يُنْفِقَ فِيه وَ إِذَا فَوَّضَ الْعَبْدُ تَدْبِيرَ نَفْسِه عَلَىٰ مُدَبِّرِه هَانَ عَلَيْه مَصَائِبُ الدُّنْيَا وَ إِذَا اشْتَغَلَ الْعَبْدُ بِمَا أَمَرَهُ اللّٰهُ تَعَالَىٰ وَ نَهَاهُ لاَ يَتَفَرَّغُ مِنْهُمَا إِلَى الْمِرَاءِ وَ الْمُبَاهَاةِ مَعَ النَّاسِ فَإِذَا أَكْرَمَ اللّٰهُ الْعَبْدَ بِهَذِه الثَّلاَثَةِ هَانَ عَلَيْه الدُّنْيَا وَ إِبْلِيسُ وَ الْخَلْقُ وَ لاَ يَطْلُبُ الدُّنْيَا تَكَاثُراً وَ تَفَاخُراً وَ لاَ يَطْلُبُ مَا عِنْدَ النَّاسِ عِزّاً وَ عُلُوّاً وَ لاَ يَدَعُ أَيَّامَهُ بَاطِلاً.

[4] *Nahjul Balaghah*, Short saying 237; *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 84, no. 5:

these are the ordinary believers; some worship Allāh in order to gain the honour of servanthood and so that Allāh ﷻ calls them His slave; some however, worship Allāh ﷻ because they are in awe of His Might and because they love Him.

It has been related in a sacred tradition that Allāh ﷻ said, "Oh my slave! Worship me so that I make you like Myself. I say to something, 'Be,' and it is, you will also say to something 'be' and it will become so."[5]

Therefore, according to a saying of Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq ﷺ, "Servanthood is a substance, the kernel of which is Lordship."[6]

By means of worship, man's soul becomes like a polished mirror in which the Divine lights are reflected. The more it is polished the more will it reflect the flashes of Divine illumination; until such a time that his potential for sanctity will change to actuality and he will become the vicegerent of Allāh ﷻ in the whole realm of existence. You should know that this is not lordship but it is a vicegerency and a representation in which the effects of lordship become manifested. The vicegerent of Allāh ﷻ does not do the work Allāh ﷻ does. Allāh ﷻ rather accomplishes his work at the hands of His vicegerent. Through the lattice of the soul of this person, He manifests Himself and reveals His Names and Attributes. Because of this the divine Gnostic is the perfect mirror for the power and grace of Allāh ﷻ.

In all the types and degrees of the miracles of the prophets and the Imāms ﷺ, in reality, it is Allāh ﷻ who is the absolute agent while the soul of the saint has been effaced in His will. This is the station of

---

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ عليه السلام قَالَ: اَلْعِبَادُ ثَلاَثَةُ قَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَوْفاً فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيدِ وَقَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى طَلَبَ الثَّوَابِ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَجْرَاءِ وَقَوْمٌ عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حُبًّا لَهُ فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَحْرَارِ وَهِيَ أَفْضَلُ الْعِبَادَةِ.

[5] *Kalimatollāh*, pg. 140, no.154:

عَبْدِي أَطِعْنِي حَتَّى أَجْعَلَكَ مِثْلِي أَقُولُ لِلشَيْءِ كُنْ فَيَكُونَ تَقُولَ لِلشَيْءِ كُنْ فَيَكُونَ.

[6] *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharīʿah*, chapter 2:

أَلْعِبَادَةُ جَوْهَرَةٌ كُنْهُهَا الرُّبُوبِيَّةُ...

servanthood - a station that can be obtained by means of obeying Allāh ﷻ.

The spiritual wayfarer considers himself to be the name of Allāh ﷻ in this station, to be effaced in Allāh ﷻ as he recognizes other beings to be the same. If he be a perfect saint, he will become the perfect name of Allāh ﷻ and apply in himself perfect and absolute servanthood.

In the Noble Qur'ān, Allāh ﷻ says, "Glory be to He who took his servant on the night journey."[7] This indicates the fact that travelling the path to Allāh's ﷻ nearness can only be achieved by means of servitude. One must forego the pride and haughtiness that comes with presumptions of independence.

In the *tashahhud* first we give witness to the Prophet's servanthood, then to his prophethood. This is because servanthood is the ladder by means of which he ascended to the station of prophethood. In the Ṣalāt, which is the night ascension of the believer, we start with the "bismillah" that is the reality of servanthood.

Intention, according to the general public, means the desire to obey Allāh ﷻ whether that be out of greed or fear. "They call on their Lord, greedily and out of fear." According to those with wisdom it is the desire to worship Allāh ﷻ out of respect and in order to acknowledge his greatness. "Worship Allāh as if you were seeing Him. If you are not seeing Him, verily, He sees you." According to those with the love of Allāh ﷻ, it is the desire to obey Allāh ﷻ out of love for His essence. Finally, near the Friends of Allāh ﷻ it means to intend to obey Him and worship Him as an effect of witnessing the beauty of the Beloved, independently and essentially, and to be annihilated in the Lord, essentially, in His attributes and in His actions. One of the most important conditions of intention is sincerity.

Sincerity of intention, in the general public's worship, is purifying one's intention of both patent and hidden polytheism, which include such

---

[7] *Sūrat al-Isrā'* (17), Verse 1:

﴿ سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ... ﴾

traits as ostentation, self-conceit, and pride. "Now, surely, sincere obedience is due to Allāh."[8] In the worship of The High-ranking, however, it is to purify one's intention from any trace of greed or fear which in their mode of wayfaring is considered polytheism. In the worship of The Possessors of Heart (*aṣḥāb al-qulūb*), it is to purify one's intentions from egoism which is the greatest polytheism and disbelief in their mode. In the worship of The Most Perfect, it is purifying one's intention of noticing the station of servitude and the act of worship, and further yet noticing the existence. As Imām Khomeini said, "The healthy heart is the one which meets The Truth, without anything else disturbing their intimacy."[9]

[8] *Sūrat al-Zumar* (39), Verse 3:

﴿ أَلاَ لِلّهِ الدِّيْنُ الْخَالِصُ ﴾

[9] *Sirr al-Ṣalāt*, pg. 75 (Farsi Version)

6

NEARNESS TO ALLAH

Question: What is nearness to Allāh ﷻ? How many different kinds of nearness are there? How can we gain nearness to Allāh ﷻ?

Brief Answer

In lexicographical terms, "*qurb*" means the nearness of one thing to another. This can be in space or time. Of course in commonplace usage, "qurb" also applies to being the centre of attention and to holding a special place near someone.

In philosophical terms there are three types of nearness: spatio-temporal, essential (i.e. pertaining to quiddity), and existential. Spatio-temporal nearness however is particular to the different parts of the material world. Since Allāh ﷻ is not matter, this type of nearness does not apply in regards to Him.

Essential nearness, or nearness in quiddity, is like the nearness person *a* and person *b* have as humans, as they possess the same quiddity—being of the same species. Allāh ﷻ, however, is unlimited and therefore without quiddity. Without quiddity, this sense of nearness will not pertain to Allāh ﷻ either.

Since Allāh ﷻ bestows existence to all beings and separation between a complete cause and its effect is impossible considering the fact that an effect is a mere link and relation to its cause, we can conclude that the nearness of Allāh ﷻ to His creation is existential nearness.

Allāh's ﷻ nearness to things

There are four groups of verses regarding Allāh's ﷻ nearness to us:

a. Verses stating His nearness to us in principle;

b. Verses holding that He is nearer to us than any other being;

c. Verses saying that He is nearer to man than his jugular vein;

d. Verses saying that He is nearer to man than man himself.

In explaining the fourth group of verses, we must say that man, like all other contingent beings, is a hollow being—empty of any and all aspects of independent existence. Thus, Allāh's ﷻ existential encompassment and comprehension lies between man and himself.

Nearness to Allāh ﷻ in philosophical terms

It is clear that Allāh ﷻ is not in any particular place, so that there could be a direction to get near Him by moving in that direction. Nearness to Allāh ﷻ is achieved through man strengthening his existential aspect to the extent that he begins to self-consciously manifest the Divine Attributes. In the movement towards salvation, the more man's existential perfects increase, the more the levels of nearness to Allāh ﷻ increase.

Nearness to Allāh ﷻ in light of the Islāmic tradition

Since Allāh ﷻ is close to everything, man must try to approach Allāh ﷻ through righteous deeds. These deeds are divided into two categories: compulsory and advisory. Deeds holding a key position in the first category are understanding and sincerity in actions, while the rest, including humility, good morals, and generosity, fall under the category of advisory deeds.

Detailed Answer

In lexicographical terms, "qurb" means the nearness of one thing to another. This can be in space or time. Because of this it is said that

something from a spatial point of view is near another thing. Or it is said that yesterday is, from a temporal point of view, closer to today than two days before yesterday. In another common usage, "qurb" means being the centre of attention of someone and to hold a special place near them.

Types of nearness in philosophical terms

In philosophical terms there are three types of nearness: spatio-temporal, essential (i.e. pertaining to quiddity), and existential. Nearness and distance are things whose existence depends on two things. *A* and *B* should both exist in order for us to say that *A* is near *B* or is far from it. In the metaphysical realm in which immaterial beings exist that are free from motion and time, spatial and temporal nearness cannot apply. This is especially true in regards to the Reality of all realities and the unlimited existence "He is an absolute to whom we cannot point (spatially or temporally or otherwise) nor can He enter our imagination."[1]

Since Allāh ﷻ is free from quiddity[2], He can not share a quiddity with anything else nor be near to anything in this respect. This is because quiddity here means genus and differentia (when quiddity is opposed to existence). But Allāh ﷻ admits of no delimitation or definition such that another quiddity be near or far from Him. "He who points to Him has limited Him and he who limits Him counts Him."[3]

Two things that are partners in or share one quiddity are like one another. Zayd and ʿAmr for instance share the quiddity of Man. Allāh ﷻ however is above and beyond having a like or an opposite.

In regards to connection in existential terms we can say that: Because Allāh ﷻ is the source of all existence and because the separation of the cause from the effect is impossible, therefore nearness can be envisioned

---

[1] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 186:

وَلاَ صَمَدَهُ مَنْ أَشَارَ إِلَيْهِ وَ تَوَهَّمَهُ.

[2] Quiddity is defined as "the limits of existence," thus special only to contingent beings [i.e. dependant beings]. Allāh ﷻ on the other hand, being a necessary being, has no limit, thus defying quiddity.

[3] *Nahjul Balāghah*, Sermon 1:

مَنْ أَشَارَ إِلَيْهِ فَقَدْ حَدَّهُ وَ مَنْ حَدَّهُ فَقَدْ عَدَّهُ.

as nearness in existential terms (although it must be noted that to speak in terms of cause and effects does not adequately convey the relationship here, since all things "other-than-God" are but so many manifestations of His one existence), "And when my servants ask you concerning me, tell them I am near."[4]

Things are, in their essence[5], pure relations to Allāh ﷻ. Until the cause is understood, the effect cannot be understood. Therefore the nearness Allāh ﷻ has to creatures is an existential nearness. There can be no existence except that Allāh ﷻ is its cause, and any effect stands by means of its cause. Therefore there can not be a form of nearness nearer than this nearness.

Allāh's ﷻ nearness to things

In regards to the nearness of Allāh ﷻ to things, the verses of the Qur'ān can be divided into four categories.

a. One group state His nearness per se: that Allāh ﷻ is near us: "Verily I am near, I answer the caller."[6]

b. A second group of verses state that He is relatively nearer to man than others: "We are nearer to him than you but you do not see."[7]

c. Another type of verse indicates that He is closer to man than his jugular vein: "Verily we created man and we know what his soul whispers. And We are closer to him than his jugular vein."[8]

---

[4] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 186:

﴿ وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ﴾

[5] That is to say, all contingent beings are dependent and lack any sort of independence. All they have is for their existence is a "shadow" existence. A shadow has no existence of itself. All of its existence depends on the object having the shadow. All existents "other-than-God" are but as shadows of that perfect Being. Of course, the similitude in question here is the dependence of the shadow on the object. Other characteristics of the example, such as the object being material, are not meant.

[6] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 186:

﴿ ...فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ... ﴾

[7] *Sūrat al-Wāqiʿah* (56), Verse 85:

﴿ وَ نَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لاَّ تُبْصِرُونَ ﴾

d. A fourth group state that Allāh ﷻ is closer to man than man himself, like the following verse: "O you who believe, answer Allāh and the Prophet when they call you to what will give you life. Know that Allāh stands between man and his heart."[9]

Discussions about the first three groups are not very difficult but the fourth group cannot be solved so easily. How can Allāh ﷻ be closer to man than himself? Because of this, some commentaries, in line with some traditions have explained this as the intermediation of Allāh's ﷻ power. They say that the meaning of the verse is that sometimes man decides to do something, then Allāh ﷻ makes him regret it and does not allow him to continue with his plan.[10]

This is an intermediate meaning, one step removed from the apparent meaning, but if we have a rational proof that supports the apparent meaning of the verse, then we have no reason for foregoing the apparent meaning of the verse (that God comes between man and himself). Man is not whole *(samad)*, rather he is like other possible beings "empty"; as Kulaynī has related in a tradition, "Verily Allāh created man empty."[11]

Now that man is empty, the comprehensiveness of the existence of Allāh ﷻ comes between man and himself. Therefore, Allāh ﷻ is near everything. If Allāh ﷻ is near, He is near with all of His attributes. This is because the essential attributes[12] of Allāh ﷻ are one with His

---

[8] *Sūrat Qāf* (50), Verse 16:

﴿ وَ نَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ ﴾

[9] *Sūrat al-Anfāl* (8), Verse 24:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ... ﴾

[10] *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 4, pg. 452

[11] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, pg. 286:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ خَلَقَ ابْنَ آدَمَ أَجْوَفَ.

[12] Allāh ﷻ attributes are of two kinds. **Essential Attributes** (or Entitative Attributes). Attributes for whose derivation and conceptualization, bringing to mind Allāh's ﷻ essence is enough; attributes like knowledge, power, life, etc. **Action-Related Attributes** (or Operative Attributes). Attributes for whose derivation, bringing to mind Allāh's ﷻ

essence. Now, if His essential attributes are present, then His attributes of action will also be active following His essential attributes.

The way to get closer to Allāh ﷻ in a philosophical view

One of the fundamental questions that can be asked in this regard is, "How can we become closer to Allāh ﷻ?"—that Being, the light of whose existence has illuminated the Heavens and the Earth, an illumination that is the same as creation and the eternal creative act. From what direction should we approach Him and in what direction should we seek to become near to Him? It is clear that Allāh ﷻ does not have a direction, hence the journey along the path to Allāh ﷻ actually takes place within the very being of the wayfarer.

In the process of perfecting his essence, when the wayfarer travels from creation to the Real and travels from the material intellect[13] to the active intellect, he communes with the Names and attributes of Allāh ﷻ. In other words he attains his felicity. The depth and faculties of his existence are strengthened and he becomes one of Allāh's ﷻ great signs or manifestations. He thus attains the state of sanctity and Divine vicegerency. This spiritual state can be called "nearness to Allāh ﷻ."

Nearness to Allāh from the view point of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth

Because Allāh ﷻ encompasses all things[14], it does not make sense that He be distant from something. Therefore, the nearness of Allāh ﷻ to His

---

essence is not enough. We need to bring to mind His essence in its modality of action and operation within creation; attributes like creativeness, forgivingness, bestowing sustenance, etc.

[13] Philosophers divide the intellect into four levels. **Material or Passive Intellect** (passive intellect or *nous pateticos*). In this stage, the intellect is at a potential state of understanding. **Intellect by Proficiency**. In this stage, the intellect understands the self-evident concepts and judgments. **Active or Agent Intellect** (*intellectus agens* or *nous poietikos)*. The stage when the intellect understands concepts or judgments needing speculative reasoning through self-evident concepts and judgments. **Acquired Intellect**. This is the stage when the intellect understands all self-evident concepts and judgments and those needing speculative reasoning corresponding to the metaphysical and physical worlds in such manner that it keeps them present and is actually attentive of them.

[14] *Sūrat al-Fuṣṣilat* (41), Verse 54:

﴿ أَلاَ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُحِيطُ ﴾

servant is true in all cases and situations. Conversely, it is not always the case that man is always close to Allāh and it is a state that man must strive to obtain. Therefore if man wants to become closer to Allāh ﷻ and to strengthen this relationship, he should obtain the nearness to Allāh ﷻ by means of good actions and obedience to Allāh ﷻ as Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir عليه السلام has said, "Nearness to Allāh can only be found through obedience to Him."[15] In doing this, he enters the beginning of spiritual vicegerency or the succour of Allāh ﷻ.

It has been related that "Prayer is the nearness of every pious person"[16] and concerning the religious tax it has been related that "the *zakāt* (has been made) with the prayers a means of nearness."[17] These are things that bring one close to Allāh ﷻ.

When this nearness is achieved, man becomes the friend of Allāh ﷻ and Allāh ﷻ becomes the friend of man. Verses such as the following clearly point to this two-way friendship: "If you love Allāh, follow me. It will make Allāh love you..."[18]

Performing all those actions that in principle bring you close to Allāh ﷻ is the means to Allāh's ﷻ nearness provided that man performs them for Allāh ﷻ. In other words, these actions must not only be good in themselves, but they must be carried out in the best way and with the proper intentions (i.e. goodness of both act and agent is required).

As to the acts, they are of two kinds: obligatory and recommended. Just as reaching heaven has obligations and recommended acts, so too reaching the highest degrees of humanity (that in itself is a type of heaven) has its

---

[15] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 74:

يَا جَابِرُ! وَاللّٰهِ مَا يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَى اللّٰهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى إِلاَّ بِالطَّاعَةِ.

[16] *Man Lā Yaḥdhuruhu al-Faqīh*, vol. 1, pg. 210:

الصَّلٰوةُ قُرْبَانُ كُلِّ تَقِيٍّ.

[17] *Nahjul Balāghah*, Sermon 199:

ثُمَّ إِنَّ الزَّكَاةَ جُعِلَتْ مَعَ الصَّلاَةِ قُرْبَاناً.

[18] *Sūrat āli ʿImrān* (3), Verse 31:

﴿ قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللّٰهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّٰهُ... ﴾

obligations and recommended actions. Understanding and sincerity both have great bearing in this regard and can be considered mutually necessary to the extent that when understanding increases sincerity also increases. On the other hand, the Qur'ān considers actions to be a means of reaching understanding[19]. Of course, the understanding and certain knowledge thus obtained is not the certainty with respect to Allāh ﷻ, since the former certainty is the cause of worship and not, as in the case of the latter certainty, the highest effect and product of worship. The latter certainty is the certainty of Allāh ﷻ and the knowledge of Him in all His unlimited attributes.

The remainder of the moral methods that lead to nearness can be considered as recommended. As Imām Ja'far b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام has said, "Amongst the things that Allāh revealed to prophet Dāwūd was this, 'O Dāwūd, just as humble people are the nearest people to Allāh, the proud ones are the farthest people from Allāh."[20]

It is clear, however, that humility and good morals or kindness are recommended or secondary acts in obtaining nearness to Allāh ﷻ whereas the primary principle remains understanding and the worship of Allāh ﷻ. In the words of the Noble Prophet ﷺ "O Abū Dharr, worship Allāh as if you see Him, for if you do not see Him, He sees you."[21] In other words, your knowledge and understanding should be "presential" or intuitive and direct knowledge.

---

[19] *Sūrat al-Ḥijr* (15), Verse 99:

﴿ وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ﴾

[20] *Muntakhab Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, no.5212:

يَا دَاوُدَ! كَمَا أَنَّ أَقْرَبَ النَّاسِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْمُتَوَاضِعُونَ كَذٰلِكَ أَبْعَدُ النَّاسِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْمُتَكَبِّرُونَ.

[21] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 77, pg. 74:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ! اعْبُدِ اللّٰهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ كُنْتَ لاَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ.

7

FRIENDS OF ALLAH NOT HAVING FEAR

Question: The Qur'ān mentions the fact that there is no fear or sadness for the friends of Allāh (Sūrat Yūnus (10), Verse 62). If this is the case, then why do we read the following prayer in the Duʿā of Friday (addressing Imām al-Zamān عليه السلام): "Peace be upon you O Pure one who is afraid!"

Brief Answer

Fear is of two types: praiseworthy and blameworthy. Blameworthy fear, like fearing for ones' life or fearing people and creatures is meaningless for the friends of Allāh عزوجل. This is why Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليهما السلام has been narrated to have said "A believer fears no one other than Allāh." As the Noble Qur'ān says "It is only Satan who frightens his followers. Do not fear him but fear Me if you believe." Praiseworthy fear is fearing the majesty and greatness of Allāh عزوجل. In this regard, the Noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله has been narrated to have said "He who knows his Lord more, fears Him more."

Praiseworthy fear is attributed to high-ranking wayfarers which is caused by feeling the greatness and majesty of the Lord and the manifestation of His attributes. This fear is a spiritual delight and doesn't conflict with the verse "Know that the friends of Allāh have no fear, nor are they sad." What's more, this type of fear is one of the perfections that the perfected individuals obtain. This is why we address the Twelfth Imām عليه السلام as so: "Peace be upon you O Pure One who fears the greatness of Allāh Almighty."

Detailed Answer

There are two kinds of fear: good and bad. The bad fear does not pertain to the saints and the friends of Allāh ﷻ. This is the fear of people, the enemy, etc. In short it is the fear of creatures.

It has been related from Abu Dharr that he said, "The Noble Prophet advised me saying 'In the path of Allāh, do not fear any one who mocks you or discourages you."[1] Also, it has been related from Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq ﷺ that he said, "The believers fear no one but Allāh."[2] As the Qur'ān has said, 'This is the Devil that scares his friends by means of his rumours. If you have faith, fear Me, do not fear them."[3]

The good fear, which is praiseworthy, is the fear of the greatness of Allāh ﷻ. As Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ has said, "Fear is the clothing of those who know Allāh."[4] And as the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ has said, "Whoever amongst you knows Allāh more, fears Him more."[5]

It is because of this that the great Prophet has said, "My fear of Allāh is more than any of you."[6]

The fruit of this fear is the fact that man takes refuge with Allāh ﷻ as Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ has said, "If you fear creatures, you flee from them but if you fear Allāh you take refuge in Him."[7]

---

[1] *Biḥar al-Anwār*, vol.71 pg. 360:

وَ أَوْصَانِي أَنْ لاَ أَخَافَ فِي اللّٰهِ لَوْمَةَ لاَئِمٍ.

[2] *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, no. 5258:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ وَلِيُّ اللّٰهِ ... وَ لاَ يَخَافُ غَيْرَهُ.

[3] *Sūrat āli ʿImrān* (3), Verse 175:

﴿ إِنَّمَا ذٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَآءَهُ فَلاَ تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونِي إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

[4] *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, no. 5178:

اَلْخَوْفُ جِلْبَابُ الْعَارِفِينَ.

[5] *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, no. 5195:

مَنْ كَانَ بِاللّٰهِ أَعْرَفَ كَانَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ أَخْوَفَ.

[6] *Miʿrāj al-Saʿādah*

[7] *Muntakhab Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, no. 2000:

As the great *ʿArif*, Khwaja ʿAbdullāh Anṣārī, has said, "The way-station of humility gives birth to that of fear. Allāh says, 'He who fears the station of his Lord […Then surly the garden is the abode].'[8] Fear is the bastion of faith, the elixir of piety, and the weapon of the believer. Fear is of three types: the first is fleeting, the second is living, the third is overpowering. The fear that is fleeting comes into the heart and quickly leaves. That is a fear which if it does not exist, there is no faith. Whoever has more faith, has more fear. Another is the living fear. That fear prevents the slave from sins. It shortens the hopes of man. The third is the fear that overwhelms. It brings the reality of fear and opens the door to ethical behaviour. It is the fear of the artifice and ruse [of Allāh]. It prevents man from being negligent of his guilt and becoming complacent. The signs which show that a man has fallen for a ruse and stratagem are ten things: worship without sweetness accompanying it; continuing to sin without repentance; closing the door of prayer; knowledge without action; wisdom without intention and will; talking without limits and controls; closing the door of humility; associating with bad people; and above all of these are giving faith to a servant without discrimination and leaving a servant to fend for himself. This is the fear of those who repent.

The reality of fear is that the spiritual wayfarer, because he has given up hope of reaching his goal or because he expects a bad thing to happen in the future, looses his composure.

According to the elevation of the stature of a wayfarer, fear can be divided into three parts:

The fear of common people: This is the fear of the punishment of Allāh ﷻ. They fear the anger of their Lord. Allāh ﷻ says, "They fear the day when the hearts and eyes are perplexed and confused."[9]

إِذَا خِفْتَ الْخَالِقَ فَرَرْتَ إِلَيْهِ إِذَا خِفْتَ الْمَخْلُوقَ فَرَرْتَ مِنْهُ.

[8] *Sūrat al-Nāziʿāt* (79), Verse 40–41:

﴿ وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ. فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ ﴾

[9] *Sūrat al-Nūr* (24), Verse 37:

﴿ يَخَافُونَ يَوْماً تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ﴾

The fear of the mediocre: This is the fear of the Divine guile and artifice. Those who have hearts that tastes the presence of Allāh ﷻ and who continuously watch over their souls are punished with this type of fear. They always fear the fact that the grace of Allāh ﷻ could end for them and that the sweetness of Allāh's ﷻ presence could vanish. Those who have set foot in this way-station have themselves become subject to Divine Guile since they have left "the Giver" for His "gifts." Allāh ﷻ says, "And for he who fears His Lord, there are two Gardens."[10]

The fear of great souls who have living hearts: That means the acknowledgement of the greatness of Allāh ﷻ. While witnessing the Beauty of Allāh ﷻ, they also get a taste of His power. His beauty has showed itself to them with ultimate coyness and His honour has manifested itself with the show of self-sufficiency. Therefore the situation of the special friends of Allāh ﷻ differs from that of other people. The fear that occurs from witnessing the greatness of Allāh ﷻ, and the manifestations of the Names of Allāh ﷻ unto their hearts, increases every moment. They are drowned in such spiritual pleasures. This fear doesn't contradict the verse of the Qur'ān that states "Know that the friends of God have no fear nor are they sad."[11]

Because of this we say to Imām al-Zamān عليه السلام, "Peace be upon you O Pure One who fears the greatness of Allāh, Almighty."[12]

---

[10] *Sūrat al-Raḥmān* (55), Verse 46:

﴿ وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّتَانِ ﴾

[11] *Sūrat Yūnus* (10), Verse 62:

﴿ أَلاَ إِنَّ أَوْلِيَآءَ اللّٰهِ لاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴾

[12] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, Ziyārat of Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام on Fridays:

أَلسَّلاَمُ عَلَيْکَ أَيُّهَا الْمُهَذَّبُ الْخَائِفُ...

8

ALLAH – FEAR OR LOVE?

Question: Should the remembrance of Allāh ﷻ evoke fear or love?

Brief Answer

The co-existence of fear and hope, and in some cases love, in respect to Allāh ﷻ, should not be a source of confusion as this phenomenon permeates all relationships of love to varying degrees. However, because of its over-conspicuousness, we are blind to it. It must be noted that even as routine a matter as walking is the result of fear, hope, and love, for without hope we will not embark on walking, and without walking, we will not reach out destination, and without fear we will not exercise caution and thus will be hurt, and again will fail to reach our destination. This issue becomes all the more clear when using automobiles, electrical appliances, incendiaries, etc. for we take pleasure in using them, but if our usage is not contained and tempered by fear and caution, using them might end in our destruction.

Therefore, it is correct to say that one must fear Allāh ﷻ, love Him, and have hope in Him all at the same time. For loving Him and having hope in Him will bring about harmony on the one hand, and will on the other hand, compel us to take action, struggle, and push forth in our endeavour to acquire the elements that will secure His satisfaction and ultimately lead to being blessed by His effusions, graces, and bounties in this world and the hereafter. His fear will evoke humility and servility; it will strengthen the spirit of obedience and preclude us from committing sins that might otherwise incur Allāh's ﷻ wrath and chastisement.

This coexistence of fear and hope in this world—the world of cultivation and striving which calls for being vigilant, for guarding the fruit [of our

endeavours] so that we may benefit from them in the hereafter wherein there will be no need for caution as it is not the abode for cultivation and striving but that of harvesting—for ordinary people will lead to a serenity in the hereafter which will be free of any trace of fear and anguish. Fear alone will entail despondency, spiritlessness and depression. Hope and love alone will result in being deceived by our base spirits, in boldness toward Allāh ﷻ and sin. Thus neither of the results of fear or hope is desirable when taken individually and without being harnessed by the other.

Detailed Answer

Fear, hope, and love are *wijdānī* phenomena [i.e. they are experienced directly and intuitively and as such their comprehension does not rely on mental concepts or sensational experience] and thus are without need of being defined. The human being experiences fear when faced with certain issues, such as:

a. When his life, property, reputation, etc. are endangered;

b. When overwhelmed by the grandeur of something or somebody;

c. When he feels clueless regarding the outcome and repercussions of an action or his fate. Although, it must be noted that it is possible that in certain cases all these factors be present.

Likewise, the feeling of love and affection is evoked in response to certain factors, such as:

a. Finding certain attractive and beautiful aspects in the beloved such that one's attraction to the beloved is the entailment of one's fondness of the beauties that the beloved manifests. Traditional poets detest this love as being "in pursuit of the veneer" and thus he who nurtures this love is condemned to disrepute. However, this is not a universal truth. If the beauties found in the beloved are passing, ephemeral, and superficial, the poet is correct. But, if the beauties and perfections that the beloved possesses are of the nature of moral values or if those beauties and perfections are existential and real ones, the resulting love would not be

merely "pursuit of the veneer" and disreputable; rather its upshot would be harmony.

b. The feeling of dependence on and need of the object of affection such that one intends to exploit that object of affection in pursuing one's aspirations. In this type of relationship, one is attracted to the object of affection for one's own sake and not for the object's sake.

c. The love that swells in one's heart as the result of feeling indebted to one's patron. In this relationship, the lover is attracted to the beloved as the result of the bounties and benevolence he has received from the beloved and as such is beholden to the beloved.

d. The beloved seeks the love of the lover and strives to captivate him in order to minister to the lover and to succour him. It is possible that more than one of the above categories be involved in one case of love.

If we examine the matter closely, we will notice that in all our actions and reactions fear, love, and hope are combined to various degrees. Although in some cases one of these factors might be the dominant and there is not always an equal balance, their coexistence is inevitable. However, this is one of the issues that is obscure to us due to its conspicuousness. Hope and love impel us to action both in our daily activities and in the risky tasks we undertake. Fear on the other hand restrains us so as to exercise caution, to assess the repercussions of our actions and to prepare the adequate preliminaries. Had we been only equipped with love, we would be reckless, which would have entailed our early destruction. And had fear been unrivalled, we would never undertake any action even such mundane things as drinking and eating, for there is always the risk of a drop of water or a bite of food going down the wrong pipe, causing suffocation.

Therefore, there should be no confusion as to the coexistence of fear, hope, and love regarding Allāh ﷻ. And if there is, it is only another sign of our obliviousness to self-knowledge and our psychic states.

To explain this further: The existence of fear, hope, and love with regard to Allāh ﷻ in different people is proportionate to their knowledge of Allāh ﷻ and His Attributes of Beauty and of Majesty, their knowledge of

the true religion, their past conduct, and their assurance or lack of assurance regarding their future.

Those who are captivated by the magnificence and grandeur of the Truth or have in the past sinned and have dishonoured the Divine presence—in their case, fear overshadows love and hope. But on the other side of the spectrum are those who are entranced by Divine Beauty and Mercy. They have experienced the Divine graces and favours and have in the past been cautious of their conduct and have honoured the Divine presence and in instances where they did slip and commit sin, found the door back to Allāh's ﷻ favour and forgiveness, seized it, and thus made a genuine repentance. In their case, love and hope overpower fear.

But finally there are those who are midway between the two previously mentioned positions. That is, they are not sure of their prior deeds being accepted and are thus afraid of their future and the possibility of not being delivered from Divine punishment and chastisement but at the same time hold hope in Allāh's ﷻ forgiveness and generosity. In other words, their fear on the one hand and their hope and love on the other strike a balance [and so neither side weighs heavier].

The important point is that in most cases, fear and love arise from one's innate self-interest and instinct of self-preservation. That is, most believers love Allāh ﷻ and have hope in Him due to their fear of Divine chastisement in the hereafter and the possibility of being deprived of Divine effusions, bounties, heavenly joys—the beautiful houris and the marvellous castles. But those who are enthralled by the beauty and perfection of Allāh ﷻ or are in awe of His magnificence, invincibility, and grandeur, or are affected by both, account only for a small number of the believers. Thus, with the exception of the prophets and the Imāms ﷺ, those who have been able to achieve the latter stage have been very few.

Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ defines these three groups in his legacy of wisdom as follows: "One group worships Allāh in hope of boons and benevolence - such is the worship of businessmen; another group worships him out of fear - such is the worship of slaves; and yet another

group worships Allāh out of gratitude - such is the worship of those who are free of themselves and of self-worship."[1]

It is for this reason that some prominent scholars state that one of the fundamentals of Islāmic pedagogy is love. The Noble Qur'ān, the great source of Islāmic morals, introduces love as the fulcrum of moral virtues. Imām Ja'far b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام says, "Allāh the Immaculate disciplined and trained his Prophet through love."[2]

The topics of warning *(takhwīf)* and encouragement *(tashwīq)* permeate the Qur'ān and the narrations of the Ahlul Bayt عليهم السلام. However, these two principles are the final stage for the weak believers, but as for the intermediate believers, they constitute the means and the preliminary stage. The believer starts the journey, being spurred forth by warning and encouragement but gradually the compelling force transforms to love.

Hence one need not be confused regarding the coexistence of fear and love in relation to Allāh ﷻ. This coexistence of fear and hope is necessary for the spiritual training, elevation and development of the human being. For fear prevents us from sinning, from bringing destruction to ourselves, and from incurring Divine wrath and chastisement, which in turn leads to greater humility and firmer obedience to Allāh ﷻ. Love, on the other hand, compels one to undertake the obligatory rituals and the supererogatory prayers with enthusiasm and to hasten in achieving the means to Divine grace, mercy, and bounties.

In short, the fruit of the marriage of fear and hope in the human being are hastening to do good, to implant in oneself the moral virtues, and to avoid evil and sin, which constitute the ultimate goal of human creation

---

[1] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, short saying #237:
قَالَ عليه السلام: إِنَّ قَوْماً عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ رَغْبَةً فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ التُّجَّارِ، وَإِنَّ قَوْماً عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ رَهْبَةً فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيدِ، وَإِنَّ قَوْماً عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ شُكْراً فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْأَحْرَارِ

[2] *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 17 pg. 3:
أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ النَّحْوِي قَالَ: دَخَلْتُ عَلىٰ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ عليه السلام فَسَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ أَدَّبَ نَبِيَّهُ عَلىٰ مَحَبَّتِهِ.

intended by Allāh ﷻ; that is, to paint ourselves with the colour of the Divine, attaining the station of Divine viceroyalty, reclining in the bounties of the hereafter, and to rid ourselves of all anxiety and anguish. And this has been expressed time and again in the Qur'ān.[3]

Fear alone [uncoupled with hope and love] will entail gloominess, depression, hopelessness, neglect of repentance, and sinking into the whirlpool of sin, being overwhelmed with the misfortunes of this world and the hereafter, etc.

Love alone leads to impudence and shamelessness in committing sins with the false hope of repentance in the latter years of life, and unwarranted expectance of Divine grace and mercy, while one should not expect to benefit from Divine grace and mercy when one is neglectful of attaining those means which secure His grace and mercy.

It is in allusion to this point that Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī ﷺ cries in his ʿArafah Supplication saying, "May the eye of he who does not behold You watching over him be blind. And he to whom You have not apportioned some love will lose his asset of existence."[4]

It is in the hereafter that we will reap the fruit of fear and love. There will be the abode of chastisement for those who did not respect this blessing or who lost hope in redemption, drowning in the whirlpool of sin, or whom were deceived and thus failed to prepare provisions for their eternal life. There will be the abode of blessing and peace, free of all forms of anxiety and fear for those who succeeded in keeping the balance of fear and hope, those who refrained from sin and prepared sufficient provisions of good deeds for their eternal life.

---

[3] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 62:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَىٰ وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴾

[4] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, Imām Ḥusayn's ﷺ supplication on the day of ʿArafah:

عَمِيَتْ عَيْنٌ لاَ تَرَاكَ عَلَيْهَا رَقِيْبًا، وَخَسِرَتْ صَفْقَةُ عَبْدٍ لَمْ تَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ حُبِّكَ نَصِيباً...

For further reading on this topic refer to books of ethics, the chapters on fear and hope, love, and friendship. The following are a few suggestions:

1. Ayatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *The Levels of Ethics in the Qur'ān*
2. Imām Khomeini, *An Exposition of Forty Ḥadīth*
3. Ayatullāh Muḥammad Taqī Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, *Ethics in the Qur'ān*

9

ASKING ONE'S NEEDS FROM OTHER THAN ALLAH

Question: Is it not polytheistic to ask for one's needs from anyone other than Allāh ﷻ such as the Prophet ﷺ or the infallible Imāms ﷺ since it is Allāh ﷻ who is the Fulfiller of Needs?

Brief Answer

If one reveres, refers or takes recourse to, or seeks one's needs from these personages with the intention that are separate from Allāh ﷻ and independent of Him in fulfilling our needs, such an intention and notion is polytheistic and contrary to *tawḥīd afʿālī* (the Unity of actions—the independence of Allāh ﷻ from all else, and the dependence of all other beings on Him in their actions) and *tawḥīd rubūbī* (the Unity of Lordship—His being the sole Planner and sovereign Lord, with all others, whether angels, prophets, or the natural worlds, being Divine workers). Such an intention constitutes polytheism in one's understanding of Divine actions or Lordship.

But if this same respect, reference, and recourse are with the intention of:

a. Obedience to a Divine command;

b. Repaying the debt we owe them by virtue of their being the conduit of Divine grace in the creational and legal realms;

c. Follow their example or benefit from their special attention, without viewing them as independent of Allāh ﷻ;

then there is no contradiction with Unity of actions or Lordship or with the fact that Allāh ﷻ is the sole (independent) Fulfiller of needs, since the actions, planning, and fulfilment of people's desires through these personages are subordinate to Allāh's ﷻ action, Lordship, and His being

the Fulfiller of needs. They are not independent of Him for it to be considered polytheism.

Thus, the criterion of polytheism in seeking one's needs from someone other than Allāh ﷻ is the intention of the individual. If he maintains the Divinity or Lordship of whoever he takes recourse to, or views them as being free of need of Allāh ﷻ, such recourse is considered polytheism because of that belief. But if it is in order to obey Allāh ﷻ and benefit from the honour and esteem those esteemed people enjoy before Him, so that they implore Allāh ﷻ for that person's needs or fulfil them with Allāh's ﷻ permission, such an action is not only not polytheistic, but the person taking recourse is also worthy of a reward for having acted in accordance with a Divine command.

Detailed Answer

The human being's existence has two aspects, meaning that he is a combination of a celestial soul and a material body. His entire being consists of poverty and need [towards Allāh ﷻ]. Since he has two aspects, he must fulfil the needs of both aspects in a balanced manner free of the two extremes of excess or negligence in order to remain sound and preserve his existence, and in order to follow the path of advancement and attain the peak of true salvation (the station of Divine regency).

The Creator of the Universe, who in His infinite Wisdom had a specific purpose in the creation of humanity and is aware of the needs of all its existential dimensions, prepared the groundwork for the fulfilment of humanity's various needs either before their creation or simultaneous to it. Divine Will dictates that the human being ensures his physical and spiritual soundness and salvation naturally and through free will; otherwise, He could have created mankind in a perfect bodily form, so that he would have no need of development to perfection, just as the creation of the sky and the Earth is in that way. And He could likewise have created him in a perfect spiritual form, so that he would have no deficiencies in terms of worship, obedience, and entering the sacred realm, just as He created the angels. But the distinction of humanity over

all other beings lies in becoming superior to angels while possessing the physical and spiritual needs.

To attain one's needs, the human being, possessed of free will, must make the best use of the abundant array of Divine blessings in the heavens and the Earth in order to be sound and remain alive. In order to attain one's spiritual needs, one must make use of the Divine laws in order to connect one's celestial soul with the *malakūt* (celestial realm).

There is no denying the role of creational and material factors in fulfilling the physical needs of the human being or in the fact that he makes constant use of these factors. Since humanity is familiar with these factors from the moment of birth, or rather ever since humanity was created, the objection does not arise in the mind of most believers that benefiting from these means and effects in fulfilling one's physical needs may be polytheism or improper conduct in Allāh's ﷻ dominion.

For the fulfilment of humanity's spiritual needs, Allāh ﷻ, the Wise, has placed another form of sustenance at people's disposal in the form of laws and religion, with sound nourishment in terms of belief, worship, morals, and training, conveyed by the prophets ﷺ. This is why they are called the "vessel of legislative grace." This is while the divine prophets, too, are required to observe those limits and duties and to utilize them to meet their spiritual needs and become linked to the spiritual and celestial realm, which is beyond their senses and perception, and for at least some moments of every day they must connect to the sacred realm (through the daily acts of worship).

There are some people who, in availing themselves of this Divine legislative blessing, have excelled others and have linked themselves to that realm both quicker and more strongly than them, so that it is as if they have detached themselves from the natural world and have themselves become celestial. Even amongst these people there are some who have surpassed the rest and attained the station of Divine regent *(khalīfah)*, becoming the *"'ummāl Allāh"* (workers of Allāh). And in this way, they also become vessels of creational grace; that is, they become intermediaries between that realm and people who have fallen behind the caravan. Thus, these individuals who have fallen behind have no choice

but to make use of these intermediaries to benefit from the spiritual realm and meet their needs.

This is where the misconception arises that taking recourse to or seeking one's needs from these personages contradicts Unity of action or Unity of Lordship.

But just as utilizing material resources and fulfilling physical needs is not polytheism, since Allāh ﷻ Himself created these blessings, subjected them to mankind[1] and gave him permission (in the manner of his creation) to use them in the correct way (which is explained by religious law)—and anyone who is a monotheist knows that they are His gifts, created by Him, and dependent on Him and does not consider them independent or necessary existents—in the same way, taking recourse to, respecting, and seeking one's needs from those personages, too, presents no contradiction to the Unity of Action or Unity of Lordship and to the fact that only Allāh ﷻ is the (independent) Fulfiller of needs, since in this recourse or attention to these personages, they are not viewed as being parallel to or independent of Allāh ﷻ.

Rather, those possessed with awareness view their efficacy and planning as being an extension of Allāh's ﷻ planning and action, and consider their existence—like that of all other beings—to be nothing but their very needfulness of the Divine Essence, since without Divine providence and grace they have no being of their own, let alone for them to be able to perform actions or fulfil needs. Thus, the belief in their efficacy and their fulfilment of needs, since it is in extension of Allāh's ﷻ action and being the Fulfiller of needs, does not entail polytheism.

As for why Allāh ﷻ referred us to these noble people and why we are in need of them to benefit from the spiritual and celestial realm, this is for several reasons:

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Jāthiyah* (45), Verses 12-13:
﴿ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلْكُ فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ. وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي السَّمٰوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِنْهُ إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

1. These individuals are the "vessels of Divine grace" to people and a channel or conduit for the current of Divine mercy towards all beings of the universe, to the extent that if not for these Noble beings, the creation of the heavens and Earth and what is between them would not have been worthy of note. This is why Allāh ﷻ says in the well-known *ḥadith qudsī* [ḥadith in which both the words and the meaning belong to Allāh ﷻ, as opposed to the prophet explaining the meaning in his own words]: "If not for you (the Prophet ﷺ), I would not have created the universe, and if not for ʿAlī I would not have created you, and if not for Fāṭimah I would not have created the two of you [since the existence of the three of you, who complement each other, is the reason for creation]."[2]

Thus, to attain the source of the grace of being, one must make use of this channel so as not to be deprived of Divine providence. This is why we say in *Duʿā al-Nudbah*: "Where is that Godly threshold through which they enter?"

2. Since these intimate personages in Allāh's ﷻ court have adorned themselves with Divine attributes, attention to them is like attention to Allāh ﷻ, since intimacy with them—even if in times of need—makes one attentive to Allāh ﷻ and reminds one of the Divine signs. This is why we recite in one of the supplications, "Where is that Godly countenance to which the friends of Allāh turn?"

3. Since they are intimate in Allāh's ﷻ court and vessels of grace, their prayers do not go unanswered and their intercession is accepted by Allāh ﷻ. Thus, in the continuation of our supplication *(an-Nudbah)* we say, "Where is that distressed one whose prayers are always answered?" Also, since they are noble, they do not refuse the request of any supplicant. If it is in his best interest, they do not send him back empty-handed, and this has been experienced many times by their contemporaries and visitors to their shrines. This is why they are addressed with the words, "Your habit

[2] *Majmaʿ al-Nūrayn*, pg. 14:
لَوْلاَکَ لَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْأَفْلاَکَ، وَ لَوْ لاَ عَلِيٌّ لَمَا خَلَقْتُکَ، وَ لَوْ لاَ فَاطِمَةُ لَمَا خَلَقْتُکُمَا.

is kindness and your disposition is nobility. Your affair is truth, sincerity, and compassion."[3]

4. A direct link with the unseen realm is not possible for people who have not attained the level of perfection, and thus they must make use of these means and paths. This is why Allāh ﷻ has commanded, "O you who believe. Fear Allāh and seek a means (of approach) to Him."[4] There are also many traditions in which the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ are called the "means" and Divine "strong faith" that a believer must recognize and take hold of.[5] Again, we recite in *Duʿā an-Nudbah*, "Where is the one who is a means of connection between the earth and heavens?"

5. To know, refer, and take recourse to them produces familiarity with them and the fulfilment of needs and thus brings about love and intimacy. This love and intimacy with these noble personages becomes a source of instruction and guidance for the individual, although they themselves are free of need of people and their referral, since they have attained their goal through Divine attention.

6. The referral of people to the friends *(awlīyā')* of Allāh ﷻ is a reward that they receive in return for their efforts, as Allāh ﷻ says to the Prophet ﷺ: "And remain awake for a portion of the night, (involved in) supplication; perhaps you will attain a praiseworthy station (that of intercession in this world and the next)."[6]

7. People's referring and taking recourse to these noble personages on the one hand encourages others to follow their path, and on the other hand it does away with the arrogance and pride of worshippers, ascetics, "wayfarers," and other claimants to a "journey to Allāh" and to self-

---

[3] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān - Ziyārat Jāmiʿah:*

عَادَتُكُمُ الْإِحْسَانُ وَ سَجِيَّتُكُمُ الْكَرَمُ وَ شَأْنُكُمُ الْحَقُّ وَ الصِّدْقُ وَ الرِّفْقُ...

[4] *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5), Verse 35:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴾

[5] Some of these traditions can be found in *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 5 pg. 333.

[6] *Sūrat al-Isrā'* (17), Verse 79:

﴿ وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَكَ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا ﴾

purification, and it prevents ostentatious and pretentious impostors from flourishing.

8. The station of the perfect human being is many degrees higher than that of the angels, since:

1. In this world and the next, the angels are at the service of Allāh's ﷻ righteous servants;

2. The efficacy of the angels is predetermined and is therefore not considered a distinction for them;

3. On the night of the Ascension *(miʿrāj)*, the Prophet ﷺ advanced farther than the angel Jibrā'īl عليه السلام;

When the angels are entrusted with executing various affairs[7] (in extension of Allāh's ﷻ efficacy), why should not these personages, who have attained the greatest station of purity and nearness to Allāh ﷻ, be the same?

The conduct of great personalities and wise people, when they see their subordinates are able to perform certain tasks, is to entrust those tasks to them so they can supervise those subordinates in responding to those who refer to them. In this way, those individuals can receive an exclusive training and be given a recompense for their efforts, and in addition others can get to know them and their station better and will find it easier to become familiar and intimate with them.

Also, it is the conduct of rational people when they want to contact some prominent personality to do so through intermediaries and people close to him if they themselves are not close to him, making use of the respect and honour in which those people are held to attain their needs. Of course, they do this with the full realization that this need to use intermediaries is because of their own inadequacy; the intermediaries are in no way equal or parallel to that prominent person, and they cannot do anything without his consent.

---

[7] *Sūrat al-Nāziʿāt* (79), Verse 5:

﴿ فَالْمُدَبِّرَاتِ أَمْرًا ﴾

In short, to become connected to the unseen world, obey Divine commands, train and elevate the self, and fulfil our needs in this world and the next—both spiritual and physical—we are in need of recognizing, referring to, imploring, and loving the friends *(awlīyā')* of Allāh ﷻ. Taking recourse to them is to take recourse to (Divinely sanctioned) means, "the firm rope of Allāh" and the intermediaries in Allāh's ﷻ court — intermediaries who are dependent on Allāh ﷻ for their existence and all their existential attributes, and whose efficacy and fulfilment of people's needs is in extension of that of Allāh ﷻ.

Taking recourse in this manner is not polytheism, since the independent Fulfiller of needs is none but Allāh ﷻ alone.

10

THE LIGHT OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH

Question: What is the meaning of Allāh ﷻ being the light of the heavens and of the earth? Is He light in the physical sense? If not, what is intended?

Brief Answer

Without doubt, the "light" mentioned in the verse of Light (Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth...) is not a physical and sensible light. For, sensible light pertains to the accidental characteristics and qualities of material existents. Hence, the arguments that negate Allāh's ﷻ corporeality preclude perceiving Allāh ﷻ as sensible and material light. Moreover, there are numerous Qur'ānic verses that deny the possibility of a visual perception of Allāh ﷻ, disaffirming any similarity between Him and His creatures.

Therefore, when Allāh ﷻ is referred to as "the light of the heavens and the earth" certainly sensible light is not meant.

Light by definition is that which is essentially manifest and makes other things manifest and visible as well; it is clear and it makes [other things] clear; it is apparent and it makes [other things] apparent. This definition applies both to sensory light—such as the light of the sun, the stars and of a lamp—and to super-sensory light—such as knowledge and faith. Of course, what comes to mind on hearing the word *light* initially is sensory light. But by analyzing the definition of light (i.e. what is essentially manifest and makes other things manifest), one finds it permissible to apply the word to spiritual matters, for they illuminate the spirit, the inward, and such application is also encountered in the Qur'ān where it

refers to faith as a light bestowed on the believer. In addition, gnostics employ the word to signify "love."

As the Divine Essence is bright and manifest and is also the cause that brightens and makes other things manifest—for, He is the creator and existence-granter — employing the word *light* to denote Allāh ﷻ is correct. Rather, as the cause for a thing's appearance to others is its existence, it must be concluded that the most fundamental instance of light is existence itself. Hence, Allāh ﷻ, is the most perfect instance of light. He is the sole real essentially manifest being who makes other things manifest. Thus, it must be proclaimed that He is the light who illuminates the heavens and the earth.

Furthermore, it must be noted that "the heavens and the earth" is an allusion to the entirety of the world of being, to all the celestial and terrestrial creatures, to the hidden and apparent worlds, not merely the sky above us or the Earth we inhabit. Hence, the meaning of, "Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth," is that Allāh ﷻ is the light of the whole universe.

The reason why the word *light* is employed in lieu of *creator* is to point to the fact that just as light is manifest and as such does not need anything else to shed light on it, Allāh ﷻ is also manifest and obvious and there is no need for a mediating agent to illuminate Allāh ﷻ. Hence, gnostics following the teachings of the prophets and Imāms ﷺ, have expressed that all creatures must be understood in the light of Allāh ﷻ; we should not try to identify Allāh ﷻ through His creatures and effects [taken on their own level]. For the friends of Allāh ﷻ, everything is manifest in the light of Allāh ﷻ, and other than His light, nothing is to be seen. If not for the Divine light, everything would sink into the darkness of non-existence.

Therefore, the main point that is understood from this verse is that Allāh ﷻ is known to all His creatures, for the appearance of all things derives from His manifestness and illumination. Allāh ﷻ is not absent so as to be revealed through His creatures. He is manifest in all His Essence, and so His obscurity in the eyes of the intellectually impaired is due to the

intensity of His light; "O You Who are obscured by the intensity of Your light, You Who are manifest but hidden in Your manifestness."

Another point that is derived from this verse is the fact that Allāh ﷻ [in Islām] is referred to as "Light" not "the Greatest Light." The Manichaean belief that Allāh ﷻ is the "Greatest Light" (i.e. a physical light similar to other lights but greater and more elevated) is not a correct belief. According to the Qurʾān, Allāh ﷻ is "pure light" and is super-sensory. He is the sole light of the world of existence, and all else is "darkness." In the words of some supplications, He is "the Light of Lights." That is, He is the real light, and if there is any light at all, it is thanks to His existence and light.

Regarding the exposition, the reality underlying this verse, and its application there are numerous views and narrations that can be sought by referring to books of exegesis and the corpus of narrations.

Detailed Answer

Without doubt, by referring to Allāh ﷻ as light, "Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth,"[1] the Qurʾān does not intend to identify Him as a physical light. The sensible light is a creature among the creatures of Allāh ﷻ, as is expressly stated in the first verse of Sūrat al-Anʿām, "All praise belongs to Allāh who created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness and the light."[2]

Muslim philosophers, theologians, and Qurʾānic exegetes have all provided strong proofs in negating a corporeal aspect for Allāh ﷻ.[3] Hence, using the word *light* in reference to Allāh ﷻ does not denote sensory light, which is either a physical substance or a characteristic of matter.

---

[1] *Sūrat Nūr* (24), Verse 35:

﴿ اَللّٰهُ نُورُ السَّمٰوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ ﴾

[2] *Sūrat al-Anʿām* (6), Verse 1:

﴿ وَ جَعَلَ الظُّلُمٰتِ وَ النُّورَ ﴾

[3] These proofs can be found in *Kashf al-Mūrad fi Sharh Tajrīd al-Iʿtiqād* pg. 287 and *Nihāyat al-Ḥikmah,* pg. 275.

Among the exegete-theologians, Fakhr Rāzī has probably treated this topic more thoroughly than any other. In his exposition of the Verse of Light, he has formulated six rational arguments why Allāh ﷻ cannot have a body and so consequently the *light* mentioned in the verse cannot be signifying sensible and material light.[4]

More importantly, there are numerous verses in the Qur'ān that negate the coming-into-being *(ḥudūth)* and corporeality of Allāh ﷻ.

Moreover, the verse, "There is nothing like Him," that recurs several times in the Qur'ān denies the possibility of any likeness and resemblance of Allāh ﷻ to other existents. Hence, Allāh's ﷻ being light cannot be of the nature of the sensible light, for the latter has many instances [while Allāh ﷻ in no way resembles physical phenomena].

In analyzing the meaning of the word *light*, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains: "The word *light* carries a popular meaning, and that is, the thing that lightens dark bodies so that we can see them, and so *light* is the thing by which all things become apparent and visible. Of course, light itself is essentially manifest and visible; there is nothing else that lightens it. Hence, light can be defined as that which is essentially manifest and makes other things manifest as well. This is the first meaning to which the word *light* was initially designated. Subsequently, the word was employed, by way of allegory or secondary designation *(waz' thānawī)*, to indicate whatever made sensible things visible. In a later stage, the word was also applied to super sensible realities. It is in this sense that *intellect* is defined as a light which reveals the intelligibles. All these various usages have stemmed from analyzing the initial meaning of *light:* "that which is essentially manifest and makes other things manifest as well."[5]

Thus, what is initially understood by *light* is the sensible light that emanates from illuminant objects—such as, the sun, the stars, and man-made lamps—without which the world would be shrouded in darkness. Of course, the essence and definition of light from the standpoint of the physicists is a whole different issue. They might consider the reality of

[4] *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 22, pg. 224
[5] *al-Mizān*, vol. 15, pg. 122

light as yet unravelled and they might have disagreements regarding it, but what is for certain is that in the material world there does exist something referred to as light that is radiated from illuminate objects, technically referred to as "sources of light." The application of the word *light*, however, is not limited to sensible light. It can be applied to whatever is "manifest and makes manifest" or, put differently, to whatever is "apparent and makes apparent." For instance, we often refer to knowledge as light, for it is in its essence clear and also sheds light on other realities.[6]

Regarding the believer, the Qur'ān states, "He who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people…"[7] So in the Qur'ānic terminology, faith is "light." And as faith illuminates the heart of the believer, shows him the destination, and guides him to felicity, this application of light is correct. This is similar to the gnostics' reference to love as "light." Rumi says:

Love is victorious and I, conquered;

As the moon, I am illuminated with the light of Love.[8]

Using the word *light* in reference to Allāh ﷻ is correct, for such usage has occurred in the Qur'ān and the narrations.[9] But we must be careful to note in saying "Allāh is light" that we do not intend material and sensible light; rather, that the Divine Essence is manifest and manifestant[10]. The manifestness and clearness of everything is due to the emanation of His

---

[6] *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Nūr*, by Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, pg. 101

[7] *Sūrat al-Anʿam* (6), Verse 122:

﴿أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيْتاً فَأَحْـيَيْنٰهُ وَ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُوراً يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ... ﴾

[8] *Mathnawi*, Sixth Notebook

[9] Nūr (Light) is one of Allāh's ﷻ names. Other than the Noble Qur'ān, Allāh ﷻ has been addressed by this name in a number of traditions. Some examples are *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* ch. 29, pg. 194, no. 8 and pg. 195, no. 9 and pg. 219, no. 11; *al-Khiṣāl*. In a number of supplications such as Duʿā' al-Kumail and Duʿā' Jawshan Kabīr this name of Allāh ﷻ has been mentioned. It is considered one of Allāh's ﷻ 99 names. Gnostics have prolonged discussions about these names which we cannot discuss here.

[10] I did not find this word in the dictionary in the sense intended here. However, I think it is appropriate to use it since the suffix *–ant* denotes *fā'ilīyyah*. (Tr.)

Essence. However, nothing illuminates Him. Thus, we can correctly say, Allāh is light.

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾi writes: "Since it is the existence of everything that is the cause of its manifestness to others, therefore the highest form of light is existence itself. Moreover, since the existence of contingent beings depends on the bestowal of existence by the Truth, the Supreme, He is the most complete instance of light. It is He Who is essentially manifest and also makes manifest all-other-than-him. All other existents become manifest and existent by virtue of Him. And this is the meaning of the verse, 'Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth.'"[11]

From the aforesaid explanations the meaning of the Verse of Light becomes clear that: Allāh ﷻ is the creator and the illuminator of the heavens and the earth. By the expression "the heavens and the earth" what is intended is the entirety of the world of existence; all the celestial and the terrestrial existents; the apparent and the hidden worlds.[12] "The heavens and the earth" does not merely signify the sky above and the Earth that we inhabit. Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that Allāh ﷻ is the light of the entire universe. The reason why the verse has employed this word in lieu of *creator* is to point to the fact that just as light is itself visible and does not need anything else to make it visible, rather it is light itself that illuminates all other things, Allāh ﷻ, likewise has no creator and there is no other agent that could shed light on Him. He is a manifest, clear, and self-evident existent. There is no need for formulating reasoning to prove His existence. He is the creator of all the other existents of the world of being. In the words of Hājī Sabzwārī, "O You Who are obscured by the intensity of Your light."[13]

Thus, as propounded by the gnostics in following the mystical teachings of the prophets and the Imāms ﷺ, Allāh ﷻ is manifest to the highest degree; He is absolutely clear, and hence there is no need for the mediation of His creatures to reveal Him. In other words, in order to reason for the existence of Allāh ﷻ, one should utilize the argument

[11] *al-Mīzān*, vol. 15, pg. 122
[12] *Tafsir Sūrat Nūr*, by Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, pg. 98
[13] *Manzumah*, Chapter Ḥikmah

from cause rather than the argument from effect. We must first comprehend Allāh ﷻ and then through Him His creatures, not conversely.

It is to this truth that the following line from the ʿArafah Supplication (related from Imām al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī عليه السلام) refers: "O Allāh! Being distracted by [Your] effects and creatures prevents me from seeing You."

In Duʿā Kumayl, the Commander of the Faithful, Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام expresses, "By the light of Your face from which all things are alight." If not for the light of the Divine Visage and Essence, everything would be dark. That is, nothing will exist, and all things would recede back into the darkness of non-existence.

Without the light of the Divine Essence the shadow of non-existence would envelope all things; the resulting darkness would not be like that of the night [rather it would be the darkness of non-existence].

Hence, it must be said that Allāh ﷻ, is absolute light. In comparison to Him, there is no other light. All other lights in comparison to Him are darkness. For, the only existent Who is by His essence manifest and manifesting is Allāh ﷻ. All other things that are manifest and that illuminate other creatures are by their essences dark. It is Allāh ﷻ Who has bestowed on them that feature.

It is in this light that ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī has made the following inference from that verse: "Hence, it can be inferred that Allāh ﷻ, is not obscure for any existent, for the disclosure of all things, to themselves and to other things, derives from Allāh's ﷻ illuminating. If Allāh ﷻ had not illuminated or brought into existence anything, nothing would have existed. Thus prior to all other things, Allāh ﷻ is the essential manifest being … Hence it can be concluded that *light* in the verse, 'Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth,' refers to that all-embracing Divine light which is the source of the universe, the light to which all things owe their manifestness, the light which is identical with the existence of everything. This is that all-embracing Divine mercy."[14]

[14] *al-Mīzān*, vol. 15, pg. 123

Thus, according to the Qur'ān, Allāh ﷻ, the Supreme, is not an absent or essentially obscure God that is revealed by His creatures. Such conception is defected and elementary. Real knowledge is to comprehend the world through Allāh ﷻ, not conversely. And this verse asserts that Allāh ﷻ is at the height of conspicuousness, clarity, and obviousness.

Another point that can be inferred from this verse is that we refer to Allāh as *light*, not as "the greatest light", which implies that there are other lights as well, some more bright and others less bright, and that Allāh ﷻis the greatest. According to the Qur'ān, there is only one light and that is Allāh, and everything else is dark and non-existent. It is true, however, that in comparing the creatures together, some are light and some are not—for instance, knowledge, faith, intellect, etc., are light. But the latter have derived their light from Allāh ﷻ.

Thus, in comparison to Allāh ﷻ, there is no other light, or in other words, He is "the Light of Lights."[15] That is, He is the light of all lights rather than being the greatest light. Therefore, the belief that Allāh ﷻ is the greatest light, that He is of the sensory lights but the brightest and the most intense—reputedly attributed to the Manicheans—is false.

In the end, we find it suitable to relate Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā's عليه السلام reply to ʿAbbās ibn Hilāl who had asked the Imām regarding the meaning of the Verse of Light: "He is the guide for the inhabitants of the heaven and the inhabitants of the earth."[16]

[15] *In Mafatīḥ al-Jīnan* there is a supplication called "Nur" (light). In it we read: "يا نور النور" (O light of light)

[16] *al-Tawḥīd*, ch. 14, no. 1

11

DIVINE TESTS

Question: If Allāh ﷻ is omniscient, why does He need to test mankind?

Brief Answer

As implied by the question, because Allāh ﷻ is omniscient, the purpose of His tests is not to unveil something hitherto unknown. Rather, the Qurʾān and aḥādīth suggest that these tests serve two purposes. First, they comprise a Divine precedent *(sunnah ilāhiyyah*[1]*)* that is in turn based on another Divine precedent that can be termed "universal guidance." In particular, Allāh ﷻ wishes that mankind, by obeying the divine law *(sharīʿah)* and struggling through the various circumstances that he encounters in life, will blossom from potentiality to actuality, and will thereby attain the level of perfection that has been intended for him. One of the terms that is used for such tests in Islāmic literature is *fitnah* (in this sense this term denotes a "crucible"). *Fitnah* literally refers to the process of smelting by which gold is purified. In one *ḥadīth* it is said that people are tested the way gold is tested. The mettle of man is gold ore that is purified in the crucible of Divine tests and guidance. It should be kept in mind though, that in the course of such tests, just as good qualities reach their perfection in the believers, bad qualities also develop to the utmost in disbelievers.

[1] A Divine precedent is a Divine action that is not bound to any specific time, place or people. Rather it is a sort of law the Allāh ﷻ has issued for Himself in such a way that from the beginning of time into eternity, He always acts according to this law. For example, one of the Divine precedents can be stated like this: "If a people rejects Divine guidance and kills Allāh's ﷻ prophets and it becomes apparent that there is no hope that even one person from among them will submit himself to Allāh ﷻ, they must be destroyed."

The second purpose that these tests serve is to awaken man from his sleep of heedlessness. The Qur'ān explains that one of the purposes of tragedy and disaster is to test man and thereby jar him from his stupor of heedlessness. In a way, tragedy in man's life serves the same purpose as the ridges that are embossed on some modern motorways and highways that are meant to wake drivers during the monotony of highway driving so they do not fall asleep at the wheel.

There are, in reality, two types of Divine will at play here. One is called the existential will *(al-irādah al-takwīniyyah)* and the other is called the legislative will *(al-irādah al-tashrīʿiyyah)*. Allāh's ﷻ existential will is that through Divine tests, both believers and disbelievers be able to actualize their good and bad potentials. On the other hand, his legislative will is that only good potentials be actualized.

Detailed Answer

Divine tests are not designed to unveil something hitherto unknown, since Allāh ﷻ is omniscient and needs no such unveiling. Rather, they comprise a Divine precedent, that is based on a second Divine precedent called "universal guidance." By universal guidance, we mean Allāh's ﷻ guidance of all creation (whether they be conscious or not), as it relates to man.

To clarify, we must first describe the three types of Divine guidance:

1. One type of guidance is intended only for the most pious people and has been negated from other groups in the following verses of the Qur'ān: "Allāh does not guide the wrongdoing ones," and "Allāh does not guide the corrupt ones." The converse of this kind of guidance is misguidance.

2. Another type of guidance known as "legislative guidance" entails showing someone the path. This kind of guidance addresses both believers and disbelievers, but does not benefit inanimate beings. Examples of this kind of guidance are in the following verses: "We

showed him the path while he is either grateful or ungrateful[2]," and "As for (the people of) Thamūd, we guided them, but they preferred blindness to guidance."[3]

3. The third kind of guidance is universal both in terms of the beings who are guided and the resulting guidance and is also called existential guidance. This is the guidance referred to in the following verse: "Our Sustainer is He who gave everything its existence, and then guided it."[4] This verse implies that Allāh's ﷻ universal guidance includes all creation, whether conscious or inanimate. In another verse, the Qur'ān states, "who created and proportioned; who determined and guided."[5] Here, the verb "to determine" *(taqdīr)* entails the facilitation of the appropriate means of a given thing so that it is "guided" to fulfil the purpose for which it was created.

All of creation - whether conscious or inanimate - attains its intended purpose through this third type of existential guidance. However man, who is more than just a physical being living in this material world, requires more than the existential guidance afforded to all creation. He can only attain perfection by choosing his path according to his free will. For this reason, Allāh must on the one hand, provide a set of positive and negative commands entailed in the *sharī'ah* (divine law) so that man can choose to either obey or disobey. On the other hand, Allāh ﷻ must create "problems" at the individual and societal levels (some of which are caused by human choice and some of which are caused by natural means such as natural disasters) so that man can choose a course of action with respect to these problems. By choosing a course of action with respect to

---

[2] *Sūrat al-Insān* (76), Verse 3:

﴿ إِنَّا هَدَيْنٰهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِراً وَإِمَّا كَفُوراً ﴾

[3] *Sūrat al-Fuṣṣilat* (41), Verse 17:

﴿ وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمٰى عَلَى الْهُدٰى ﴾

[4] *Sūrat Ṭāhā* (20), Verse 50:

﴿ قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدٰى ﴾

[5] *Sūrat al-A'lā* (87), Verse 2-3:

﴿ ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوّٰى. وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدٰى ﴾

divine law and the aforementioned problems, man actualizes the potential that is hidden within himself, and either proves himself to be worthy of eternal felicity or chastisement. It is for this reason that both the divine law and human tragedy are referred to in Islāmic literature by the terms "trial," "tribulation," and "test."

To put it simply, Allāh ﷻ is like a scientist examining each individual human being. The parameters on which his experiments are based are the *sharīʿah* and human tragedy. Through these two variables, a person's station with respect to the level of perfection that was intended for him is determined.[6]

To recapitulate, Divine tests are based on the Divine precedent called universal guidance. Through these tests every person comes to know which abode he will enter: the abode of reward or the abode of chastisement. The Qurʾān describes the purpose of these tests in this way: "…so that Allāh may purify those who have faith and that He may eradicate the faithless."[7]

In the course of repeated tests, the superficial faith and deceitful good qualities of the faithless and the hypocrites are extirpated. Another meaning of the "eradication of the faithless" is mentioned in the verse that says, "the (final) outcome will be in favour of the fear of Allāh"[8] and in the verse that reads, "My righteous servants shall inherit the earth."[9]

---

[6] *Sūrat al-Kahf* (18), Verse 7:

﴿ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً ﴾

Also refer to: *Sūrat al-Insān* (76), Verse 2, *Sūrat al-Anbiyāʾ* (21), Verse 35, *Sūrat āl-i ʿImrān* (3), Verse 154, *Sūrat al-Fajr* (89), Verse 6, *Sūrat al-Taghābun* (64), Verse 15, *Sūrat Muḥammad* (47), Verse 4

[7] *Sūrat Āle ʿImrān* (3), Verse 141:

﴿ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ يَمْحَقَ الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴾

[8] *Sūrat Ṭāhā* (20), Verse 132:

﴿ وَ الْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوىٰ ﴾

[9] *Sūrat al-Anbiyāʾ* (21), Verse 105:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ ﴾

We can recap the positive effects of divine tests in the following two points:

1. They serve to actualize hidden potentials. Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ says: "It is in extreme circumstances that a man's true mettle shows itself."[10] It is narrated from Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā ﷺ that "People are tested as gold is tested, and they are purified as gold is purified."[11] The word *fitnah* refers to the process of smelting gold ore. Gold ore is melted so that its impurities float to the surface and are removed. Likewise the essence of man is like gold that Allāh ﷻ wishes to purify. Meanwhile, the presence of animal-like qualities such as anger and lust pose a major obstacle to his purification. It is for this reason that Divine tests are considered a means for the perfection of mankind.

In the military, soldiers are required to perform strenuous activities to build their strength. Likewise, Divine tests are meant to strengthen man's inner self. Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ says, "Although Allāh knows man better than he knows himself, (He tests him) in order to make manifest those actions by which he earns his reward or punishment."[12]

2. They also serve to awaken man from his sleep of heedlessness. Allāh ﷻ tests man both through tragedy and hardship and by showering him with an abundance of blessings such as power, health, and wealth. Often these blessing deceive a person so much that they threaten to lead to his downfall. Allāh ﷻ sends tragedy his way, in order to jar him from his

---

[10] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Short Saying 217:

فِي تَقَلُّبِ الْأَحْوَالِ عِلْمُ جَوَاهِرِ الرِّجَالِ.

[11] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1 pg. 370:

سَمِعْتُ أَبَا الْحَسَنِ عليه السلام يَقُولُ: ﴿ الم أَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لاَ يُفْتَنُونَ ﴾ ثُمَّ قَالَ لِي: مَا الْفِتْنَةُ؟ قَلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ الَّذِي عِنْدَنَا الْفِتْنَةُ فِي الدِّينِ، فَقَالَ: يُفْتَنُونَ كَمَا يُفْتَنُ الذَّهَبُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: يُخْلَصُونَ كَمَا يُخْلَصُ الذَّهَبُ.

[12] *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Short Saying 93:

وَ إِنْ كَانَ سُبْحَانَهُ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَ لٰكِنْ لِتَظْهَرَ الْأَفْعَالُ الَّتِي بِهَا يُسْتَحَقُّ الثَّوَابُ وَالْعِقَابُ.

stupor so that he can once again discern right from wrong, and so that he remembers that all existence and blessings issue from Allāh ﷻ, whom one should never forget and against whom one should never sin.

Many verses in the Qur'ān speak of this aspect of Divine tests[13]. These verses generally use the terms *tadhakkur* (to remind), *tadarru'* (to show humility), and *rujū'* (to return to the path). These concepts link together in the following way: to return to the path that leads to Allāh ﷻ one must first be reminded of Allāh ﷻ; he must then humble himself before Allāh ﷻ; only then can he truly return to Allāh ﷻ and better himself. Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ؑ refers to this Qur'ānic truth in the following way: "When Allāh's servants commit a sin, He tests them with hardship until they repent and cease committing sins and heed Allāh's admonishment."[14]

If what we have said so far is true, then one might wonder why Allāh's ﷻ prophets ؑ, Imāms ؑ, and saints are tested? The answer to this question is found in a narration of Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ؑ where he says: "The divine test is a form of discipline for the wrongdoer, a test for the believer, a means to increase one's station for the prophets, and a means of ennoblement for the saints of Allāh."[15]

---

[13] *Sūrat al-A'rāf* (7), Verse 94, *Sūrat al-Rūm* (30), Verse 41, *Sūrat al-Sajdah* (32), Verse 21, *Sūrat al-A'rāf* (7), Verses 30-168, *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), Verse 126

[14] *Nahj al- Balaghah*, Sermon 143:
إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْتَلِي عِبَادَهُ عِنْدَ الْأَعْمَالِ السَّيِّئَةِ بِنَقْصِ الثَّمَرَاتِ... لِيَتُوبَ تَائِبٌ وَيَقْلَعَ مُقْلِعٌ وَيَتَذَكَّرَ مُتَذَكِّرٌ.

[15] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 4, pg. 235, no. 54:
إِنَّ الْبَلاَءَ لِلظَّالِمِ أَدَبٌ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِ امْتِحَانٌ وَلِلاَنْبِيَاءِ دَرَجَةٌ وَلِلأَوْلِيَاءِ كَرَامَةٌ.

12

ALLAH'S WILL IN HUMAN GUIDANCE

Question: Considering the verse of the Qur'ān in Sūrah 32, verse 13 which reads, "Had We wished We would have given every soul its guidance," - can it not be concluded that Allāh ﷻ has not desired the guidance of all humanity? If Allāh ﷻ had desired the guidance of all humanity He would have willed such, but obviously He has not. Why?

Brief Answer

Allāh ﷻ has willed the guidance of all His creatures. For, after taking all the [relevant] Qur'ānic verses into consideration, the following points can be deduced:

1. Divine guidance is divided into existential (*takwīnī*) and legislative (*tashrī'ī*) guidance. Existential guidance is the all-encompassing guidance that embraces the entire creation. Allāh ﷻ has put all creatures in motion by ingraining in their nature their inclination for seeking perfection and reaching their ultimate goal. The legislative guidance, which is more specific, is exclusive to the bearers of intellect and thought and pertains to religious issues, such as rightful doctrines and the Divine *oughts* and *ought-nots*. The prophets and their infallible successors serve as the conduit for this latter guidance. It is this guidance that is an extra favour bestowed upon mankind, and hence they enjoy both types of guidance.

2. There are many verses in the Qur'ān which confirm the free will of the human being, such as, "Indeed We have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful." This ability to choose is a measure of existential guidance from Allāh ﷻ, for the human being cannot himself be the

source of his free will as it would entail the problem of circularity or infinite regress.

3. The entire creation is founded on a framework of causality, and the Divine norm (*sunnat Allāh*) requires that all affairs be guided through the causal matrix. In this vein, He has provided the means of guidance for all human beings, by which they can attain the ultimate goal of their existence. So although the human being has been blessed by existential guidance, at the same time he is a free being and can choose to take the path of Divine guidance—thereby preparing in himself the grounds for further guidance—or he could choose to take the opposite direction, which leads to disbelief and oppression. What the verse in question intends is that if Allāh ﷻ had wished, He could have created the human being without free will. But Allāh ﷻ chose to mould the human being as a volitional creature by the means of His existential and legislative guidance so that he would be responsible for his actions and distinguish truth from falsehood. It is in line with the same Divine norm that if the human being embarks on the path of oppression and disbelief, consequently he would be deprived of Divine guidance. But on the other hand, by choosing to follow the path of truth, the human being earns the blessing of further guidance.

Detailed Answer

Before answering the question, it is necessary to mention some preparatory points.

1. It would be helpful to reflect on the entire verse in question: "Had We wished We would have given every soul its guidance, but My word became due [against the defiant]: 'Surely I will fill hell with all the [guilty] jinn and humans.'"[1]

[1] *Sūrat al-Sajdah* (32), Verse 13:
﴿ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَآتَيْنَا كُـــلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدَاهَا وَلٰكِنْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ مِنِّي لَأَملأنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴾

2. The definition of *hidāyah*: It signifies enlightening and showing the way, out of kindness and goodwill.

3. The Qur'āan recognizes two general types of Divine guidance: existential (*takwīni*) and legislative (*tashrī'i*). The existential is that all-inclusive guidance that benefits the entire creation. Allāh ﷻ guides all creatures to their ultimate perfection and goal by means of that which He has imparted in their nature. In this regard the Qur'ān explains, "He said 'Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it"[2]. This point is reiterated in the following verse: "[He] who created and proportioned, [He] who determined and guided."[3]

The legislative guidance, which is the one specific to the bearers of intellect and thought, pertains to religious matters such as the true doctrines and the Divine law. This guidance has been delivered to humankind through the channels of Divine prophets and their infallible successors. Allāh ﷻ says, "A part [of mankind] He has guided and a part has deserved [to be consigned to] error"[4]; also, "and Allāh guides whomever He wishes to a straight path."[5] As these verses allude to a limited guidance, it can be inferred that the guidance in question is the legislative. Nevertheless, this guidance in the context of the human community is an all-inclusive one [meant for all human beings].

4. The human being, as a creation of Allāh ﷻ who is subservient to Him, is the only creature moulded a free being. There are numerous verses in the Qur'ān that emphasize the volitional nature of the human being, such as: "And say, '[This is] the truth from your Lord: let anyone who

---

[2] *Sūrat Ṭahā* (20), Verse 50:

﴿ قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ ﴾

[3] *Sūrat al-A'lā* (87), Verses 2-3:

﴿ الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ. وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ ﴾

[4] *Sūrat al-A'rāf* (7), Verse 30:

﴿ فَرِيقًا هَدَىٰ وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلَالَةُ... ﴾

[5] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 213:

﴿ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَآءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ... ﴾

wishes believe it, and let anyone who wishes disbelieve it."[6] In addition: "Indeed We have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful."[7]

Hence it is the individual himself who is responsible for what he does.

This freewill is part and parcel of human existence and is by no means separable from it. Thus the human being is predestined in possessing freewill. There is no human being who could decide not to be free. From this it can be deduced that the source of human volition cannot be the human being himself, for then we would have the problem of circularity or infinite regress. But in the context of his deeds and actions, he is free by nature, and this is one instance of that existential guidance.

5. The existential system is founded on the system of causality. The Divine norm (*sunnat Allāh*) has established that all events come about by means of their natural causes. The same norm applies to the question of guidance in which case He provides the means of guidance so that truth would be clear for those who seek it and so that they could attain the ultimate goal by recognizing those means.

Based on the aforementioned points and according to the explicit connotations of various verses of the Qur'ān, the existential guidance encompasses all creatures. In addition, the human being has been blessed by the Divine legislative guidance as well. Due to the fact that freewill has been existentially inscribed in his nature, he has the option of following the exclusive Divine guidance, thereby preparing the grounds for further elevation. But he could also choose to abandon the way of truth, plunging into disbelief and darkness. The verse in question indicates that had Allāh ﷻ wished, He could have created the human being without freewill. But He chose to favour humankind by both the existential and the legislative guidance, by which He could hold the human being

[6] *Sūrat al-Kahf* (18), Verse 29:

﴿ وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَ مَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ... ﴾

[7] *Sūrat al-Insān* (76), Verse 3:

﴿ إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا ﴾

accountable for his actions, and by which He intended to distinguish truth from falsehood.

Conclusion

It has been clarified that understanding the verse in question to mean that God does not wish the guidance of all human beings is a misconception. Rather, the contrary holds true. For He has wished the guidance not only of all human beings but of all creatures. The difference lies in that Allāh ﷻ has ordained by His Divine norm that if the human being decided to walk on to the path of disbelief and oppression, he would be naturally deprived of Divine guidance. But if he chose to traverse the path of truth, he would be blessed by that Divine guidance. "As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways, and Allāh is indeed with the virtuous."[8]

[8] *Sūrat al-'Ankabūt* (29), Verse 69:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

13

NON-MUSLIMS AND HELL

Question: We know of many people around the world who are not Muslims or Shī'a but are nevertheless individuals of good conduct; for example, non-Muslims are responsible for many inventions. Is it right that they all deserve to be punished in Hell because they are not Muslims?

Brief Answer

Those who do not believe in Islām can be classified into two groups:

1. Those who are termed '*Jahil-e-Muqassir*' (lit. '*culpable ignorant*'). These are non-believers to whom the message of Islām has reached and who have understood its truthfulness. However, they are not prepared to accept the truth due to their obstinacy and stubbornness. This group deserves to be punished in Hell.

2. Those who are termed '*Jahil-e-Qasir*' (lit. '*inculpable ignorant*'). These are non-believers to whom the message of Islām has not reached, or it has been presented to them in a very incomplete and untruthful manner. Such people will attain salvation if they are truthful to their own religion.

Detailed Answer

Islām is a simple and accessible religion and it is easy to find out its truthfulness by means of the two guiding authorities that have been given to mankind: the '*outer*' guiding authority, that is, Allāh's prophets and saints, and the '*inner*' one, that is, the intellect.[1]

[1] *al-Kafi*, v.1, p.25, no. 22

Islām is in complete opposition to the concept of religious pluralism because this concept is based on the principle that different beliefs are equal and that Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews etc. all have the same rank and status. According to religious pluralism, no proof exists for the invalidity of any belief because the truth is unattainable and religion is a relative and completely personal affair. Not only are its truths and real substance unattainable and every person takes from it whatever he or she personally understands, but furthermore, there are numerous truths and many correct paths to salvation and deliverance.

Such views are inconsistent with the religion of Islām, which is comprised of a set of fundamental beliefs and practical, legal and ethical laws and principles. Islām does however give concessions to those who are far from its reality. This can be better understood when we consider that there are two groups of people who do not believe in Islām:

1. Those who are termed '*Jahil-e-Muqassir*' (lit. '*culpable ignorant*') and who are obstinate non-believers. That is, Islām has reached them and they have understood its truthfulness; however, they are not prepared to accept the truth due to their obstinacy and stubbornness. This group of non-believers deserves to be punished in Hell because despite having known the truth, they have chosen with their own free will to reject Islām. These non-believers, even though they may be of good conduct, could have attained salvation but instead have closed the path to salvation themselves as they have covered the truth and are rebellious and obstinate in relation to it. As a result, they have chosen their own predicament.

2. Those who are termed '*Jahil-e-Qasir*' (lit. '*inculpable ignorant*'). These are non-believers to whom the message of Islām has not reached, or it has been presented to them in a very incomplete and untruthful manner; so for example, they think that Islām has the same status and rank as the religions of India and China and at the most, Judaism and Christianity. This group of non-believers, whether they live in the most remote parts of the world or in the most civilized, will not be subject to the punishments of Hell because they are not blameworthy for their lack of belief, and punishment is only for blameworthy sinners.

Unfortunately, there is so much propaganda against Islām that free thinking and seeking the truth has been taken away from many people in a way that they cannot distinguish truth from falsehood. The fact is that despite making significant material progress, contemporary man has regressed spiritually. The main cause of this is the '*World Arrogance*'—the superpower enemies of Islām—with its propagandist and deceptive media system that in full force tries to change and distort the truth. Therefore, many people, even in the most civilized of places, have remained unaware of the true message of Islām and of the enlivening Ahlul Bayt عليهم السلام school of thought. Worse still, incorrect and unrealistic information about Islām is given to them in a way that a religion of mercy, love and justice is portrayed as a religion of violence, oppression and injustice.

In conclusion, from the point of view of Islām, those who have not heard about the true message of Islām and are not blameworthy with regard to this will attain salvation if they are truthful to their own religion. This religion must be based on the *'fitrah'*[2]—man's primordial, innate nature—and so the followers of such a religion, for example, abstain from lying and committing crimes against humanity. This rule is also applicable to the Ahlus Sunnah to whom the truthfulness of Shīʿaism has not been explained correctly.

[2] *Fitrah:* Allāh says in the Qur'ān, "The divine nature by which Allāh has created mankind" (30:30). Therefore, the *fitrah* in every person is the root of all spiritual matters and goodness. Imām Riḍā عليه السلام has said, *"And it is by means of the fitrah that His proof is substantiated"* (*al-Saduq, al-Tawhid*, pg. 35. That is, whatever Allah has as argumentation is of no use without the *fitrah*. By this explanation, it becomes evident why in the terminology of Islāmic philosophers and theologians the *fitrah* is referred to as the origin of all spiritual matters and goodness, in contrast to *tabi'ah* (nature), which is referred to as the origin of all material and instinctive matters. Man is a being of free will that continuously chooses the path of the *fitrah* or the way of *tabi'ah*, and it is with this free will that he determines his life in the Hereafter, as indicated in the famous *hadith:* "*The World is a plantation for the Hereafter.*"

14

SELF-CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN ALLAH

Question: On the one hand, in the sciences of education and psychology a great deal of emphasis is placed on self-confidence, but in Islāmic teachings, ethics, and gnosticism (ʿirfān) on the other hand, it is stressed that one must trust only in Allāh ﷻ and not in oneself. Is their a contradiction between the two perspectives?

Brief Answer

To apprehend whether there is a conflict or not, one must first have a clear definition of the two terms. There are two ways of understanding self-confidence:

1. Comprehending ones' abilities, potentials, and building on the existing capabilities in the attempt to satisfy one's desires and attain to the true human identity. This version is in no way in conflict with the spirit of trust in Allāh ﷻ. The advantage of this version is its compatibility with two key religious terms: self-knowledge and knowledge of Allāh's ﷻ blessings and the right way of employing them.

2. Egocentrism. That is, to rely solely on one's personal capabilities and knowledge to the extent of considering one's ambitions and desires as the source of ultimate well-being and success. This understanding is not only in disharmony with religious teachings; it is a mirage, a mere figment of the imagination. This objectionable self-confidence is actually self-centeredness and being over-confident of oneself. It is in allusion to this type of self-confidence that the Commander of the Faithful says, "Whosoever trusts in his self will be betrayed many times."

The Definition of *Tawakkul*

Tawakkul comes from the root *wikālah* and so by derivation means "appointing someone as one's trustee (*wakil*)". What is meant by the self-confidence that is in harmony with *tawakkul* is maintaining one's composition in the face of great predicaments by relying on the endless power of Allāh ﷻ, thereby considering oneself triumphant. It means to struggle resolutely in the face of all the troubles and tribulations that befall one, trusting in Allāh ﷻ where one feels powerless and not ceasing to try. Rather, even where one feels capable, one should know that the real power is Allāh ﷻ. For, in the eyes of the true monotheist, He is the fountainhead of all existing powers, so that viewing the natural phenomena in separation from the Divine will is a kind of polytheism. All natural causes derive their potency from Him and exist due to His will.

But the second interpretation of self-confidence is in no way compatible with *tawakkul*, for in this sense self-confidence would be to regard one's strengths and capabilities independent of Divine will. And self-reliance and relying on other creatures are in opposition to the spirit of trust in Allāh ﷻ.

The Prophet ﷺ has been related as having said, "I asked Jibrā'īl ﷺ, 'What is *tawakkul*?' He replied, 'Recognizing the truth that a creature can neither harm nor benefit, and not to have your eyes on the wealth of others. When a servant of Allāh acquires these traits, he will act only for Allāh and will not have any hope in other than Him. This is the truth and boundary of *tawakkul*.'"

Detailed Answer

In order to properly examine the question of the contradiction of self-confidence—in the context of psychology—with the concept of trusting in God and not trusting in oneself—in the context of religious teachings—one must first analyze the meanings of the two concepts.

Analyzing the definition of self-confidence

Self-confidence is acknowledging one's strengths and capabilities, therefore relying on what one has for achieving what one desires and for attaining to the true essence of humanity. This conception of self-confidence is not in conflict with religious teachings. Rather it is exactly in line with the will of Allāh ﷻ and acceptable by the godly people. We are duty bound to attempt to acquire this trait and the failure thereof might result in being deprived of many advantageous things, the least of which might be the lack of success and the inability to achieve Divine satisfaction. Hence, we refer to this conception of self-confidence as the laudable self-confidence.

There are several qualifications that contribute to the positive conception of self-confidence. The first is comprehending oneself, one's capabilities, strengths and weaknesses, duties, and material and spiritual assets. What is the most effective plan for utilizing these assets? These are all points and questions that stem from the two key religious concepts: self-knowledge and recognizing one's God-given blessings and appropriately exploiting them.

This conception of self-confidence is in essence to be aware of the supra-human entity and the lofty aspects of the human being by means of knowing the blessings of Allāh ﷻ. And this is based on the fact that Allāh ﷻ has bestowed certain blessings on the human being and thus holds him responsible vis-à-vis those blessings and at the end will hold him accountable, asking as to how he employed those blessings. Hence, taking the responsibility of these blessings on one's shoulders is not possible without taking advantage of one's personal assets, without self-confidence, without benefiting from those blessings, or feeling positive. So to reward [unclear] the positive definition of self-confidence: It is the belief that "I" am one of Allāh's ﷻ creatures that has been given blessings by a Being who has control over these blessings and who would not be harmed were He to deprive me of all of them. We would be ungrateful if we did not think of the scheme of our existence in this manner.

We accept the first definition of self-confidence because it reinforces our independence and self-esteem and thus prevents us from being dependent

on other creatures as well as underestimating ourselves. In other words, self-confidence is the conscious and beneficial acceptance of our values, assets, and symbols, such that with this lofty human/Islāmic self-confidence we can stand up against all instances of timidity, [cultural] disorientation, thereby preventing our subordination to those who only wear the disguise of humanity.

Through self-confidence we will be able to regulate our mind, thereby gaining access to all the golden keys to success. Is it not true that when imperialists decide to enslave a people, their first tactic is to convince the people that they have nothing, that their mentality is backward and that they have fallen behind from modernism and that they are too immature to stand up on their own feet? By such intimidations a nation might fall from the heights of self-confidence to the pits of self-abasement, and seeing itself as inferior it will try to emulate the predator culture. Such emulation is in itself a manifestation of the cultural deficiency of the nation in question and is the beginning of its self-alienation, both culturally and religiously.

A good number of those who get caught in psychological voids—and as a result get involved in crime—are those who underestimate themselves. The analysis provided by ʿAli Mirzabiygee states that, "Self-esteem plays a major role in one's logical and normal behaviour or on the other hand one's abnormal, unfriendly, and criminal behaviour. Based on the conducted research in this field, self-esteem can prevent, ameliorate, or worsen some types of modes of human behaviour. As narrated in a tradition, "He who is self-abased will become such that there will be no security against his mischief."[1] Therefore, the positive self-confidence results in self-esteem and is itself the fruit of self-assurance, determination, and capability. "The determination of men of eminence can uproot mountains."[2] (*The Role of Psychological Needs,* pg. 33)

[1] *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl*, pg. 483:

مَنْ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ فَلاَ تَأْمَنْ شَرَّهُ.

[2] *Musnad al-Shahāb*, vol. 1, pg. 378

Another positive quality of this definition of self-confidence is its harmony with the spirit of *tawakkul* in Islāmic culture. We will explain this point in more detail later on.

The second possible definition for self-confidence is egocentrism—i.e., the absence of any concern other than one's desires. This could end in such extremes that one might solely depend on his faculties and knowledge, considering his needs and aspirations as the source of absolute good and ultimate success. This illusion is not only in opposition to Islāmic teachings, it is also a figment of the imagination. It would be more accurate to refer to this negative definition of self-confidence as *egocentrism*. It is the latter psychological state that has been the cause of many failures and by which the human being has been betrayed: "Whosoever trusts his ego will be betrayed by it."[3]

Why is this definition of self-confidence deplorable? The following factors all play a role in the negative nature of this state of mind. This conception of self-confidence creates a false self-image in the mind of the human being and thus entails disequilibrium. When one thinks, "What I want should be…Truth is that which corresponds to my opinion and so my opinion should be done…There are no obstacles in my way…I am strong enough so that others are nothing in comparison to me…"—such thoughts can only lead to "personal overestimation". The solidification of this notion would cause "extreme conceit" which will open the way for an unrealistic overestimation of oneself. And without doubt such mental waves and whirlpools will entail "instability" and the distortion of one's true personality.

At any rate, the limits of one's capabilities should be recognized. One should take into consideration all the other factors and realities too. With such awkward self-confidence there will be no possibility of a realistic assessment of one's capabilities. The Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام says, "If you seek Allāh's grace, determine the aspects of your capabilities and the limits of your inabilities. Otherwise you

[3] *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, vol. 5, pg. 161

مَنْ وَثَقَ نَفْسَهُ خَانَتْهُ.

would exceed your scope thereby undermining the possibility of progress and Divine grace."[4]

It is for this reason that Islām prohibits such overestimation of oneself and has warned that if a human being does not abandon this state of mind, he would be seized by two entailments: conceit and self-love.

In addition to the detriments you heard regarding *'ujb*—viewing oneself beyond the range of fallibility and being satisfied with one's deeds—it is an evil tree whose fruit is a range of greater sins… The veil of *'ujb* and the heavy curtain of self-satisfaction blocks one from seeing one's own weaknesses. And this is a great affliction that prevents the human being from all perfections… And another detriment of *'ujb* is being overconfident of oneself and one's deeds. This causes the ignorant and unfortunate human being to consider himself free of need of the Truth, exalted is He, therefore neglecting His grace.[5]

The second feature of the negative self-confidence which renders it a deplorable trait is that it implies a notion of independence from Allāh ﷻ, which is practically denying the principle of Divine unity in actions. In the science of theology it has been demonstrated that all existents, motions, and actions in the cosmos derive from the Pure Essence of Allāh ﷻ. He is the cause of causes, the head of the chain of causality. Even our actions are, from one aspect, from Him. He has bestowed upon us strength, choice, and free will, but this Diving agency does not reject the role of the human being. He has bestowed strength and choice, but at the same time we are the doers of our own actions and as such are responsible for them. But this fact does not contradict the agency of Allāh ﷻ, for all that we possess is from Him and will return to Him: "There is no active agent in existence but for Him."[6] Attributing the main role to oneself is tantamount to assuming absolute agency for oneself in opposition to Allāh's ﷻ absolute will and His boundless rule.

---

[4] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 66, pg. 79
[5] Ayatullāh Khomeini, *Forty Hadith*, under the explanation of the third ḥadith
[6] Ayatullāh Nāṣir Makārīm Shirazi, *Payām Qur'ān*, vol. 3, pg. 274

Analyzing the definition of *Tawakkul*

Tawakkul is derived from the root *wikālah* and means the appointment of a trustee (*wakil*). It should go without saying that appointing a trustee is necessary where one is incapable of personally handling the situation, in which case the strength of some one else is employed. It should also be noted that the right trustee should at least have the following four traits: well informed, trustworthy, having the power to undertake the task in question, and concerned for the welfare of the client.

The first interpretation of self-confidence—i.e., self-knowledge and self-assurance along with utilizing all personal capabilities and assets—has no contradiction with *tawakkul*. For, in addition to the purely religious concepts that are embedded in this interpretation of self-confidence—such as self-knowledge, knowledge, and utilizing the blessings of Allāh ﷻ—essentially the realistic *tawakkul* stems from this positive interpretation of self-confidence. For, what is intended by the concept of *tawakkul* is that the human being, when confronted with tribulations in life, must not feel abased or weak. Rather, relying on the limitless power of Allāh ﷻ, he must see himself triumphant and victorious. In this light, it becomes clear that *tawakkul* possesses an inspiring, revitalizing, and regenerating meaning that increases one's endurance and resilience. Hence, relying on Allāh ﷻ should not be construed in any other way but that the human being, when faced with the troubles and vicissitudes of life, when exposed to the animosity of enemies and the stubbornness of detractors, or in running into difficulties or seeming impasses, must endeavour to open the doors of success and when incapable, rely on Allāh ﷻ thereby continuing to struggle. More accurately, even where one is capable of undertaking a task, Allāh ﷻ should still be recognized as the principal agent in the world, for from the perspective of a monotheist, the fountainhead of power and strength is Allāh ﷻ

Those who assume that being cognizant of the world of causes and natural elements is in opposition to the spirit of *tawakkul* are in deep error. For dissociating the natural elements from the will of God is itself a type of polytheism. Is it not true that even natural elements owe their efficacy to Him and exist due to His will? Of course, if such elements and

causes are considered independent entities in contrast to His will—then such a view is in opposition to the spirit of *tawakkul*. The main point is that self-assurance, taking advantage of Allāh's ﷻ blessings, utilizing one's capabilities, and hopefulness are not in contrast to *tawakkul*. The Prophet of Islām ﷺ, the crown of those who rely on God, never failed to seize any opportunity, plan, or positive tactic, nor did he neglect any natural element, and he used to warn the believers, "You can… You are superior." Why should we not consider "You are superior" as the rightful interpretation and the true scheme for the conformity of *tawakkul* and self-confidence.

The second interpretation of self-confidence is in contradiction with *tawakkul* because relying on other people is in diametrical opposition to relying on God. That is, living as a liability for others and being dependent on them means a lack of independence. For relying on God frees the human being from dependence (which is the cause of human disgrace and bondage) and bestows on him freedom and self-confidence. The Prophet of Islām ﷺ has been narrated as having said, "I inquired from the Messenger of Revelation, Jibrā'īl ﷺ, 'What is *tawakkul*?' He said, 'Being aware that a creature can neither harm nor provide nor block [others' sustenance] from being provided; that you take your eyes off of the possession of other people. When a servant of Allāh has thus transformed himself, he will act only for Allāh and will have hope only in Him. This is the truth and definition of *tawakkul*.'"[7]

[7] *Maʿānī al-Akhbār*, pg. 261:
فَقُلْتُ: وَمَا التَّوَكُّلُ عَلىٰ اللّٰهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ؟ فَقَالَ: اَلْعِلْمُ بِأَنَّ الْمَخْلُوقَ لاَ يَضُرُّ وَلاَ يَنْفَعُ وَلاَ يُعْطِي وَلاَ يَمْنَعُ، وَاسْتِعْمَالُ الْيَأْسَ مِنَ الْخَلْقِ، فَإِذَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ كَذٰلِكَ لَمْ يَعْمَلْ لأَحَدٍ سِوىٰ اللّٰهَ وَلَمْ يَرْجُ وَلَمْ يَخَفْ سِوَىٰ اللّٰهَ وَلَمْ يَطْمَعْ فِي أَحَدٍ سِوىٰ اللّٰهَ فَهٰذَا هُوَ التَّوَكُّلُ.

15

ATTAINING PERFECTION

Question: How can perfection be attained?

Brief Answer

This topic needs to be discussed in three parts.

1. Definition of *Kamāl* (Perfection) and How It Differs from *Tamām* (Completion) and Progress

Completion applies when speaking about the parts of a thing, as in the case where a thing is composed of several parts and all the parts are put together, it is said that that thing is complete. In other words, completion pertains to the parts that are necessary to bring something into existence. But perfection pertains to the levels and stages of something. When something reaches completion, there still might be more perfect states for it. Thus a thing could be complete but not perfect. Also, the term progress could apply to a movement that is merely horizontal. However, elevation is embedded in the meaning of perfection. For, perfection is meaningful only in the context of an ascending and vertical movement. Hence, it is possible to achieve progress without attaining to perfection.

2. Human Perfection from the Point of View of Islām

a. Perfection is in vision and acquisition. One must fully comprehend the Divine sciences and act accordingly.

b. Perfection is dependent on sensing, for the human being is compelled to action when feeling threatened and realizing one's own imperfection.

3. Different Views on Perfection

a. Ideology of Power

According to this ideology, the perfect human being is synonymous with the powerful human being. The more powerful one is, the higher the level of perfection he has attained to. Even if knowledge is of value, it is due to the fact that it enables the human being to strengthen himself and to subjugate the surrounding environment.

This view has two problems. First, knowledge in this ideology has no intrinsic value and sanctity. It is power alone that is considered perfection. Second, not only is knowledge not perfection and a means to transcendence, it serves as grounds for war and the exploitation of the weak.

From the point of view of Islām, power is not intrinsically negative. There are instances where it has been promoted, but with the condition that it be employed in the way of advocating moral values and social reformation.

b. The View of the Philosophers

From the perspective of the philosophers, perfection can be sought in two things: wisdom (which is the comprehension of the universal truths of the cosmos) and justice (which is the tempering of the instincts and the human faculties by the intellect, or in other words, the intellect dominating the human faculties)

Islām also considers wisdom a virtue. The Qur'ān refers to wisdom as "abundant good" (2:269) and recognizes it as a means of perfection. Justice is also emphasized by Islām. However, in Islām the intellect's domination over the sensual and psychic faculties is considered effective only when it is reinforced by Revelation.

c. The Mystic Ideology

Mystics are of the opinion that reality is nondual. Reality is God and all else is the radiance of His existence. Thus, the human being attains to perfection when he comes to view only Him and nothing else, when he reaches annihilation in the Truth. The closer one ascends to the Truth,

the more perfect he becomes. And the path of this journey is the heart, and one must combat one's ego and overcome it and belittle it so as to erase any trace of egoism.

Although Islām approves of the path of the heart and vision, it also supports the intellect and has referred to the latter as the "inward prophet". In contrast to mysticism, both the personal and the social aspects of life have been recognized, and so the perfect human being is he who perfects himself in both aspects. Another defect of the mystical perspective is that it undermines self-esteem and self-worth to the extent of demeaning the individual. Islām does not allow such excessive self-humiliation. From the view point of Islām, at the same time that the believer must combat his ego and tame it, he must avoid ignoble and unbecoming acts.

Detailed Answer

Definition of Perfection

First, we must define perfection. *Tamām* (completion) is contrasted with *naqṣ* (deficiency) and so is *kamāl* (perfection). In the Noble Qur'ān we read: *Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you*[1]. That is, the Qur'ān considers *tamām* and *kamāl* different in meaning: it employs *tamām* in the context of deficiency in blessing and *kamāl* in the context of deficiency in religion.

At this point it is necessary to explain how *kamāl* (perfection) differs in meaning from *tamām* (completion) and *pīshraft* (progress). If an object is composed of several parts, such as a building, until all the parts are put together, it is said that the object is deficient and incomplete and when all the parts have been assembled, it is said that the object is complete. However, perfection applies to levels and stages. For instance, a new born child, although healthy and complete with all the natural parts and organs, is in one respect deficient and must pass through the various

[1] *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5), Verse 3:

﴿ اَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَ أَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي... ﴾

levels of perfection by means of training and education in order to attain to perfection.

In other words, *tamām* is used where all the necessary parts for composing a whole are present, otherwise that whole is deficient in its essence. On the other hand, *kamāl* is used when an object has reached completion but has the capacity to improve and acquire higher degrees. Thus, an object could be complete but not perfect.

But as to the difference of *kamāl* (perfection) from *pīshraft* (progress), it can be said that the idea of elevation is embedded in the meaning of perfection. Perfection is a movement but a vertical one, from lower degrees to higher and loftier degrees, unlike progress which can also apply to a horizontal movement. For instance, if an army is at war and is conquering enemy territory and moving ahead, it is said that the army is progressing, not perfecting. Therefore, social perfection denotes human elevation in the social context not merely progress, for there are many changes that might be considered as progress for the human being or the society but might not necessarily indicate perfection or elevation.

Human Perfection from the Point of View of Islām

1. Perfection Dependent on Vision and Acquisition

One must endeavour to fully understand the Divine sciences and conduct himself accordingly. That is, he must put his knowledge into action. Just as virtues are interrelated with perfect and complete acts of worship, vices are interrelated with deficient and ineffective acts of worship.

2. Perfection Contingent on Sensing Danger

He who knows that something dangerous is threatening him and might result in his being left hungry and thirsty in the middle of nowhere will embark on solving the dangerous situation. The person who constantly reminds himself of the hardships of the hereafter and the chastisement of hell, realizing the danger, will struggle to attain to perfection and avoid all deficiencies. For unless one feels the deficiency and insufficiency of his state, he will not advance toward perfection. By the same token,

deficiency and backwardness are the results of ignorance and the complacent and self-deceiving notions of being perfect.

But in what does human perfection lie? What is the path to attaining to perfection? There are divergent views regarding this question. We will limit ourselves to three views in addition to Islām's assessment of each of them.

The Ideology of Power.

According to this view, the perfect human is the strong human. The stronger the human being is and the more firmly he controls his surroundings, the closer he is to perfection. Darwin's theory of evolution—known as "competition to survive"—is based on this notion. For the exponents of this view, knowledge is valuable only in so far as it enables the human being to strengthen his grip on his environment, thus they exploit knowledge for the sake of power. In their view, truth and justice have no reality or meaning other than power.

Two criticisms come to mind regarding this viewpoint. First, knowledge enjoys no sacred place in this ideology, rather it is only a means for acquiring power, and it is power alone that can be considered perfection for the human being. Second, not only is knowledge not conducive to perfection or moral elevation, it prepares the grounds for conflict. It serves as a tool in the hands of the aggressors and oppressors. Therefore, humanity does not advance by employing knowledge as it should, for the imperialist powers utilize it to exploit the weaker nations.

Islām advocates the use of power, but the sort of power that is in harmony with lofty human values, with compassion and kindness. There are numerous verses in the Qur'ān that encourage the Muslim community to strengthen itself, but the power intended in such verses is that which would be utilized in the way of fighting oppression and defending the rights of the oppressed, the sort of power that would pave the way for upholding justice and moral values.

Philosophers' Perspective on Human Perfection.

According to philosophers, human perfection lies in two things. The first is wisdom, which is comprehending the reality of things as they are in themselves and the general order of the cosmos. To corroborate this point, they cite the following verse, *He gives wisdom to whomever He wishes, and he who is given wisdom, is certainly given an abundant good*[2]. Thus they consider wisdom a Divine gift and a means to perfection.

The second truth which constitutes perfection in the view of the philosophers is justice. By that they intend moral justice, i.e., creating a balance among the human instincts and faculties, bringing them under the supervision of the intellect.

From the Islāmic point of view wisdom is also seen as a means to perfection and, as was explained, more than just being beneficial to humanity, wisdom is a good in itself; meaning that it should be sought as an end in itself and not as a means for something else. Moreover, justice is also something which Islām underscores. It also stresses the importance of balancing the faculties and instincts and the intellect's management of them. However, Islām does not consider this sufficient. According to Islām, the intellect must be complemented by faith, for reason alone is not potent enough. It is the intellect monitored by Revelation and faith that is desirable in the Islāmic context.

Mystics' Perspective on Human Perfection.

Mystics are of the opinion that reality is nondual, i.e., God. All else is His radiance and a form of the reality. Whatever seems to be real as such is due to Him. The human being can reach perfection only after realizing the truth and attaining to it, to which they refer as "attaining to the Truth," indicating annihilation in the Truth. He must be comprehended before anything else, even prior to comprehending oneself. Although the

[2] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), verse 269:
﴿ يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَآءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْراً كَثِيراً وَمَا يَـذَّكَّرُ إِلاَّ أُولُـوْا الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾

unity expounded by the ystics should not be understood as indicating incarnation or God becoming identical with the creation. Rather, what is meant is to see Him alongside everything, within everything, and prior to everything. And if the human being fails to attain to the truth, he is imperfect and veiled from the truth. The path leading to the truth is that of the heart, not reason, syllogism, nor philosophy:

Syllogists have legs of wood,

But legs of wood are dangerously unsteady.

The mount for this journey is love and intimacy. And the ego must be exterminated in this way.

In the mystical worldview, some issues have been disparaged with which Islām disagrees. Islām approves of love and spiritual wayfaring but at the same time supports the intellect, calling it the "inward prophet" and counting it as one of the Divine blessings. In mysticism esotericism has been overemphasized, thus undermining the outward aspects of spirituality and emphasizing seclusion and withdrawal from social life. Islām on the other hand, while stressing the importance of personal aspects, spiritual purification, and spiritual retreat in God, encourages the social aspects as well. Islām advocates worship but along with involvement in the society, hailing those who are worshippers by night and warriors by day.

According to Islām, the Universal Man is he who is a man of worship, of kneeling and prostration before the Lord, but also one who is dutiful vis-à-vis his social responsibilities—i.e., social reformation and enjoining good and forbidding evil.[3] In the mystical worldview, attaining to the Truth and Unveiling and liberation from egoism requires the annihilation of the ego, belittling it to the very extreme without being disturbed by such practices. Rather one should consider them as the way to perfection. Islām, however, does not approve of such measures. For, it views the believer with respect and commands him to defend his dignity. Islām encourages combating one's ego and self-esteem concurrently. That

[3] These traits can be found in the Noble Qur'ān: *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), verse 112 and Sūrat al-Fatḥ (49), veresse 29 are two examples.

is, it approves of combating one's ego so long as it does not lead to being disgraced and belittled. The value of the believer is very high in the Islāmic value system, so much so that it has been considered equal to that of the Kaaba.

16

THE ANGELS AND FREE-WILL

Question: We know that some angels do nothing but worship Allāh ﷻ. Is this worship of theirs performed of their own freewill? If not, does Allāh ﷻ have need of such worship?

Brief Answer

No benefit from any creature's worship—whether it has freewill or not—reaches Allāh ﷻ. Rather worship that is offered out of freewill is the cause for the spiritual advancement of the worshipper. However, for creatures that worship Allāh ﷻ without freewill, such as the angels, their worship is simply an intrinsic part of their existence. Their subservience to Allāh ﷻ stems from their perception of His greatness, and does not benefit Allāh ﷻ in the least.

Detailed Answer

Angels are supernatural beings. We can only know of their existence by way of revelation or through individual supernatural experience. Angels are immaterial and can therefore not be described quantitatively or qualitatively. However, they can *appear* in human form. The Qur'ān speaks of Mariam's ﵂ encounter with the Noble Spirit when she saw it in human form.[1] It also tells us of the angels who visited Ibrāhīm ﵇

[1] *Sūrat Maryam* (19), Verses 16-19:
﴿ وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذْ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا. فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا. قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنتَ تَقِيًّا. قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا ﴾

and Lūṭ ﷺ in the form of men.[2] Additionally, it is narrated that Jibrāʾīl would appear before the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in the form of Daḥyah al-Kalbī, the Prophet's milk-brother.

We know that angels are limited beings that vary from individual to individual. Some are consigned with the responsibility of meting out punishment in this world, some in Purgatory *(al-Barzakh)*, and some in the Hereafter. Some are entrusted with the task of writing the deeds of men, and some write the decrees of Allāh ﷻ. Some manage the day-to-day affairs of the cosmos, and some are messengers who carry divine revelation. Some inspire the hearts of men and some are protectors and helpers of the believers. Some have higher rank and give orders to others. Some are responsible for sustenance, some for rain, and some take the souls of people when they die. In the same vein, some angels are perpetually in a state of prostration, some continually bow, and some

---

[2] *Sūrat Hūd* (11), Verses 69-81:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَىٰ قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيذٍ. فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ أَيْدِيَهُمْ لاَ تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لاَ تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِ لُوطٍ. وَامْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ. قَالَتْ يَا وَيْلَتَا أَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا إِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ. قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللّٰهِ رَحْمَةُ اللّٰهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ. فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرَىٰ يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ. إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ. يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ. وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَقَالَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ. وَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهُ يُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ هَؤُلاَءِ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلاَ تُخْزُونِي فِي ضَيْفِي أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ. قَالُوا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِي بَنَاتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيدُ. قَالَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةً أَوْ آوِي إِلَىٰ رُكْنٍ شَدِيدٍ. قَالُوا يَا لُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَصِلُوا إِلَيْكَ فَأَسْرِ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَلاَ يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلاَّ امْرَأَتَكَ إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيبٍ ﴾

forever glorify Allāh ﷻ. Some eternally circumambulate the Ka'bah and pay tribute to the graves of the Friends of Allāh ﷻ. Some seek forgiveness and intercession for the believers. Others curse the disbelievers, pagans, hypocrites and staunch opponents of the Prophet's household. In all cases, each angel is assigned a specific task. He neither has power to perform more than what he has been commanded nor to fall short of his task.

The essence of worship *('ibādah)* is to display servitude *('ubūdiyyah)* to one's master. One's display of servitude is directly proportional to his perception of Allāh's ﷻ greatness. Such a display, therefore, is an indication of the spiritual perfection of the creature, not a deficiency in the Creator. It is not necessary that any benefit from a creature's worship reach Allāh ﷻ in order for Allāh ﷻ to be able to say that His purpose in creating man and jinn was that they worship him. Rather, the fact that their creation is an awesome display of Allāh's ﷻ infinite power and endless beneficence is enough.

If a creature has freewill, his worship will result in a purification of his soul and his gradual advancement through the ranks of servitude. Therefore, the benefit of his worship returns to himself not to Allāh ﷻ in such a way that were he not to worship Allāh ﷻ, he would not harm Allāh ﷻ in the least. Rather, if he fails to worship Allāh ﷻ, it is himself will be harmed!

Apparently, some of the angels also questioned whether Allāh ﷻ needs worship done out of freewill. When Allāh ﷻ informed them that that He would create a regent on earth, they said, "We already sing your praises. Why would you create someone on earth who will cause corruption and spill blood?" So Allāh ﷻ bestowed on Ādam عليه السلام His special knowledge—a knowledge that the angels were incapable of learning. The angels proclaimed, "We possess no knowledge except that which you have taught us." They thereby conceded their own inferiority to Ādam عليه السلام and fell down in prostration before him.[3]

[3] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verses 30-33:

It is obvious that the worship that issues from freewill is more valuable than worship to which one is compelled. The former is the actualization of one's potential while the latter is simply a result of one's stagnant and constant present state in which there is no room for future development and from which the slightest slip means a fall to perdition.

Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام describes the angels in the following way: "You have created the angels and placed them in the heavens. They do not feel fatigue nor are they oblivious nor do they sin. Among all Your creatures, they know the most about You, are most fearful of You, are the nearest to You, and the most obedient … Their intellect does not err. Their bodies do not tire. Neither did they issue from loins nor were they concealed by wombs. They were not created from filthy semen. You created them in a special way and placed them in the heavens. Through their nearness to You is an honour for them. With Your revelation You entrusted them. From sickness and tribulations You protected them. From sin You purified them. If You had not empowered them, they would have no power. If You had not made them constant, they would have no constancy. If it were not for Your mercy, they would not obey You. And if it were not for You, they would not exist.

However, despite their station, obedience, nearness to You, and unwavering attention to You and Your commands, if You were to reveal a glimmer of Your reality—a reality that You have kept hidden from them, their actions would seem insignificant, they would be ashamed of themselves, and they would know that they have not worshipped You as

---

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلاَئكَة إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ. وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلاَئكَة فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلاَءِ إِنْ كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ. قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لاَ عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلاَّ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ. قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمٰوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴾

You deserve to be worshipped. Glorified are You who are the Creator, the Object of Worship, and the One who tests his servants."[4]

A reflection of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's ﷺ words make three issues clear:

1. The secret behind their worship: The angels' worship of Allāh ﷻ is a natural consequence of their experiential knowledge of Allāh ﷻ. However, because their existential capacity is limited, their knowledge of Allāh ﷻ is also limited.

2. The secret behind the aforementioned objection of the angels when Ādam ﷺ was created: The root of this objection was their limited knowledge.

3. The secret behind their admission and prostration before Ādam ﷺ: When it became clear to them that they were incapable of understanding the reasons behind Allāh's ﷻ actions, they admitted to this shortcoming and prostrated before Ādam.

To recap, because the freewill of angels is not like that of man, their worship does nothing to raise their station. However, if they were to

---

[4] *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, vol. 2, pg. 207:
وَ قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عليه السلام فِي خِلْقَةِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ: وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ خَلَقْتَهُمْ وَأَسْكَنْتَهُمْ سَمٰوَاتِكَ فَلَيْسَ فِيهِمْ فَتْرَةٌ وَلَا عِنْدَهُمْ غَفْلَةٌ وَلَا فِيهِمْ مَعْصِيَةٌ، هُمْ أَعْلَمُ خَلْقِكَ بِكَ، وَأَخْوَفُ خَلْقِكَ مِنْكَ، وَأَقْرَبُ خَلْقِكَ إِلَيْكَ وَأَعْمَلُهُمْ بِطَاعَتِكَ، لَا يَغْشَاهُمْ نَوْمُ الْعُيُونِ وَلَا سَهْوُ الْعُقُولِ وَلَا فَتْرَةُ الْأَبْدَانِ، لَمْ يَسْكُنُوا الْأَصْلَابَ وَلَمْ تَتَضَمَّنْهُمُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَلَمْ تَخْلُقْهُمْ مِنْ مَآءٍ مَهِينٍ ، أَنْشَأْتَهُمْ إِنْشَاءً فَأَسْكَنْتَهُمْ سَمَاوَاتِكَ وَأَكْرَمْتَهُمْ بِجِوَارِكَ وَائْتَمَنْتَهُمْ عَلَى وَحْيِكَ وَجَنَّبْتَهُمُ الآفَاتِ وَوَقَيْتَهُمُ الْبَلِيَّاتِ وَطَهَّرْتَهُمْ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ وَلَوْلَا قُوَّتُكَ لَمْ يَقْوُوا وَلَوْلَا تَثْبِيتُكَ لَمْ يَثْبُتُوا وَلَوْلَا رَحْمَتُكَ لَمْ يُطِيعُوا وَلَوْلَا أَنْتَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا ، أَمَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَلَى مَكَانَتِهِمْ مِنْكَ وَطَوْعِيَّتِهِمْ إِيَّاكَ وَمَنْزِلَتِهِمْ عِنْدَكَ وَقِلَّةِ غَفْلَتِهِمْ عَنْ أَمْرِكَ لَوْ عَايَنُوا مَا خَفِيَ عَنْهُمْ مِنْكَ لَاحْتَقَرُوا أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَلَأَزْرَوْا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَعَلِمُوا أَنَّهُمْ لَمْ يَعْبُدُوكَ حَقَّ عِبَادَتِكَ سُبْحَانَكَ خَالِقاً وَمَعْبُوداً مَا أَحْسَنَ بَلَاءَكَ عِنْدَ خَلْقِكَ.

abandon their worship, they would fall. Their worship stems from their knowledge of Allāh's ﷻ greatness on one hand and their own insignificance on the other. No benefit from their worship reaches Allāh ﷻ. Rather their worship is a manifestation of Allāh's ﷻ omnipotence.

17

SATAN'S INFLUENCE

Question: How does Satan influence our thoughts?

Brief Answer

Before we can investigate the influence of Satan on our thoughts, we must gain an understanding of who Satan is.

Lexicographers differ over the linguistic root of the word *shayṭān* (satan). The strongest opinion states that it comes from "*shaṭana*" meaning "to be far." As it is known, *shayṭān* in ʿArabic, is a common noun, and can therefore be applied to any of a number of beings. However, the archetypical satan—the leader of them all—is known in Arabic as *Iblīs*.[1]

Satan is a member of the class of beings called jinn. Like all jinn, he can transform himself into various forms, sometimes appearing as a man, sometimes as an animal. The only limitation placed on him is that he cannot manifest himself as a prophet or Imām. It is mainly through these transformations that Satan misguides people. At watershed moments in a person's life, he appears as a well-wishing advisor and lays the groundwork for his destruction.

Salmān al-Fārisī narrates that Imām ʿAlī ﷺ said, "The old man who was the first to pledge his allegiance to Abū Bakr and whose forehead was calloused from extensive prostrations, was the accursed Satan."

However, Satan does not always employ this method. He exists in an intermediate state between the material and the immaterial realms. For this reason, he cannot directly affect the immaterial spirit of the human

[1] *Iblīs* will be denoted as Satan with a capital 's.' When satan as a common noun is intended, it will be spelled with a lower case 's.'

being. Rather, he infiltrates a person's thoughts by means of one aspect of the human soul called *al-nafs al-ammārah* (the lower soul). This is the animalistic aspect of the soul, that can be transformed into *al-nafs al-muṭma'innah* (the higher soul) through training and enhancement. It is through temptation and by showing the lower soul manifestations of what it desires that Satan paves the way to misguide man. For this reason, Satan is only a part of the cause of human misguidance.

These manifestations take on different forms, yet they all conform to what the lower soul desires:

1. The beautification of ugly deeds: By making ugly actions appear beautiful, Satan effectively strips the otherwise inherent ugliness of sin and mitigates the societal taboo associated with sin in such a way that man easily falls into the trap of sin. This phenomenon can be witnessed in a person who rationalizes his wrong actions.

2. False promises: Through false promises and unattainable hopes, Satan renders man heedless of the Hereafter, death, and even Allāh ﷻ. Such a person becomes a slave to his desires and is prepared to go to any lengths to attain the attainable, even if it means sinning against Allāh ﷻ.

3. Fear: Satan scares man with thoughts of the future, compelling him to accumulate wealth, flee from *jihād*, aid the unjust, etc.

Detailed Answer

To properly understand the answer to this question, we must first gain an understanding of the nature of Satan.

Lexicographers differ over the linguistic root of the word "satan." The strongest opinion states that it comes from "*shaṭana*" meaning "to be far." It is for this reason that anyone that distances man from his Lord is called a "satan."

Many exegetes of the Qur'ān believe that a "satan" is any mischievous being that has been misguided. According to this opinion, "satan" is a common noun that can be applied to any of a number of members,

whether jinn or human. However, *Iblīs* is a proper name for the particular satan who refused to prostrate before Ādam.[2]

The Qur'ān explicitly states that Satan is a jinn[3] and is made of fire. The jinn are in an intermediate state between physical and immaterial and can manifest themselves as various physical beings. Human beings, on the other hand, are composed of a body and soul. Man's soul in turn has two aspects. One aspect is Godly in nature. It is alternatively called the spirit *(al-rūh)* and the higher soul *(al-nafs al-muṭma'innah)*. The other aspect of the human soul is animalistic in nature and is called the lower soul *(al-nafs al-ammārah)*. To gain control over man, Satan must access this lower soul. Being immaterial himself, he cannot establish direct contact with man's physical body. It is this connection between Satan and the lower soul of man that is called a "whispered temptation" *(al-waswās)* in Qur'ānic terminology. Therefore, Satan is only a part of the cause and cannot misguide man by himself. Rather he invites man to that which his lower soul desires. Man can then choose to follow Satan's temptations or the laws of Allāh ﷻ and the standards of his intellect. It is for this reason that Allāh ﷻ admonishes man in the following way: "Do not follow in Satan's footsteps, for he is your manifest enemy."[4]

How exactly does Satan incite a person's irrational desires to push him towards sin? We will enumerate several of the techniques that Satan employs for this purpose:

---

[2] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 34:
﴿ وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلاَئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلاَّ إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

[3] *Sūrat al-Kahf* (18), Verse 50:
﴿ وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلاَئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلاَّ إِبْلِيسَ كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ... ﴾

[4] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 208:
﴿ ... وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴾

1. As stated earlier, Satan, being a jinn, is able to manifest himself in different physical forms. At various critical points, he presents himself as a well-wishing advisor for the express purpose of misguiding people. There is ample mention of such instances in history, and it is even possible that such instances have presented themselves in our own lives.

For example, it is narrated from Salmān al-Fārisī concerning the incident of Saqīfah: Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام asked, "Do you know the man who ascended the pulpit and preceded everyone else in pledging his allegiance to Abū Bakr?" I said, "No. But I saw that he was an old man who leaned heavily on his cane, and I saw that on his forehead was a large callous that was the result of lengthy prostrations. He was the first to ascend the pulpit. He expressed with tears running down his cheeks, 'Praise be to the Allāh that did not take my life so that I could see you here. Extend your hand that I may pledge allegiance to you.' He extended his hand and pledged allegiance, then he came down from the pulpit and left the masjid." Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام asked, "Salmān, do you know who that was?" I said, "No, but he upset me. It seemed as though he spoke facetiously of the Prophet's death." Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام said, "That was Satan—may Allāh curse him."[5]

2. The beautification of ugly deeds: Satan makes ugly deeds seem beautiful so that people begin to gravitate toward them. This

[5] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, pp. 343-344:
فَقَالَ لِي يَا سَلْمَانُ هَلْ تَدْرِي مَنْ أَوَّلُ مَنْ بَايَعَهُ عَلَى مِنْبَرِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وآله؟ قُلْتُ: لاَ أَدْرِي إِلاَّ أَنِّي رَأَيْتُ فِي ظُلَّةِ بَنِي سَاعِدَةَ حِينَ خَصَمَتِ الْأَنْصَارُ وَ كَانَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ بَايَعَهُ بَشِيرُ بْنُ سَعْدٍ وَ أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ ثُمَّ عُمَرُ ثُمَّ سَالِمٌ قَالَ لَسْتُ أَسْأَلُكَ عَنْ هٰذَا وَ لٰكِنْ أَتَدْرِي أَوَّلَ مَنْ بَايَعَهُ حِينَ صَعِدَ عَلَى مِنْبَرِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وآله قُلْتُ لاَ وَ لٰكِنِّي رَأَيْتُ شَيْخاً كَبِيراً مُتَوَكِّئاً عَلَى عَصَاهُ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ سَجَّادَةٌ شَدِيدُ التَّشْمِيرِ صَعِدَ إِلَيْهِ أَوَّلَ مَنْ صَعِدَ وَ هُوَ يَبْكِي وَ يَقُولُ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يُمِتْنِي مِنَ الدُّنْيَا حَتَّى رَأَيْتُكَ فِي هٰذَا الْمَكَانِ ابْسُطْ يَدَكَ فَبَسَطَ يَدَهُ فَبَايَعَهُ ثُمَّ نَزَلَ فَخَرَجَ مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ فَقَالَ عَلِيٌّ عليه السلام هَلْ تَدْرِي مَنْ هُوَ قُلْتُ لاَ وَ لَقَدْ سَاءَتْنِي مَقَالَتُهُ كَأَنَّهُ شَامِتٌ بِمَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وآله فَقَالَ ذَاكَ إِبْلِيسُ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ.

phenomenon is referred to in the Qur'ān as "the confounding of truth and falsehood."[7] Beautifying ugly deeds is a relatively easy task that conforms to base human desires. It is for this reason that the following verse was revealed: "Satan made their actions seem beautiful to them, and then diverted them from Allāh's path."[8]

3. False promises: By making false promises and encouraging one's farfetched hopes, Satan keeps a person's mind engaged in thoughts that are far from reality. As a result, the person remains heedless of Allāh ﷻ. The following verse mentions this phenomenon: "Satan promises them and compels them to entertain farfetched hopes."[9]

4. Fear: Another of Satan's tricks is to frighten people about the future. Such fear results in hopelessness, cynicism in Allāh ﷻ, a lack of trust in Allāh ﷻ, and finally complete abstention from any benevolent actions. For instance, Satan frightens people of poverty to such an extent that they are driven to miserliness, as the Quran states: "Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you toward sin."[10]

---

[7] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 42:

﴿ وَلاَ تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْـتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

[8] *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16), Verse 63:

﴿ تَاللّهِ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلـى أُمَمٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴾

[9] *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), Verse 120:

﴿ يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيهِمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلاَّ غُرُوراً ﴾

[10] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 268:

﴿ اَلشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللّهُ يَعِدُكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلاً وَاللّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴾

18

THE POWER OF SATAN AND THE JINN

Question: To what extent do Satan and the other jinn have power over human beings?

Brief Answer

The words "satan" and "jinn" are repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'ān. There is also a chapter in the Qur'ān named "al-Jinn". "Satan" is a common noun that denotes any creature that is mischievous, misleading, and delinquent, whether it be human or not. "Iblīs" is a proper noun and is the ʿArabic name of the particular satan who deceived Ādam and Eve عليهما السلام and even now lays in wait for any opportunity to deceive the sons of Ādam.

The word "jinn" is etymologically derived from a word meaning "to hide" or "to be hidden." It denotes a creature made of fire that possesses both a body and a soul. The jinn are held legally accountable before Allāh ﷻ and can choose to believe or disbelieve.

Some people's understanding of the jinn is full of hyperbole and fantastic stories, while others reject their existence all together—repudiating even true accounts of jinn. The Qur'ān and aḥādīth describe jinn as powerful creatures. For example, in Sūrat al-Naml (27), Verse 39, the Qur'ān recounts the story of an *ʿifrīt* (one kind of jinn) who claimed to be able to bring the throne of Bilqīs to Sulaymān عليه السلام "quicker than you can stand up." It should be noted that Sulaymān عليه السلام did not repudiate this jinn's claim, thus indicating that he truly possessed the power. However, one must be careful not to exaggerate such information out of proportion, thereby claiming that jinn have infinite power. Such a belief is tantamount to *shirk* (the attribution of partners to Allāh ﷻ). No

creature, no matter how powerful, can act without Allāh's ﷻ sanction. For this reason, Satan has power to misguide only those people who have relinquished their belief in one Allāh ﷻ and have surrendered to the temptations of Satan. Accordingly, Satan himself admits that he has no power over Allāh's ﷻ sincere servants when he swears, "I shall misguide them all except Your sincere servants."[1]

Satan's sole influence over man is by way of whispering temptations. He can never strip man of his free will. In philosophical terms, Satan's non-materiality is not complete, therefore he cannot reach the lofty station that the spirit of the righteous enjoys. Giving into the temptation of the carnal soul (*al-nafs al-ʿammārah*) opens the way for satanic influence thereby pulling man into Satan's traps. The sole respite from his grasp is to turn one's attention to Allāh ﷻ and seek his protection. Allāh ﷻ says, "You (Satan) have no power over my servants."[2]

Detailed Answer

The Etymology of Satan and Jinn

We begin our discussion by analyzing the words "satan" and "jinn," and then investigate the limits of Satan's power.

"Satan" means "banished" or "mischievous". In its singular form, "satan" has been used 71 times in the Qurʾān and in its plural form, 18 times. Both the Qurʾān and aḥādīth indicate that Satan is one of the jinn.

"Satan" is a common noun that denotes any creature that is mischievous, misleading, and delinquent, whether it be human or not. "Iblīs" is a proper noun and is the ʿArabic name of the particular satan who deceived Ādam and Eve ﷺ and even now lays in wait for any opportunity to deceive the sons of Ādam.

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Ḥijr* (15), Verse 39-40:

﴿ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ. إِلاَّ عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴾

[2] Ibid., Verse 42:

﴿ إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ... ﴾

The Etymology of Jinn

The word "jinn" has been used 22 times in the Qurʾān. "Jinn" is derived from a word denoting "to hide" or "to be hidden." Jinn are created from fire or from an amalgam of fire. In the language of the Qurʾān, jinn are conscious beings with free will that are hidden from human perception under normal circumstances. Like mankind, jinn are legally accountable to Allāh ﷻ and can choose to believe or disbelieve. They will be raised on the Day of Judgment.

Mulla Sadra describes the jinn in the following terms: "Jinn have substantial existence both in this corporeal realm and in the unseen or imaginal world. Now, as for their existence in this world, it is as we explained before—there is no substance that has any type of subtlety and composure whatsoever but that it contains a spirit and a soul which has been infused into it from the source of Pure Activity. Perhaps the reason why jinn can manifest and hide themselves at different times lies in the subtlety of their bodies. They can disperse the components of their bodies and then collate them. When they collate their bodily components, they can be seen. And when they disperse themselves, they become invisible like water vapour which appears like clouds when condensed and disappears when heated."

Just like human beings, jinn possess a body and spirit and are conscious and have free will. Some are male and others female. They reproduce and are legally accountable to Allāh ﷻ. They are born and they die. They can choose to believe or disbelieve.

The Relationship between Jinn and Satan

The Arabic word "*shayṭān*" conveys the adjectival meaning "mischievous." The term has been used in the Qurʾān in this very meaning. However, it is also used alternatively for *Iblīs* and for any being for whom mischief has become a deep-rooted character trait. In fact the Qurʾān explicitly states that a "satan" can be from the ranks of jinn or man.

The Limits of Satan's Power

In the dualistic religion of pre-Islāmic Iran, *Ahrīman* was thought to be the creator of all evil. Some may think Satan in the Qur'ān is the counterpart of *Ahrīman* of ancient Iran. This is a mistaken belief since Satan had no role to play in creation whatsoever. Allāh ﷻ created everything, and no other being besides Allāh ﷻ can create independently. In the Qur'ān, Allāh ﷻ derogates such beliefs when he says, "They make the jinn partners of Allāh ﷻ, when He has created them, and they carve sons and daughters for Him without any knowledge."[3]

Satan has power to incite man with tempting thoughts, to call him toward evil, and to make evil seem beautiful to him. He has no power to force anyone to do anything.

It is true that both angels and jinn have the power to descend upon people. The descent of angels is not limited to the moment of death. For example, if someone says, "Allāh" with full attention, angels descend upon him. Jinn also have certain such powers. For instance, they can perform feats with incredible speed. Though their power of intellect is weak, they are able to move heavy objects with great speed. Some verses of the Qur'ān indicate that jinn—like humans—are physical beings.

In the story of Sulaymān ﷺ, one jinn claims to be able to bring Bilqīs's throne to Sulaymān's ﷺ court quicker than he can stand up. Though he does not actually perform this feat, Sulaymān ﷺ does not repudiate his claim, indicating that he did possess such an ability. In other verses, jinn are able to listen to the Qur'ān being recited (a feat requiring that they have the physical faculty of hearing).

---

[3] *Sūrat al-An'ām* (6), Verse 100:
﴿ وَجَعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴾

Satan's Influence

Satan launches his assaults on mankind from every direction. As the Qur'ān says: "I shall approach them head on and from behind and from the right and from the left."[4] Satan's exerts his influence on man's thoughts. He launches his assaults from various fronts, of which we mention a few:

1. He tries to deter man from worshipping Allāh ﷻ according to the requirements of revelation by tempting him to act according to his own desires.

2. He influences man's ability to think rationally so that instead of reaching conclusions based on solid reasoning, he accepts fallacies that only seem to be rational.

3. He influences man's ability to understand reality as it is. He skews man's understanding or convinces him to reject the possibility of understanding such reality. In this way, Satan first corrupts one's perception of reality, then his ability to comprehend reality, and finally his actions.

The Qur'ān and aḥādīth indicate that Satan and his cohorts only have influence over people who have surrendered their devotion to Allāh ﷻ and who—in a fit of heedlessness—have fallen into a stupor of self-conceit. Of his own admission, he has no influence over Allāh's ﷻ true servants. "I shall misguide them all except Your sincere servants."[5]

In philosophical terms, Satan's immateriality is not complete, therefore he cannot reach the lofty station that the spirits of the righteous enjoy. However, this does not stop him from trying to mislead such people.

People have invented a myriad of myths about jinn that do not make logical sense. If however, we strip away the myths, the basic belief in their

---

[4] *Sūrat al-A'rāf* (7), Verse 17:

﴿ ثُمَّ لَآتِيَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ... ﴾

[5] *Sūrat al-Ḥijr* (15), Verses 39-40:

﴿ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ. إِلاَّ عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴾

existence is totally logical. In particular, we have no reason to believe that living beings are limited to those things we can perceive. Rather, the aḥādīth indicate that imperceptible beings are more in number than perceptible ones: "Allāh created the jinn of five types: a type like airborne odours and fragrances, a snake-like type, a type like scorpions, a type like insects of the earth, and a type like mankind who will have to give accounts and will receive retribution."[6]

As history attests, it is in large part because of the myths that people have created around the jinn that many otherwise rational scholars have come to deny their existence altogether. In reality, each group has lost the truth by going to extremes. Islām affirms the existence of the jinn but rejects the fantastic tales surrounding them. It is for this reason that one chapter of the Qur'ān specifically addresses the topic of the jinn.

It is essential to remember that in the Islāmic worldview, all that exists—whether they be angels, jinn, or human beings, and whether they are material or immaterial—are creations of Allāh ﷻ, and can only act according to Allāh's ﷻ will. Allāh ﷻ constantly reminds us in the Qur'ān that no cause, whether material or immaterial, can act independently. Life and death, benefit and loss, are all subservient to His power. Therefore, one must always remember Him and trust in Him and seek sanctuary in Him. It is by establishing such a relationship with Allāh ﷻ that one can inoculate himself against all harm. As the Qur'ān says, "Nothing can harm them except by Allāh's leave."[7]

We are also warned about human beings and jinn who are evil (literally, who are "satans"), as one author states: "Never incline towards them. Satan is the sworn enemy of Allāh and man. He has taken a solemn oath to misguide you. However, his power over you is limited to whispered

---

[6] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 60, pg. 267:
خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ الْجِنَّ خَمْسَةَ أَصْنَاف: صِنْفٌ كَالرِّيحِ فِي الْهَوَاءِ، وَصِنْفٌ حَيَّاتٌ، وَصِنْفٌ عَقَارِبُ، وَصِنْفٌ حَشَرَاتُ الْأَرْضِ، وَصِنْفٌ كَبَنِي آدَمَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْحِسَابِ وَالْعِقَابَ.

[7] *Sūrat al-Mujādalah* (58), Verse 10:
﴿ ...وَلَيْسَ بِضَارِّهِمْ شَيْئًا إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللّٰهِ...﴾

temptation and he can never negate your free will. The source of evil thoughts is in the human soul itself (*al-nafs al-ʿammārah*). This aspect of the soul is the Achilles' heel of the human being through which Satan acts. Allāh ﷻ has said, "We created man and we know the temptations of his soul; we are closer to him than his jugular vein.[8]" He also said, "Indeed as for My servants you do not have any authority over them, except the perverse who follow you."[9]

[8] *Sūrat Qāf* (50), Verse 16:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ ﴾

[9] *Sūrat al-Ḥijr* (15), Verse 42:

﴿ إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلاَّ مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ﴾

19

RESURRECTION

Question: Please discuss the issue of resurrection in detail both from a rational and a natural or instinctive perspective. Please refer to important books regarding this topic.

Brief Answer

The answer to this question will be clarified by examining three philosophical perspectives—that of *Mashā'* (Peripatetic Philosophy), *Ishrāq* (Illuminationist Philosophy), and *Hikmat al-Muta'āliyah* (Transcendental Philosophy), as well as the opinions of *Kalām* (Theology), and *'Irfān* (Mysticism). Among the topics discussed by scholars on this issue include topics such as the possibility of resurrection, its concrete existence, its proof, and the circumstances surrounding the occurrence of resurrection of the body, the soul, or both. Hence the answer will be comprised of the following:

a. The concept of resurrection.

b. The possibility and actual occurrence of resurrection.

c. Claims and descriptions pertaining to resurrection.

d. Proof of resurrection.

a. Concepts such as:

1. Returning to one's original abode.

2. Death after life and life after death.

3. Existence of a world similar to this world and the gathering of all mankind.

4. Return of the soul to its origin and source.

5. Transfer of the soul from this world to the next.

6. Gathering of individual souls within the collective the soul.

7. Resurrection or rising of people from their graves.

b. Firstly, the possibility of resurrection and its occurrence must be proven. Its possibility can be easily understood from the existence of this world.

c. Many scholars and philosophers believe in the resurrection of the body and the soul. However, they disagree on the manner in which the body is resurrected—whether it is the material body of this world, or the imaginal body of the purgatory, or perhaps the particular intellectual and metaphysical body that returns.

d. The logical reasons provided in the Qur'ān for resurrection are as follows:

1. The afterlife is a requirement for the purposefulness of this world, the establishment of justice, and the perfection of humanity. The same Allāh who created mankind in the first place and Who wills seeds to grow in the earth is also very much capable of resurrecting mankind.

2. Among the logical reasons for resurrection is the existence in every human of a single unique soul which is not affected by changes in the physical characteristics of the body. Perfection is not achieved during the period the soul is with the body. It is reached when resurrection occurs. The death of the body is a consequence of the soul's attention to the next world and is its homecoming or return to its origin and eternal abode. The idea of creation necessitates that mankind are transposed to a better world. The return of the soul to its origin is a necessity of the concept of resurrection. The soul has greater desire towards its origin than it does to its physical body and its greatest joy is to see the truth. Resurrection is the manifestation of some of the blessed names of Allāh such as the Returner, the Enlivener, the Gatherer, the Cause and etc.

3. Natural Reasons: All of the fundamental principles and secondary precepts of religion, including resurrection, come naturally to human

beings—being innate and inborn to the soul. The desire to be eternal is natural and will be realized through resurrection. The ultimate desire of mankind is not material pleasure. The fear of death and what's associated to it is a clear indication of the natural desire to be eternal.

Detailed Answer

The answer to this question will be clarified by examining three philosophical perspectives—that of *Mashā'* (Peripatetic Philosophy), *Ishrāq* (Illuminationist Philosophy), and *Hikmat al-Muta'āliyah* (Transcendental Philosophy), as well as the opinions of *Kalām* (Theology), and *'Irfān* (Mysticism). Each of these will be discussed in further detail depending on the availability of resources and sometimes quoting from authorities in order to further clarify the topic. It should be noted a perusal of the works of Ibn Sina reveals the fact that he did not offer any logical proof for resurrection. He was of the belief that the only reason to affirm the reality of resurrection was its confirmation by the Prophet—after which he saw no need for a logical proof. However, he did express his opinion on other topics related to the afterlife.

But now, as to the scholars of *Kalām*, a brief quotation from them will suffice to illustrate their opinion with regards to the resurrection:

Since mankind is composed of a body and a soul, the conditions of his return to the next world can be discussed from both a physical and a spiritual sense. In general, any discussion on resurrection can be divided into two sections: proving resurrection and its necessity, and the manner in which it occurs—whether physical, spiritual, or both.

Philosophers have generally either not given much attention to the first section or have paid more attention to the manner in which resurrection occurs—concentrating on its physical dimension even though they may accept both physical and spiritual resurrection. This is because physical resurrection has typically been more controversial. In line with this, the subject of resurrection in this question can be divided into four main topics:

a. The concept of resurrection

1. Returning to the original abode

2. Death after life and life after death

3. The creation of another world similar to this world and the gathering of all mankind from the first to the last.

4. Return of the soul to its origin

5. Transfer of the soul from this world to the next

6. Gathering of individual souls within the collective soul (Allāh)

7. Resurrection meaning the rising of the people from their graves in the afterlife when Allāh will judge their deeds and the angels will enter in rows upon rows

One of the conclusions that can be reached from the above points is that the fundamental condition of resurrection is being transferred to the next world. Hence, subjects such as death, survival of the soul, eternal life and etc. are only preliminary discussions.

b. Possibility of resurrection and its occurrence

It is senseless to discuss any topic unless and until its possibility has been proven. Whether it is proven through the proof of something that is its kind, or through the proof of something that supercedes it. The creation of another world is either like creating this world, or it is even easier. The very existence of this world is indicative of the possibility of the existence of such a world, and hence the possibility of the existence of a similar world, meaning the next world. Thus we can discuss the occurrence of the next world and resurrection.

c. Claims and descriptions of resurrection and the circumstances of its occurrence

According to Mullā Sadrā, many scholars, philosophers and a group of scholars of *Kalām* believe in both a physical and spiritual resurrection based on the return of the soul to the body.[1] He also introduces his belief

[1] *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād*, pp. 488-489

as the return of the same identical body to its soul and believes this to conform to both logic and religion. He believes that disagreeing with this is blasphemy (*kufr*) and is denying the text of the Noble Qur'ān.[2]

Meeting in resurrection; the body of the dead is returned with its same parts so that if someone sees him, he says that this is the same person that was in the previous world.[3]

According to the principles of Mullā Sadrā, man although one, has three realms and dimensions in which he subsists: sense, imagination, and intellect. Man's existence is initially material and of the order of the natural world, but with its development it becomes spiritual and then goes on to become the intellectual being that is of the next world. All three bodies pertain to the same single individual and are akin to the changes that occur in a person from childhood to old age. What personifies the body is the soul and the soul is one. Therefore, the body of the next world is the same body from this world that has reached perfection.

However, according to the scholars of *Kalām*, the return of the body occurs through the gathering of the physical parts of the body and reintegrating them into one whole. These body parts have unique characteristics due to the fact that they possess one unique soul. As a result, by the will of Allāh each body is recreated from its own parts. After this stage the body rejoins the soul and the same worldly human is recreated. (304.

Even though Ibn Sina believed in both a physical and spiritual resurrection, he was unable to provide a logical argument for physical resurrection and obtained his belief from religion; conversely as for spiritual resurrection, he believes it is verifiable through logic and presents it with logical arguments.

Shaykh al-Ishrāq does not believe in physical resurrection, namely the resurrection of the body alongwith the soul. Instead, he believes in a body of the world of purgatory (*Barzakh*) and that the soul returns to its origin

[2] *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād*, pg. 490
[3] Ibid.

because of its love for it—returning once again from the disarray of the lower world to the world of light.

d. Proof of resurrection

1. Logical reasons extracted from the Qur'ān:

a. Allāh is the Truth and does not do anything in vain. An aimless world is vain. Thus, a world in motion must have a goal toward which it is moving and in which it will find its rest; this world of rest is the world of resurrection.

b. The All knowing Allāh never does anything that contradicts His wisdom and justice and because this world is not able to provide what is just for a believer and a disbeliever, there must be a day on which all receive justice for their deeds.

c. A concomitant result of the mercy of Allāh is that mankind eventually reaches perfection. Hence, there must be a resurrection so that mankind can reap the benefits of his deeds and reach perfection.

d. The Almighty Allāh who created mankind in the first instance is most certainly capable of creating the same humans a second time.

e. When a seed is placed in the earth and water and earth surround it, logically it should decompose; instead it opens and splits into a root, which penetrates the ground, and a sprout, which grows out of the ground. This is a sign of the power of Allāh and His infinite wisdom, something that is also capable of bringing about the resurrection.

2. Logical arguments

a. According to the Mullā Sadrā and his *Hikmat al-Muta'āliyah*: In his *Asfar, Mabda' wa Ma'ad,* and *Shawahid al-Rububiyyah* he mentions certain principles which are either altogether or for their most part specific to his own philosophy. He goes on to declare the actuality of physical and spiritual resurrection on the following basis: Although the properties of the body change, the soul remains the same and is what

personifies the body. Thus the body and soul of this world are resurrected.[4]

b. Existence is good and awareness of it is also good. The more complete an existence, the greater the good. Thus the existence of intellect and cognition is nobler and its contentment greater. The pleasure obtained from understanding is indescribable. This is because intellection is more intense vis a vis perception, the perceiver and the perceived that sense perception. However, this greater good is not attained when the soul is dependent on the body and it will only be achieved when this restriction is removed.[5]

c. When the soul reaches a level where its dependence on the body is lessened and its attention towards the afterlife is greater, it will separate from the body through a natural death. This separation is not because the body is incapable of keeping the soul but instead due to its natural attraction to the other world. If this were not the case, the body's incapability to keep the soul would have been more evident at the beginning of its creation.[6]

d. Mankind has been created with great intricacy and detail. A high-ranking angel has worked his mould for forty days. It seems very illogical that Allāh would be content with his annihilation; instead He wills that mankind leave this low status towards a noble station.[7]

e. Return of the soul to its origin is a necessity of the phrase *ma'ad* or "return". Return means going back to where one came from.[8]

f. Perspective of Shaykh al-Ishrāq: The desire of the soul towards its origin is greater than towards its own body. The more it disassociates from the material, the greater its desire towards the other world. If the body is defeated, at the moment of death, the soul returns to its origin. For the soul, there is no greater joy than achieving perfection. If the soul does not achieve this because of being busy with the body and the

[4] *al-Asfār al-Arba'a*, vol. 9, pp .185-197
[5] Ibid. pp. 121-123
[6] *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād*, pg. 527
[7] Ibid. pp. 526-527
[8] Ibid. pg. 528

material, after separating from the body, all the facts will be revealed to it and the blessings of Allāh will rain down on him.[9]

g. Pespective of scholars of *Kalām*: Religions sent from God have promised rewards and punishments for good and bad deeds. However, Allāh's justice is not fully realized in this world alone. Hence, there must be another world, which is deserving of this realization.

h. Gnostic's perspective: Allāh is certainly worthy of the manifestation of all His blessed names and qualities. There is an appropriate time and place for each blessed name and quality. The full manifestation of blessed names such as the Returner, the Giver of Life, the Gatherer, etc will occur in the next world.

3. Natural or innate reasons for resurrection

a. The source of all fundamentals and branches of religion is from one's nature; otherwise there wouldn't be any coherence between creation and its guidance.

b. The ultimate desire of mankind is not the material world. This is true since by reaching it, the desire does not dissipate. Human nature is focused on achieving perfection. After traveling through the various stages of life, man's attention will be on the afterlife and his potential will reach its limit and he will return to his origin.

c. The desire for everlasting existence is natural; otherwise mankind would never fear death. All the natural desires of mankind are so that he can reach perfection and have wisdom to them. The wisdom in this is the existence of another world, since this world is not deserving of eternal life.

d. The fear of death and what is associated with it has clearly shown itself throughout history and is a sign of mankind's natural desire for eternal existence.

[9] *Ḥikmah al-Ishrāq* [Farsi Translation], pp. 367-368

20

HEAVEN AND HELL

Question: Do heaven and hell exist at present or will they be created later?

Brief Answer

According to the Qur'ān and aḥādīth, heaven and hell exist at present. However, they will become fully apparent and represented only in the Hereafter at which time each person, according to his actions, beliefs, and ethical behaviour, will be led to his eternal abode.

Nevertheless, prior to the Hereafter, both heaven and hell can reveal themselves either as visions in this temporal world or as manifestations in purgatory *(barzakh)*, serving in both cases as reward or punishment for the one who sees them. There is little difference of opinion among the scholars up to this point. However, there are other aspects of heaven and hell that require more explanation. In particular:

1. What is the relationship between a person's beliefs, actions, and thoughts and his station in the Hereafter?

2. What justification is there for the existence of heaven and hell?

3. What different types of heaven and hell exist?

In brief, the paradise in which Ādam and Eve عليهما السلام resided and from which they were sent down to Earth; the heaven or hell of one's actions which envelops a person; and the heaven and hell of purgatory are all simply manifestations of the ultimate, eternal heaven and hell. Additionally, whether a person's eternal abode is heaven or hell depends on his own choices and actions in this world.

Detailed Answer

Belief in heaven and hell as the eternal abode in which a person will remain after the Day of Judgment, and belief in the details of how heaven and hell are created and then perfected, comprise a part of what is known as "belief in the unseen" (*al-īmān bil ghayb*). As such, the only means for attaining knowledge of these things is revelation.

At the same time, until heaven and hell are witnessed first hand in the Hereafter, they do not cease to be part of the unseen world. Therefore all the doubts and questions associated with the unseen apply to the details of heaven and hell as well. However, these doubts and questions are not such that they prevent one from attaining surety of the basic existence of such things.

Among these questions is the question at hand about whether or not heaven and hell exist at present. If they do exist, where are they located? In what state are they? Is heaven simply fallow land that man must cultivate? Is it incompletely built requiring man to complete its construction? Is it complete, and man simply enters it in the Hereafter? Will heaven and hell be created in the Hereafter itself?

To answer these questions, we must first tackle two essential issues:

1. What is the relationship between man's actions in this temporal world with his situation in the Hereafter?

2. What types of heaven and hell exist?

Several rationalizations have been offered to explain the relationship between a person's worldly actions and his punishment or reward in the Hereafter:

1. Punishments and rewards are arbitrarily apportioned in the Hereafter for particular actions, intentions, and thoughts just as certain forms of capital punishment or monetary penalties are apportioned as retribution in this world. Based on this explanation, the relationship between actions and recompense is arbitrary, not intrinsic.

2. Retribution in the next world follows the special theory of relativity. In particular, the energy a person expends in this world for any given action

is converted to matter in the Hereafter, thereby causing him pleasure or pain.

3. Human actions possess an exoteric and esoteric aspect. In this world, most people can see only the exoteric aspect. However, in purgatory to some extent, and in the Hereafter, to the full extent, the esoteric side of these actions will manifest themselves. It is the manifestation of this esoteric aspect of one's actions that causes him pain or pleasure in the Hereafter.

4. A person's actions and thoughts issue from the exoteric faculties of his mind and bodily limbs. In addition, these actions affect his esoteric spirit, though he may be quite unaware of any such effect. In this world, most people perceive the exoteric aspects in themselves and in others. Similarly, in the afterlife, the esoteric aspects will become apparent for all to see. A person will appear in the form that he gave himself in this world through his good and bad actions. It is this form that causes his pain or pleasure.

The first two opinions do not conform to the verses and aḥādīth related to this topic. The other two explanations do accord with some of the verses and aḥādīth, but they cannot explain all aspects of purgatory and the Hereafter.

With respect to the second question about the different kinds of heaven and hell, the following opinions have been presented:

1. Allāh's ﷻ threats, warnings, promises, and glad tidings concerning heaven and hell are simply means of keeping human beings in line. It is not necessary that heaven and hell actually exist. The mere fact that people do good out of their desire for paradise and refrain from bad out of fear of hell, is in itself a virtual paradise.

2. Paradise is another word for a classless, utopian, Islāmic society. Hell on the other hand is a capitalistic society. Therefore, those seeking heaven should work to establish the ideal proletarian state, so that they can avoid the hell of capitalism.

3. Paradise is actually a planet in our universe that will be discovered when the technology of space travel advances sufficiently. We shall then be able to colonize "paradise" and escape from the "hell" of earth.

4. Heaven is tantamount to the attainment of positive attributes and hell is the attainment of evil attributes.

These four explanations are materialist in nature, and are at odds with the Qur'ān and aḥādīth, and contradict the philosophy and rationale behind sending prophets and revealing books. The heaven and hell described in the Qur'ān will only appear after death on the Day of Judgment, and are eternal abodes, not evanescent and fleeting.

1. The paradise in which Ādam and Eve عليهما السلام resided after being created, and from which they subsequently descended to earth, was in reality a part of this temporal, material world. If this were not the case, they would not have been expelled from it, and its form would have been determined by their prior actions.

Manifestations of the esoteric reality of human actions are sometimes witnessed by gnostics even before death,and by pure believers and extreame disbelievers after death, in their graves. Such manifestations will be a source of pleasure or pain for these people prior to Judgment Day. Because these manifestations of heaven and hell are witnessed before Judgment day, they are in reality part of the temporal world. They envelop every person and are perceptible to saints or in the realm of dreams. This view of heaven and hell accords with the third and fourth opinions mentioned above concerning the interplay between actions and retribution.

2. The Qur'ān and aḥādīth indicate that the heaven and hell of the Hereafter exist at present. Certain parts of these two realities were shown to the Prophet ﷺ during his Mi'rāj (ascension).

Every person has two places reserved for him: one in paradise and one in hell. If he leaves this world with faith and good deeds, he will occupy his place in heaven. If not, he will be cast into his place in hell. The particularities of his reward or punishment are determined by his actions in this world.

In an authentic narration from Imām Ja'far b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليهما السلام, it is said: "Not a person has been created except that a place has been created for him in paradise and hell. When the righteous enter paradise and the people of hell enter hell, a voice will command the people of paradise to gaze toward hell. They will look therein and see their own places in hell. It will say, "This is the where you would be if you had sinned against your Lord." At witnessing this, they will become so elated that if it were possible to die in paradise, they would die of happiness for being spared such punishment. Then a voice will command the people of hell to gaze at paradise and see their places therein. It will say, "If you had obeyed your Lord, you would have experienced such pleasures." At witnessing this, they will be so distressed, that if it were possible to die in hell, they would die of sadness. Then the places in paradise that had been reserved for the people who are in hell will be given to the inhabitants of heaven, and the places in hell that has been reserved for the people of heaven will be given to the residents of hell. This is the meaning of the verse in which Allāh says of the people of heaven, "It is they who will be the inheritors, who shall inherit paradise, and will remain therein forever."[1] and [2]

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Mu'minūn* (23), Verse 10-11:

﴿ أُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴾

[2] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 8, pg. 125, 287:

أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ عليه السلام قَالَ: مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ خَلْقاً إِلاَّ جَعَلَ لَهُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ مَنْزِلاً وَ فِي النَّارِ مَنْزِلاً، فَإِذَا سُكِّنَ أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ الْجَنَّةَ وَأَهْلُ النَّارِ النَّارَ نَادىٰ مُنَادٍ: يَا أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ أَشْرِفُوا، فَيُشْرِفُونَ عَلىٰ النَّارِ وَتُرْفَعُ لَهُمْ مَنَازِلُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ لَهُمْ: هٰذِهِ مَنَازِلُكُمُ الَّتِي لَوْ عَصَيْتُمْ رَبَّكُمْ دَخَلْتُمُوهَا. قَالَ: فَلَوْ أَنَّ أَحَداً مَاتَ فَرِحاً لَمَاتَ أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ فِي ذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمِ فَرِحاً لِمَا صُرِفَ عَنْهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ، ثُمَّ يُنَادُونَ: يَا مَعْشَرَ أَهْلِ النَّارِ إِرْفَعُوا رُؤُوسَكُمْ فَانْظُرُوا إِلىٰ مَنَازِلِكُمْ فِي الْجَنَّةِ فَيَرْفَعُونَ رُؤُوسَهُمْ فَيَنْظُرُونَ إِلىٰ مَنَازِلِهِمْ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَمَا فِيهَا مِنَ النَّعِيمِ، فَيُقَالُ لَهُمْ: هٰذِهِ مَنَازِلُكُمُ الَّتِي لَوْ أَطَعْتُمْ رَبَّكُمْ دَخَلْتُمُوهَا. قَالَ: فَلَوْ أَنَّ أَحَداً مَاتَ حُزْناً لَمَاتَ أَهْلُ النَّارِ ذٰلِكَ

In conclusion, the particular heaven or hell that is to be man's eternal abode exists at present and is perfected by one's thoughts, beliefs, and actions. However, no one other than the Prophet ﷺ has seen these eternal abodes. That paradise in which Ādam and Eve عليهما السلام lived, and the heaven and hell that can be seen before death in dreams and visions, and during death and after death in the grave are simply manifestations of those eternal abodes.

الْيَوْمَ حُزْناً، فَيُورِثُ هٰؤُلاَءِ مَنَازِلَ هٰؤُلاَءِ، وَهٰؤُلاَءِ مَنَازِلَ هٰؤُلاَءِ، وَذٰلِكَ قَوْلُ اللّٰهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: ﴿ أُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴾

21

THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE PROPHETS IN THE QUR'AN

Question: Explain the infallibility of the prophets. Why is it that some verses of the Qur'ān contradict their infallibility?

Brief Answer

The answer to these questions can be summarized in the following points:

1. Infallibility is a state of the soul that makes an infallible person shun sins or any unpalatable acts and protects him from mistakes and forgetfulness without negating his free will.

2. The secret behind the infallibility of the prophets lies in their direct vision and intuition of reality, their perfect faith and certainty, and their deep love for Allāh ﷻ; along with their profound awareness of Allāh's ﷻ majesty and the realization of His attributes. In addition, through infallibility, Allāh ﷻ strengthens the prophets against the deceptions of Satan and the desires of the carnal soul.

3. Numerous rational proofs confirm the necessity of the infallibility of the prophets. The clearest of these proofs is the fact that Allāh's ﷻ purpose in creating man can only be fulfilled through their infallibility.

4. If some verses of the Qur'ān seem at first glance to contradict these rational proofs, we must examine those verses more carefully, reflect deeper on their apparent meaning, and uncover their true meaning.

5. Numerous verses affirm the existence and even the necessity of infallibility, although the term "infallibility" has not been used. We cite below some examples:

a. Some verses describe a number of the prophets as *mukhlaṣīn* (those who have been purified). For example, see 38:45-48. In these verses, one who is *mukhlaṣ* is one who has not been and cannot be misguided by Satan.

b. Numerous verses explain that the prophets have been guided by Allāh ﷻ. For example, see 6:84-90. It is inconceivable that someone who has been guided by Allāh ﷻ could be misguided or make a mistake.

c. In many verses Allāh ﷻ has unconditionally commanded people to obey the prophets. See 3:31-32 and 4:80 and 24:52. It is clear that such an unconditional command from Allāh ﷻ requires that they be infallible.

d. The verses 72:26-28 indicate that Allāh ﷻ protects his prophets from all perspectives.

e. The Verse of Purification (*āyah al-taṭhīr*) found in 33:33 clearly indicates the infallibility of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

1. Those verses that seem to contradict the prophets' infallibility are either conditional propositions that do not indicate that they have sinned or they pertain to the believers, not the prophets.

2. With respect to the prophet Ādam عليه السلام, in whose infallibility many have doubted, the following can be said. First, the proscriptions in the verses related to this discussion are *irshādī* (advisory) in nature, not *mawlawī* (a command issued by a superior to an inferior with the hopes that the command will be obeyed). Second, even if they were *mawlawī* imperatives, they do not indicate that a failure to fulfil the commands is tantamount to a sin, but rather that Ādam chose a lesser of two permissible paths. Third, the world in which Ādam was living at the time was not a world entailing legal responsibility toward Allāh ﷻ. In such a world, disregarding a command cannot be considered a true sin. If we see occasionally that Allāh ﷻ addresses the prophets with a sharp tone, this is because they are, after all, men with the faculties of anger and lust and the needs of animals. Therefore, they also require constant admonishment and guidance in such a way that if they were left to themselves for an instant they would be destroyed.

Detailed Answer

Let us begin answering this question by defining the term infallibility (*ʿiṣmah*). ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī defines infallibility as "the presence of a quality in a person that prevents him from committing any impermissible act such as a sin."

Al-Fādil al-Miqdād, a ranking Shīʿī theologian, presents a more thorough definition, when he says, "Infallibility is a trait bestowed by Allāh to a legally accountable individual *(mukallaf)* in such a way that the presence of this trait negates in this individual any motive to disobey or commit a sin while he remains capable of doing so. This bestowal is a consequence of the person's acquisition of a moral habit *(malakah)* of refraining from sin. In addition, this person is aware of the reward earned through obedience and the punishment incurred through disobedience and is apprehensive of forgetfulness and failing to perform the better of two praiseworthy acts."

It is essential to note that infallibility never compels a person to obey nor prevents him from disobeying. Rather, his faith, knowledge, and perception of Allāh's greatness has reached a level where they do not allow him to commit a sin or disobey Allāh ﷻ. According to several aḥadīth, Allāh ﷻ strengthens the prophets and Imāms through the Pure Spirit, the Spirit of Faith, the Spirit of Strength, the Spirit of Lust, and the Lofty Spirit.

Now that we have defined infallibility, we turn to an analysis of the intellectual and textual proofs for the existence of this trait in certain individuals. As a preliminary note, when examining the verses of the Qur'ān concerning the infallibility of the prophets, it is important to keep in mind that Divine revelation can never contradict human reason. Therefore, we must read these verses in light of reason, so that no contradictions occur.

With respect to the infallibility of the prophets, we will mention only one rational proof. Al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, in a very terse statement, says, "Infallibility is necessary for a prophet so that surety in him is attained, and as a result, the purpose of creation is fulfilled." In other words, a

prophet must be infallible so that mankind can trust the revelation that he brings.

Some scholars have expressed this proof in the following way: "Once the intellect independently accepts the existence of Allāh and the logical possibility of revelation and prophethood (in a general sense, not as pertains to any specific prophet), the intellect then affirms the necessity of the infallibility of the prophets in receiving and conveying divine revelation. The evidence for this is that since Allāh has sent his prophets to guide mankind, he must send a person who is neither careless nor forgetful, much less sinful. If not, He will contradict His own purpose in sending prophets, revelation, and in essence, the purpose of creation itself. If the prophets were capable of carelessness, forgetfulness, or sin, people would never fully trust that what they say is from Allāh. They would always entertain the possibility that the prophets have lied to them or made a mistake or misunderstood Allāh's intent."

This theological principle is firmly based on the attributes of Allāh ﷻ himself. In particular it is based on His omniscience *('ilm)*, omnipotence *(qudrah)*, the purposefulness of His actions *(ḥikmah)* — both in creation and legislation — and in essence, on the fact that He is free from impropriety, injustice, and purposelessness. If a prophet were to make a mistake in receiving or conveying revelation, this mistake would demonstrate either ignorance, weakness, or incompetence in Allāh's ﷻ actions. In reality, if the prophet were not infallible, either he would accidentally or intentionally make mistakes in guiding people or, at the very least, his people would not trust him sufficiently, either in terms of his claims to prophethood or in terms of the message and duties that he brings. In the first case, the prophethood would become a cause for the misguidance of people. In the second case, the prophethood would be utterly without purpose. Far be it from Allāh ﷻ to either misguide or act without purpose.

Until now, we have defined infallibility and presented one intellectual proof for the necessity of this quality in the prophets. We now turn to an examination of the Qur'ānic verses that deal with infallibility. We shall discuss these verses in two sections. The first section comprises verses that

support the infallibility of the prophets. The second section examines verses that seem to contradict their infallibility. Finally, we shall present our answer to the initial question.

Qur'ānic evidence in support of infallibility

Many verses in the Qur'ān speak of the quality of infallibility in the prophets, though they do not necessarily use the word *ʿiṣmah*. We can divide and discuss these verses in the following manner:

1. Some verses refer to the prophets as *mukhlaṣīn* (those who are especially chosen). One who is *mukhlaṣ* cannot be misguided by Satan, and is therefore, infallible. The following verses serve as an example: "And remember our servants: Ibrāhīm, Isḥāq, and Yaʿqūb, men of strength and insight. We purified them through a special trait: the remembrance of the abode of the Hereafter. They are, in our estimation, amongst the elect, the righteous. And remember Ismā'īl, Ilyās, and Dhū al-Kifl, each of whom was among the righteous."[1]

In these verses, prophets who were among the *mukhlaṣīn* are mentioned.

In conjunction with other verses that quote Satan as saying, "By your might, I shall surely pervert them except your chosen *(mukhlaṣ)* servants among them"[2] or "Without a doubt, I shall misguide them except those who are chosen (*mukhlaṣ*) from amongst them,"[3] it becomes clear that the *mukhlaṣīn* are those who are out of Satan's reach and are therefore infallible.

---

[1] *Sūrat Ṣād* (38), Verses 45-48:
﴿ وَاذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ. إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَىٰ الدَّارِ. وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ. وَاذْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِنَ الْأَخْيَارِ ﴾

[2] Ibid., Verse 82:
﴿ قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ... ﴾

[3] *Sūrat al-Ḥijr* (15), Verse 39-40:
﴿ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ. إِلاَّ عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴾

2. Another group of verses mention the presence of "divine guidance" in the prophets. For example: "We granted Ibrāhīm, Isḥāq and Yaʿqūb and we guided them both. And we had guided Nūḥ before them. And from his progeny, we guided Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Ayyūb, Yūsuf, Mūsā, and Harūn. In this way do we reward the righteous. Similarly Zakariyya, Yaḥya, ʿIsā, and Ilyās were all amongst the righteous. We chose men from amongst their fathers, children, and brothers, and guided them to the straight path. This is Allāh's guidance … These are people whom Allāh has guided, so follow their guidance (O Muḥammad). I do not ask you any remuneration for this message. This message is simply a reminder for all people." [4]

These verses indicate that the prophets have been guided by Allāh ﷻ. In conjunction with the verse where Allāh ﷻ says, "There can be no one to misguide him whom Allāh ﷻ guides,"[5] it becomes clear that no one can misguide the aforementioned prophets since they have been guided by Allāh ﷻ. And since committing a sin is a form of misguidance, we can conclude that these prophets are free from sin—that is, they are infallible.

The fact that these verses mention these particular prophets as chosen prophets can serve as corroborating evidence for their infallibility. They have, after all been chosen to guide other people, thus they themselves

---

[4] *Sūrat al-Anʿām* (6), Verses 84-90:
﴿ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلاًّ هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ. وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَإِلْيَاسَ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ. وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا وَكُلاًّ فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ. وَمِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ. ذَٰلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَلَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ. أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَيْسُوا بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ. أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهُدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهِ قُلْ لاَ أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ ذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

[5] *Sūrat al-Zumar* (39), Verse 37:
﴿ وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُضِلٍّ ﴾

must have already been guided. In addition, the last verse quoted above commands Muḥammad ﷺ to follow the guidance of these prophets. Clearly, for the final prophet—with his high status—to be commanded to follow his predecessors indicates their infallibility. Otherwise, following one who is not himself infallible will eventually lead to misguidance.

3. A third group of verses calls on all Muslims to obey the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. For example, one verse says, "Say: if you love Allāh, then follow me so that Allāh should love you and forgive you your sins. Allāh is forgiving, merciful. Say: obey Allāh and his messenger. If you turn away, Allāh does not love the disbelievers."[6]

A verse in Sūrat al-Nisā' says: "Whoever obeys the Prophet has obeyed Allāh."[7]

Other verses also speak of unconditional obedience of the Prophet and such unconditional obedience necessitates his infallibility, otherwise, the result would be misguidance rather than guidance!

Besides the three groups of verses we have mentioned, there are other individual verses that could be mentioned to support the infallibility of all prophets in general or of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in particular. One verse says: "He is the Knower of the unseen. He apprises no one of His secrets except chosen prophets whom He has surrounded with protectors so that He may be assured that they have conveyed their Sustainer's message. He has complete knowledge of what is with them. He has encompassed all things."[8] Another verse reads, "Allāh wishes only to

---

[6] *Sūrat Āl-i 'Imrān* (3), Verses 31-32:
﴿ قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ. قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾

[7] *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), Verse 80:
﴿ مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّى فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ﴾

[8] *Sūrat al-Jinn* (72. Verses 26-28:

repel all impurity from you—O people of the Household—and purify you thoroughly."[9] It should be noted that Allāh's ﷻ "wish" in this verse denotes his existential will and not his legislative will. Furthermore, because his existential will cannot be negated (i.e. whatever he wills must necessarily occur), the "people of the household" have necessarily been purified of all defilement—foremost of which is sin. This verse thereby establishes the infallibility of these "people of the household." Who exactly is included in the "people of the household" is outside the parameters of our discussion, but undoubtedly, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ himself is included. Therefore, the verse explicitly indicates his infallibility. This assertion, in conjunction with the following logical proposition leads us to the conclusion that all prophets are infallible. This proposition says that all scholars are divided between two views concerning the infallibility of the Prophets: either they are all infallible, or they are all fallible. No one claims that some prophets are fallible while others are not. Therefore, by establishing the infallibility of the final prophet through the aforementioned verse, we can conclude that all prophets are infallible.

Qur'ānic verses that seem to contradict the infallibility of the prophets

Once we have logically established the necessity of the prophets' infallibility, if we encounter verses that seem to contradict our reason, we must look more carefully at the verses to understand their true intent. An examination of all such verses would require an entire book, however, in order to answer the question at hand, we shall examine a sampling of these verses.

﴿ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلاَ يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا. إِلاَّ مَنِ ارْتَضَى مِنْ رَسُــولٍ فَــإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا. لِيَعْلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رِسَالاَتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَحْــصَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا ﴾

[9] *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* (33), Verse 33:

﴿ ...إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴾

1. One verse reads like this: "It has been revealed to you (O Muḥammad) and to all the prophets that if you ascribe partners to Allāh, all your actions will come to naught and you will be amongst the losers. Instead, worship Allāh alone and be amongst the grateful."[10]

From this verse, it appears that associating partners with Allāh ﷻ is possible even for the prophets. Otherwise, it would make no sense to warn them of such a possibility. The argument against this misinterpretation is that the prophets are free to choose disbelief because, as we stated earlier, infallibility does not negate a person's free will. However, the prophets will never actually become disbelievers because their deep understanding of Allāh ﷻ and their direct relationship with Him prevents them from considering sin, if even for a second. Rather, this verse indicates two meanings. First, it is a conditional statement that indicates that "your actions will come to naught" if the condition of ascribing partners to Allāh ﷻ occurs, not that "ascribing partners" is going to occur. Second, the verse indicates the danger of ascribing partners to Allāh ﷻ, and informs us that such a sin will not be tolerated from even the prophets. In reality this verse clarifies the duty of all people with respect to this sin by making an example of the prophets. Such an analysis of these verses has been narrated from Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā عليه السلام when he says, "Such verses are speaking to all believers, although they may be addressed to the Prophet ﷺ."[11]

Another similar verse reads: "The Jews and the Christians will never be satisfied with you until you accept their religion. Say: The sole guidance is the guidance that comes from Allāh. If you (Muḥammad) give in to

---

[10] *Sūrat al-Zumar* (39), Verse 65-66:
﴿ وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ. بَلِ اللَّهَ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴾

[11] *Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, vol. 4 pg. 497:
قَالَ الرِّضَا عليه السلام: هٰذَا مِمَّا نَزَلَ بِإِيَّاكَ أَعْنِي وَاسْمَعِي يَا جَارِهُ خَاطَبَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالَى بِذٰلِكَ نَبِيَّهُ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَأَرَادَ بِهِ أُمَّتَهُ، وَكَذٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيُحْبِطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِيْنَ وَقَوْلُهُ تَعَالى.

their whims and desires despite the knowledge that has reached you, you will have no protector or helper against Allāh."[12]

One might ask, is it possible for the Prophet ﷺ to give in to the whims and desires of the Jews and Christians? First of all this verse like the one before it is a conditional statement and therefore does not indicate that vthe condition will occur. Second, as we clarified before, the Prophet's ﷺ infallibility does not make it impossible for him to sin. Rather, it is his understanding, fear of Allāh ﷻ, and faith that makes him shun sin. Third, this statement may be speaking to all believers, although it is addressed to the Prophet ﷺ.

2. A second group of verses is represented by the following verse: "We have not sent a prophet or a messenger before you except that whenever he wished (for something), Satan cast (something) into his wishes. Then Allāh nullifies what Satan had cast and then Allāh confirms his signs. Allāh is All-Knowing, Wise ... (He does this so) that those who have been given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Sustainer, and so they may have faith in it, and that their hearts may be humbled before Him."[13]

These verses are among the strongest arguments of those who deny infallibility. In order to cast doubt in the authenticity of the Qur'ān, Orientalists have also discussed these verses. They interpret the "casting" of Satan into the wishes of the prophets as a sort of interference in revelation. In this way, they seek to reject the infallibility of the prophets in both the reception and conveyance of revelation. Another

---

[12] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 120:
﴿ وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلاَ النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللّٰهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ وَلَئِنْ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلاَ نَصِيرٍ ﴾

[13] *Sūrat al-Ḥajj* (22), Verses 52,54:
﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلاَ نَبِيٍّ إِلاَّ إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰ أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللّٰهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللّٰهُ آيَاتِهِ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ... وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ ... ﴾

interpretation that they present is that Satan whispers to the prophets, thereby weakening their resolve to guide their people.

Certainly these verses mean nothing of the sort. Allāh ﷻ explicitly negates the existence of such whispers and interference from the prophets. The correct interpretation of these verses is as follows. In every age, when prophets were sent to guide people, Satanic forces from among men and *jinn* attempted to interfere with the divine mission by corrupting the message in order to misguide people. The Qur'ān refers to this phenomenon when it says: "he promises them and gives them hope; but Satan promises them nothing but misguidance."[14] In the verses from Sūrat al-Ḥajj, Allāh ﷻ states that He does not sit idle in the face of these satanic plots, but rather rushes to aid His prophets and deliver them victory.

3. Other verses that require close attention are those that describe the story of the prophet Ādam ﷺ.[15] These verses seem to indicate that Ādam ﷺ was deceived and misguided by Satan, and is therefore fallible.

We can address these doubts in several ways:

First, the negative imperative in these verses (i.e. "do not approach this tree") is *irshādī* (advisory) in nature, not *mawlawī* (a command issued by a superior to an inferior with the hopes that the command will be obeyed). In particular, these verses are spoken with the tone of one who is sympathetically advising another because he knows the outcome of his actions. Acting against such an advisory imperative does not contradict Ādam's ﷺ infallibility.

Second, for argument's sake, if the imperative was of a *mawlawī* nature, it was not one that was compulsory for Ādam ﷺ to follow. Rather, it was showing him the better of two permissible paths. When he acted against this imperative, he was not committing a true sin (that deserves punishment), but rather what might be considered a "sin" with respect to

[14] *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), Verse 120:

﴿ يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيهِمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلاَّ غُرُورًا ﴾

[15] Refer to *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verses 35-37, *Sūrat al-A'rāf* (7), Verses 19-24, and *Sūrat Ṭāhā* (20), Verses 115-123.

his high station. This is what is commonly referred to by the phrase, "the good deeds of the righteous are like sins for those closest to Allāh."

Third, that which contradicts infallibility is for a legally accountable person *(mukallaf)* to commit a sin. On the other hand, Ādam ﷺ was at that time, in a place where no laws existed. It was only after the fall, when he began his life on Earth, and laws were decreed that legal accountably to Allāh ﷻ began. Therefore, any failure to follow Allāh's ﷻ instruction before this time does not contradict his infallibility. Furthermore, the verse also says that the station of prophethood was granted to him after his repentance. Therefore, if someone believes that prophets are only infallible during their prophethood, this action of Ādam's ﷺ would not contradict his infallibility. However, if one believes that a prophet is infallible from birth (as Shīʿī scholars believe), such an argument would not suffice.

4. Other verses suggest that some of the other prophets committed sins or admitted to committing mistakes that contradict their infallibility. These verses mention the prophets Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Yūsuf, Mūsā, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Ayyūb, and Yūnus ﷺ. A thorough examination of these verses would require an extensive discussion and therefore, we refer the reader to exegeses of the Qurʾān that deal with this topic more extensively.

5. Some verses refer to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ himself, and have been key points of argument for those who deny his infallibility. One such verse reads, "We granted you a clear victory that Allāh may forgive you your past sins and those to come and complete his blessing upon you and guide you on a straight path."[16]

These verses apparently indicate that the Prophet ﷺ has committed and will commit sins, and that Allāh ﷻ has forgiven him for all of these by means of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah.

---

[16] *Sūrat al-Fatḥ* (48), Verses 1-2:
﴿ إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا. لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا ﴾

The correct interpretation of these verses is quite different. First, the words *dhanb* (sin) and *ghufrān* (forgiveness) have been used here to indicate their literal meanings, not the meanings they have come to connote in Islāmic nomenclature. In particular, the denotation of *dhanb* is an unsavoury consequence of an action. *Ghufrān* means to cover or hide. Consequently, the meaning of the verse is: "we have granted you this victory in order to hide the consequences of your mission."

Before and after the *hijrah* (the Prophet's ﷺ emigration from Mecca to Medinah), the pagans of Mecca held many misconceptions about Islām and the Prophet that were corrected by his subsequent victories. In addition, the initial upheaval that the Islāmic mission had caused in the pagan way of life was quickly forgotten because of the victory he was granted.

Since the terms *dhanb* and *ghufrān* have not been used in their conventional meaning (i.e. sin and forgiveness), this verse in no way contradicts the Prophet's infallibility. Second, even if one insists that these terms have been used in their conventional meanings, the "sins" that are referred to are those actions of his that the pagans of Mecca considered sins, not sins against Allāh ﷻ.

Another similar verse reads, "May Allāh forgive you. Why did you grant them permission to stay back? (You should not have done so) so that it would become clear to you who are the truthful, and so that you would know the liars."[17]

Some have taken the word *ʿafā* (he forgave) to indicate that the Prophet ﷺ had committed sins and is therefore fallible.

We can answer this attack by saying that the sentence *ʿafā Allāhu ʿanka* is an indicative sentence that has been used here as a prayer *(duʿā')* to honor the Prophet ﷺ just as the statements *ʿayyadaka Allāhu* (may Allāh empower you) and *raḥimaka Allāhu* (may Allāh have mercy on you) are used. Consequently, these phrases do not contradict the Prophet's ﷺ

[17] *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), Verse 43:
﴿ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ لِمَ أَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَتَعْلَمَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴾

infallibility at all. In the words of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, "Those who misinterpret these verses are in fact playing with the words of Allāh and do not understand the Qur'ān at all. They do not even know the ABC's of the Qur'ān."

We conclude our discussion of the verses that seem to contradict the infallibility of the prophets hoping that what we have presented is sufficient for the reader to correctly interpret the remaining verses.

It remains to be explained why such verses exist in the Qur'ān and why Allāh ﷻ addresses his prophets with such a sharp tone at times.

Despite the lofty station of the prophets, they are human beings like us. Like all human beings, they are invested with the faculties of lust, anger, and human desires. Therefore, they require constant guidance from Allāh ﷻ. If they are left to their own devices for even an instant they would be destroyed. For such people who have been vested with the responsibility of the guidance of all mankind, even a momentary lapse in their resolve is therefore considered a tremendous sin. It is for this reason that Allāh ﷻ sometimes addresses them in a strict tone and it is for this reason that they are in constant need of prayers and forgiveness.

To recapitulate, in the face of conclusive logical proofs, we must forgo the apparent meaning of verses that seem to contradict these proofs. With this methodology, no verses in the Qur'ān contradict the infallibility of the prophets. Additionally, there are a myriad of verses that explicitly indicate that the prophets are infallible, of which we have mentioned a few.

22

THE ORIGINAL SIN OF ADAM AND EVE

Question: Did Ādam commit a sin? What about the question of the infallibility of the Divinely sent prophets?

Brief Answer

In order to arrive at the answer, a few preliminary points must be considered. It must first be pointed out that the Divine prophets and their deputies enjoy lofty spiritual and existential stations in the order of existence. They are the hidden rays of Divine effusion; the complete manifestations and clear signs of the Beauty and Majesty of the Truth. The clay of their bodies and the forms of their souls were moulded by the might of both of the Divine arms—Beauty and Majesty—and were taught the reality of the Divine Names and Attributes in the pre-eternal world of the Unseen.

The second point that must be addressed is in regard to the question of infallibility. There are a range of views in this regard, among them:

1. They are infallible vis-à-vis the major sins but are vulnerable to the minor sins;

2. They are vulnerable to both major and minor sins;

3. They do not commit sins intentionally but may do so by mistake;

4. They are absolutely infallible.

The final view, which is the correct one, is that of the Shīʿa and is supported by a variety of reasons, one of which is that if they were vulnerable to sin, it would defy the purpose of their mission, for in that

case the masses would not be willing to trust and follow them; such a scenario runs contrary to the wisdom of the Omniscient Lord.

Now the cause of their infallibility is their all-encompassing knowledge of obedience and disobedience, of what is permitted and what is forbidden, and generally speaking of vice and virtue (or in a word, their theoretical intellect) that keeps them from sinning (which is carried out by the faculty of the practical intellect).

A relevant question in the context of Ādam's عليه السلام sin is where Ādam عليه السلام resided before banishment. It could not have been the promised Paradise; for, firstly, as asserted in the Divine Text leaving Paradise is not possible; secondly, Satan is not allowed in Paradise, and finally, there are no restrictions on the consumption of any fruit in Paradise.

The last point meriting mention in this context is in regard to the nature of Ādam's عليه السلام error. One of the posited explanations is that it was not a sin but a neglect of what was more meritorious (*tark awlā*); for, firstly, prophets are infallible; secondly, considering the lofty station of the prophets, it would not be inappropriate for them to be upbraided on account of neglecting what is more meritorious—hence, the adage, "The righteous deeds of the good folk are the sins of those brought nigh to Him;" thirdly, neglecting the more meritorious has in fact occurred among the prophets—as in the story of Yūnus عليه السلام—and so is a likely possibility.

But as to the question of why Ādam and Eve عليهما السلام were not forbidden from the consumption of the forbidden fruit on earth as they were in the Garden of Eden, there are several possible explanations. It is possible that the forbidden tree was an actual tree, a plant, the consumption of which entailed banishment from the heavenly life that they were enjoying, and as such there would have been no reason for the prohibition of that tree on earth. And as elucidated in the appropriate place, religious directives vary based on location, time, and other particular circumstances.

Another possibility is that the tree in question was a spiritual reality. In this case, that tree was either the tree of knowledge, which is of course not defensible as it is contradictory to definitive Qur'ānic and traditional

principles. For, as related in the Qur'ān, Ādam عليه السلام was not only not restricted in the acquisition of knowledge but in fact he was taught all the "names" thus becoming the teacher of the angels.

Another possibility is that the tree is a metaphorical allusion to the trait of envy. Of course since Ādam عليه السلام was a messenger of God, the envy in question should be construed as a sort of longing, possibly a longing for the spiritual station of the Prophet of Islām, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn عليهم السلام. Also in this context it may refer to the condemnation of jealousy before entering this world.

Detailed Answer

In reply to the above question, three issues must be examined. However, it is necessary to note the fact that the absolute infallibility of the infallibles عليهم السلام—i.e., the prophets and the Imāms—is the consequence of their luminous and lofty spiritual and existential stations in the order of existence. They are the hidden rays of Divine effusion; the perfect manifestations and the clear signs of the Beauty and Majesty of the Truth. The clay of their bodies and the form of their souls were moulded by both of the Divine arms—i.e., Divine Beauty and Majesty—and so they were taught the reality of the Divine Names and Attributes in pre-eternity in the world of the Unseen. They have always enjoyed the friendship of God, the Exalted; they see themselves in the perpetual presence of God, and it is precisely this sense of presence that precludes the committing of sin, although they are still capable of it.

As regards the question of the infallibility of the prophets عليهم السلام, there are conflicting views among Muslim sects. However the main positions can be organized into five groups:

1. The prophets عليهم السلام are infallible vis-à-vis the major sins but might commit the minor sins. Moreover, they are bestowed with infallibility at reaching adulthood. This is the view espoused by the majority of the Muʿtazilites.

2. They are infallible vis-à-vis the deliberate perpetration of sin but are prone to the inadvertent commission of sin. Moreover, the prophets are

bestowed with infallibility after being appointed to prophethood. This view is held by Abū ʿAlī Jibāʾī.

3. The prophets are infallible vis-à-vis all sins except those committed inadvertently. They will, however, be punished for such sins, although the common folk are not liable in such cases. This discrepancy is due to the height of the prophets' spiritual station. This view is embraced by Nazzām and those who follow his school of thought.

4. Prophets are susceptible to the commission of sin, any type of sin, whether major or minor, and whether intentional or unintentional. This is the view embraced by *Hashawīyyah* and a number of the traditionalists (*ahl al-hadīth*).

5. Prophets are absolutely infallible in regard to all types of sin, whether major or minor, and whether intentional or unintentional. This is the view espoused by the *Imāmīyyah*, the Shīʿites. According to the Shīʿite school of thought, the prophets are endowed with infallibility even before they are appointed to prophethood. The only negative deed that they might perform is acting in opposition to what is encouraged (but not mandatory) or what is more meritorious.

The *Imāmīyyah* support their belief by a number of arguments, three of which will be mentioned here.

1. If they were to commit sins that would indicate their inferiority to the lowest of people, as the knowledge which they possess of the Creator is not available to others. Hence, considering the knowledge which has been bestowed to them regarding Allāh ﷻ and the reality of sin and disobedience to the command of the Lord—if they were to sin, they would be the most sordid of sinners.

2. The commission of sin by the prophets would pose a dilemma to the believers. For, as Divine messengers they aught to be obeyed, but as sinners, their obedience would not be permissible. Thus such a scenario would entail the coincidence of obligation and prohibition, i.e., the concurrence of two opposites, which is impossible.

3. The purpose of the Divine mission of the prophets is to serve as exemplars to be obeyed, to instruct their societies, and to dissuade the believers from sin. If the commission of sin be possible for the prophets that would translate into their people's lack of trust in them—a trust which is necessary in order to advance their mission, hence defeating the purpose of their mission. And such is unbecoming and thus impossible in respect to the Wise Lord.

The infallibility of the prophets and the Imāms عليهم السلام derives from their complete knowledge and direct witness of the unseen realities (which is due to their Divinely inspired theoretical intellects) which prevents them from committing sin (and this aspect can be attributed to their Divinely reinforced practical intellects). In this light it becomes clear that their infallibility is a volitional matter due to their Divine knowledge of what is permissible and what is not and of vice and virtue.

The second issue is the location of Ādams's عليه السلام residence prior to his banishment to earth. Was it the promised Paradise of the Hereafter or a terrestrial heaven? Some are of the opinion that it was the promised Paradise. Although Paradise does not accommodate obligation, but this does not pose a problem in the case of Ādam and Eve عليهما السلام, for the eternal residence in Paradise is the result of acquired eligibility, which was lacking in their case.

But there are several problems with this view. Firstly, if he resided in Paradise which does not accommodate obligation, then why does the Qur'ān state that he disobeyed Allāh ﷻ? And how was Satan capable of disobedience? Secondly, if it were Paradise, then Satan would not have had access to it? Thirdly, the consumption of all the bounties of Paradise is permissible and Allāh ﷻ does not prohibit anything there, while Ādam عليه السلام had been prohibited from eating the fruit of the forbidden tree.

Therefore, it seems that the correct view is that he was in a terrestrial paradise. This view is actually substantiated by hadiths which specify that it was a garden in this world, pointing out that Ādam and Eve عليهما السلام would even witness the setting of the sun and the moon. There are however contradicting hadiths indicating that the place of their residence was in a heavenly location. This contention is corroborated by the usage of the

word *hubūt* in speaking of the banishment, which denotes descending from a higher level to a lower level.

The third issue is in regard to Ādam and Eve's عليهما السلام deed: whether they committed a sin or not? There are three positions on this question, two of which are the more important. The first position is that, firstly, it was a minor sin, and secondly, it preceded Ādam's عليه السلام prophethood, and hence the station of prophethood was not violated. Several reasons have been cited in support of this position, among them: the verses that deal with this issue clearly indicate the sinful nature of the deed, for the word *ʿisyān* occurs in them, which in the Qurʾān is employed only in the sense of sin. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that the command addressed to Ādam prohibiting the consumption of the fruit in question ("*lā taqrabā*") was an advisory warning. And furthermore, it does not make sense that Ādam عليه السلام repented on account of disregarding an *advice*.

The other position—which seems to be the correct one of the two—is that Ādam عليه السلام was in fact a prophet when committing the deed in question, for Jibrāʾīl would visit him and the visitation of Jibrāʾīl indicates prophethood, for he does not visit anyone but prophets. This point is strengthened by the fact that Allāh تعالى taught Ādam عليه السلام all the "names" and it was only he that knew them and not even the angels had that knowledge. On that account, Ādam عليه السلام was appointed teacher to the angels, bestowing to them the knowledge of the "names". All these incidents were prior to Ādam's عليه السلام eating from the forbidden tree. Hence, it can be inferred that Ādam عليه السلام was in fact a prophet when he committed the deed in question.

The problem is that according to the Shīʿa school of thought, prophets are absolutely infallible and are even free of minor sins. Thus, the prohibition must be interpreted as an advisory warning and so Ādam's عليه السلام guilt was neglecting that which was more meritorious. But since prophets are at a high station of Divine knowledge, they are guilty even in the case of neglecting what is more meritorious. This is witnessed also in the stories of Yūnus عليه السلام (when he became angry with his tribe and lost all hope in guiding them and so abandoned them without asking permission

from Allāh ﷻ, whereat Allāh ﷻ confined him to the belly of a whale, where if he had not become contrite and repented, he would have remained till the Day of Judgment)[1] and Yūsuf ﷺ (when he sought help from an inmate instead of Allāh ﷻ for deliverance from prison).

Although it should be noted that neglecting the more meritorious of deeds does not warrant punishment in the case of the ordinary people, for "The righteous deeds of the good folk are the sins of those brought nigh to Him." It is for this reason that the midnight prayer was obligatory for the Prophet while it was an encouraged act for everyone else. It is thus that the laypeople's performance of rituals, which is fraught with distraction and negligence, is inappropriate in the case of the prophets of Allāh ﷻ.

According to this position, *ʿisyān* must be construed as "opposing the word of the Lord". "Word" could either apply to what is obligatory or otherwise something just encouraged. Hence, the claim that the usage of *ʿisyān* in the sense of ignoring that which is encouraged is inaccurate loses ground. Furthermore if in fact *ʿisyān* literally denotes disobeying a command, in this case because of the presence of irrefutable proofs it must be interpreted accordingly.

The word *ghawā* in the verse in question[2] denotes harm and loss, for if Ādam ﷺ had abstained from eating from the forbidden tree, he would have deserved a great reward. And repentance in his case was not for redressing a sin, rather for a deed that was unbecoming of his status. This must be complemented by the fact that repentance is not always for rectifying a sin. It is, however, always efficacious in severing the chains of bondage to other than Allāh ﷻ, thus meriting a great reward, although one might not be sinful.

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Anbīyāʾ* (21), Verse 87:

﴿ وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنتُ مِنْ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

[2] *Sūrat Ṭāḥā* (20), Verse 121:

﴿ فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَىٰ ﴾

But as regards to why he was not banned from consuming the forbidden tree after banishment or as to whether he regained his original status, first the meaning of the "tree" and its consumption must be understood. There are two possibilities as to the meaning of the "tree": It was either a concrete plant—such as wheat, fig, camphor, etc.—or a spiritual reality. In the latter case, it could not have been the "tree of knowledge" as some have contended, for he was the most knowledgeable creature after Allāh ﷻ, to the extent that he became the teacher of the angels. Another possibility is that it was the tree of jealousy, which would have to be understood as an inclination toward a positive thing owned by someone else, not the prevalent form of jealousy, for it would be in conflict with the status of prophethood. It has been suggested that his jealousy was in seeing the status of the Prophet of Islām, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn ﷺ and realizing his inferiority. This is a more likely possibility as jealousy is even now a detestable trait condemned by God. It has been stated in a hadith that jealousy devours one's faith even as fire consumes a cotton ball.

If however the "tree" refers to a concrete tree, it must be said that it is not wrong for the ruling on a subject to be different in differing times and locations. For instance, in the very early years of Islām, Muslims were directed to pray facing Jerusalem. That changed later on and they were commanded to pray facing the Kaʿbah. Or consider the case of consuming the corpse of an animal not slain according to the prescribed rite, where in normal circumstances it is forbidden while it has been allowed—or depending on the case obligated—in the case of an emergency to save a starving person from death. To turn back to the story of Ādam ﷺ, eating from the forbidden tree was prohibited in that particular time and place but permissible at other times and locations. Furthermore, if Ādam ﷺ was banished to earth, it was as the direct result of eating from that tree, and so that deed was injurious only in the celestial realm and not on earth.

We would like to close this essay by noting that if the dear readers are interested, this topic can be pursued at a higher level.

23

THE PURPOSE OF RELIGION

Question: Did religion come to imprison us or to set us free?

Brief Answer

Freedom, from the point of view of religion, can be studied under two headings: spiritual freedom and socio-political freedom. From the spiritual perspective, man's essence or immaterial self is free from corporeality, materiality, and material characteristics. It is nostalgic of its place of origin, the realm of the Dominion and the spiritual world. But due to the attachment of his soul to the body, it is entangled with worldly and material affairs. Man has no choice but to pursue his perfection through the means that this world affords, for this world is the cultivation field for the hereafter. However, most people tend to view the world in an independent way and are ignorant of its true value which is found in its relation to the hereafter. Hence they get caught up in frivolities and trivial pleasures and this bars them from ascending to the heights of perfection. Instead of concentrating on the essence and reality of things they are distracted and consider the sensible phenomena as ultimate reality—being utterly oblivious of the *malakūt* (the celestial realm) and spiritual reality of things. It is in this vein that the seekers of the material world perceive freedom as paramount to enjoying the pleasures of the world without any restraints, whereas true freedom lies in extricating oneself from the snares of lust, and it is this freedom which religion encourages. From the religious point of view, even the mighty king who is constantly expanding his empire might be a slave, a slave to his self, while it is very probable that someone living in utter poverty might have absolute sovereignty.

In conclusion: what the seekers of the material world pursue is the illusion of imaginary freedom, but that which religion encourages is real freedom.

Regarding social and political freedom, Islām neither advocates radical freedom and anarchy, nor does it compel the believer to surrender to all external circumstances and unjust powers, something that would undermine his dignity.

It can be said that individual and social freedoms do exist in Islām but with a qualification that fundamentally distinguishes them from those that are espoused by the Western worldview. For Islām is Allāh-centred, and as such, ordains that man, in his intellectual discernment and application of will, refer only to Allāh ﷻ. In the domain of moral upliftment and cultural progress, Islām exhorts the human community to establish justice and forbids its members from infringing on the rights of each other, while at the same time encouraging them to expand their knowledge and intellectual endeavours with a view to the proper application of knowledge.

Detailed Answer

Our spirit, from the point of view that it is essentially immaterial, is free from matter and body and the properties of bodies. The spirit of man has neither length, breadth, height nor depth, nor qualities such as heat, coldness, the six directions and the other attributes of bodies. The spirit is from the world of "command" *(ʿalam al-amr)* and looks towards its own world. The beings of the realm of existence are either in the world of creation and matter or in the world of dominion *(malakut)*, command, and immateriality. Above the world of bodies that contains temporal and mutable things, there is another world that contains beings that are not subject to change and do not exist in time. This is the world of command that envelopes, comprehends, and rules over and above the world of creation. Both the command and the creation belong to Allāh ﷻ as the Noble Qur'ān has indicated: "Be aware that the creation and the

command belong to Allāh, who is High and is the Creator of the World."[1]

The descent of the sprit from the world of command to the world of creation means that the human soul is in a certain sense imprisoned in the lower world *(dunya)*. Yet, it is necessary for man to obtain his acquired perfections by means of this world and it is because of this that this world is considered the cultivation field for the next world. Looking at this world as if it were independent and by itself keeps man away from spiritual wayfaring and journeying to the next world. It makes him forget about even the possibility of soaring free in the supernatural realms. If man persists in this myopia and grounded behaviour, he begins to think that he will be in this world forever. According to the words of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ, "He who looks at the world with insight, the world will give him wisdom and he who sews his eyes unto the world, the world blinds him."[2]

The life of this world. Allāh ﷻ has described the life of the world as follows: "Verily, the life of this world is sport and vanity."[3]

Play or sport is an action whose goal is imaginary. Vain actions are those that that make man forget others. The verse indicates the fact that the life of this world (that is the attachment of the soul to the body) busies man with himself to the point where he forgets others. The cause of this is the fact that the world deceives the soul in such a way that it makes him think that he is the body or one with the body. After being deceived in such manner, it is only natural that he becomes disconnected from the other world and forgets all of the greatness and beauty that was in the world of command. In this way, his life passes in sport and vanities. He

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf* (7), Verse 54:

﴿ أَلاَ لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَ الْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

[2] *Nahjul Balāghah*, Sermon 82:

وَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ بِهَا بَصَّرَتْهُ وَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ إِلَيْهَا أَعْمَتْهُ

[3] *Sūrat Muḥammad* (47), Verse 36:

﴿ إِنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَ لَهْوٌ ﴾

turns to everything with imaginary and fanciful goals. When he reaches those illusionary goals, he finds nothing.

Allāh ﷻ says that "Those who disbelieve, their actions are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty person believes it to be water. When he reaches it, he does not find anything there except Allāh."[4]

The person who believes in the primacy of material beings turns all of his attention to sensible things and he is totally unaware of the hidden aspect of things. Such a person wastes his life in eating, drinking and play. According to the words of the Noble Qur'ān, they only know the apparent aspect of the world and they are unaware of the next world.[5]

But the person who looks at the hidden aspect of things takes their apparent aspect as only a sign for the hidden. He considers the apparent to be a shell for the kernel that is the hidden. In no circumstance will he sacrifice the kernel for the shell. As the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ has said, "The friends of Allāh are the ones who look at the hidden nature of the world, while the ordinary people look at the apparent; they are concerned with the future while the people are concerned with transient things."[6]

Those who seek the world surmise that freedom means having all their worldly wishes granted and having unlimited use of riches. They are not aware of the fact that in reality, if we give in to the commands of our carnal soul, we become ever more bound by the shackles of our material body. This is because the carnal soul is that aspect of the human soul that

---

[4] *Sūrat al-Nūr* (24), Verse 39:
﴿ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَاءً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ... ﴾

[5] *Sūrat al-Rūm* (30), Verse 7:
﴿ يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ ﴾

[6] *Nahjul Balāghah*, Short Saying 432:
إِنَّ أَوْلِيَآءَ اللهِ هُمُ الَّذِينَ نَظَرُوا إِلَى بَاطِنِ الدُّنْيَا إِذَا نَظَرَ النَّاسُ إِلَى ظَاهِرِهَا، وَاشْتَغَلُوا بِآجِلِهَا إِذَا اشْتَغَلَ النَّاسُ بِعَاجِلِهَا.

pays more attention to bodily desires and hopes to remain forever in the world.

In reality freedom means to be free from the snares of this world and our lower desires. This is the freedom that religion seeks to achieve. According to religion it is possible for someone to be the king of the world but because he is entrapped by his base desires, he is not free. How many a people exist who live in the most constricting poverty yet remain the masters of their own will. If the power of desire and anger come under the guidance of reason, then not only will they not corrupt the soul, but rather they will grow and become beneficial. True freedom is the dominion of reason (over desire and anger) in the kingdom of the soul.

According to religion, slavery is the domination of anger and desire over man. As Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام has said, "How many an intellect is in the captivity of its desires."[7]

Again, that great personality has said, "Is there not a free man amongst you who would give this (the world) to its owner?! Know that there is no greater trade for your soul than heaven. Therefore do not sell your soul for less than that."[8]

When man becomes free from his base desires, he will be successful in society and his cultural activities. As can be understood from the Noble Qur'ān, man faces enemies from the outside and the inside who wish to enslave him. Freedom from these two kinds of enemies constitutes the inner and outer freedoms. Unfortunately some groups like the Sufis have overemphasized inner freedom to such an extent that they have forgotten the outer enemy i.e. the false Gods of gold and embellishment. In opposition to them, some groups have spent all their energies in fighting outer powers, seeking to gain freedom in society. They consider every limitation to be the cause of man's slavery.

---

[7] Ibid., Short Saying 211:

كَمْ مِنْ عَقْلٍ أَسِيرٍ تَحْتَ هَوًى أَمِيرٍ.

[8] *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, no. 3589:

أَلاَ حُرٌّ يَدَعُ هذِهِ اللُّمَاظَةَ لِأَهْلِهَا إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ ثَمَنٌ إِلاَّ الْجَنَّةَ فَلاَ تَبِيْعُوْهَا إِلاَّ بِهَا.

There is another group that believes that in order for man to reach perfection, felicity, and freedom, both kinds of freedom are necessary. These two freedoms are interrelated. Freedom in society is not possible without spiritual freedom.

In order for us to make an ideal and humane society it is necessary that we don't go to extremes and obtain both types of freedoms. Therefore, in religious ideology and thought, neither is absolute freedom permissible nor are we compelled to accept all the external conditions of an unjust government. Hence in Islām there is a concept of social freedom, but it is very different from what is meant by the term in the West.

The great prophets came to construct the world but they look at the world in view of the afterlife. In this view, the present world is like a cultivation field for the next world and in which we make our afterlife with our actions. The prophets came in order to teach people how to live in order to be successful in the hereafter. Therefore, the injunctions of the prophets are for today but only so that we can obtain the hereafter.

Religion has its own views regarding economic, political, and social development. It has not relegated this matter to the intellectuals of society. The religion that claims universality and considers all human beings to share in its vision must, by its own logic, hold a comprehensive view about their development. Therefore, understanding religion is quintessential. Of course, this is very difficult. Religion has three dimensions, one of which lies inside the soul of man. The other two lie outside him. The two that lie outside are the Qur'ān and the noble progeny of the Prophet ﷺ. The inner dimension of religion is the power of reason and the innate nature of man; these two are called the "proofs" of religion. Something that reason clearly understands to be true also carries religious authority. Because of this religion is a combination of reason and tradition.

Because the basis of all affairs is Allāh ﷻ, and because it is He who creates all things and the success and loss of man lies in His hands, therefore, all the aspects of man's life should reflect His orders, whether in economics or any other field. In ethical and cultural matters Islām has invited people to justice and has forbidden people from trampling on the rights

of others. From another point of view, it has encouraged people to learn and teach others and to apply one's knowledge correctly. There is no good ethical precept except that which religion has invited us to and has made it either obligatory or recommended to act upon it.

The religion of Islām is global. This religion says you can live peacefully with those who do not defy or deny religion. It does not prohibit to live peacefully with those who don't want to fight you, overthrow religious governments or want to banish you from your home.[9]

'Progress' can be either good or bad. Bad progress is wasteful and lavish living. The Qur'ān considers all those things to be bad. It scolds those who waste Allāh's ﷻ blessings. In regards to those who only think about personal success it says, "Some are they who only think about themselves;[10] they eat as the cattle eat."[11]

Also, the Qur'ān has scolded those who hoard gold.[12]

"Unfortunately, miserliness has made its home in man's soul."[13]

"Whoever frees himself from the clutches of his own greediness is successful."[14]

---

[9] *Sūrat al-Mumtaḥanah* (60), Verse 8:
﴿ لاَ يَنْهَاكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَـــرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴾

[10] *Sūrat Āli 'Imrān* (3), Verse 154:
﴿ وَطَآئِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ ﴾

[11] *Sūrat Muḥammad* (47), Verse 12:
﴿ وَيَأْكُلُونَ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ الْأَنْعَامُ ﴾

[12] *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), Verse 34:
﴿ ... وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلاَ يُنفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴾

[13] *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), Verse 128:
﴿ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ﴾

[14] *Sūrat al-Ḥashr* (59), Verse 9:

Good progress is to work hard and be satisfied with little. From this point of view, if man works hard for his needs and for the needs of society, this effort can be called *kawthar*.

﴿ ... وَمَنْ يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُوْلٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴾

24

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

Question: What is the purpose of creation? Please state rational proofs in this regards. If the purpose is to perfect ourselves, then why did not Allāh ﷻ create humanity perfect to begin with?

Brief Answer

Allāh ﷻ is an unlimited being who holds all perfections. Creating (bringing to existence) is munificence *(jamāl)* and Allāh ﷻ is munificent. His munificence necessitates that He grant existence to anything worthy of creation. Thus, Allāh ﷻ created because He is munificent. In other words, the goal and reason behind creation is Allāh's ﷻ attribute of munificence. Since, Allāh's ﷻ attributes of essence are not extraneous to His essence, we can conclude that the goal of creation is Allāh's ﷻ essence.

Allāh ﷻ created man with dual inclinations—for good and evil—and with two opposing poles in the external world that correspond to these two, namely the prophets (who represent good) and the devils (who represent evil). In so doing, Allāh ﷻ enabled man to reach the highest level of perfection possible for creatures, and also allowed him the freedom to fall into the lowest pits of depravity. If man, despite his animalistic desires and the constant whispering of satanic beings, follows the path of truth, he attains stations above even that of the angels, precisely because the latter do not have such animalistic desires and satanic whispers. However, if he chooses falsehood, he ends up being lower than even the animals, for they lack the spiritual capabilities and potential of man.

Had Allāh ﷻ given man every perfection that he could possibly achieve at birth, those perfections would not have been volitional ones. Besides, Allāh ﷻ had already created beings that had all the perfections that they could achieve from the outset and that were without any potential perfections. Thus, the purpose for which man was created is only met if man achieves perfection through his freely chosen actions. Although the disbelievers and sinners who do not reach perfection certainly do not achieve the true goal of their creation (i.e. acting according to Allāh's ﷻ decree and wishes) they nonetheless do not go against the existential goal of man's creation. This is because Allāh ﷻ wanted with His existential will that man be able to choose between truth and falsehood. Had Allāh ﷻ made it impossible for man to choose falsehood, belief and obedience would not have been volitional and man would not have freewill.

Detailed Answer

In order to clarify the answer to this question we must pay attention to the following points:

1. The aim and end of Allāh's ﷻ actions: Allāh ﷻ is not limited by any thing. This is because He is the necessary being and His existence does not depend on another. He has, therefore, all perfections.

2. One of His perfections is the fact that He is the giver of grace and is generous. Allāh ﷻ has said in the Qur'ān, "The grace of Allāh is not withheld."[1]

3. On Allāh's ﷻ part, there is nothing that prevents Him from giving. Therefore, if in an instance He does not give, it is because of the limitations of receiver; not the Giver. Everything that can be given, is given. Every good thing, it can be said, is backed by existence while every evil is "backed" by non-existence. For example, knowledge is goodness and perfection while ignorance is evil and imperfection. Also, power, in opposition to incapacity, is perfection and good. When we pay attention

[1] *Sūrat al-Isrā'* (17), Verse 20:

﴿ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُوراً ﴾

to the third preliminary, we can infer that the grace of Allāh ﷻ comes about by means of His creating. Therefore, the giving-nature necessitates creation.

In other words, if we suppose something deserves to exist but Allāh ﷻ does not create it, then this is preventing a good from occurring and will be considered niggardliness (given that existence is good). We know, however, that Allāh ﷻ cannot be miserly. We can conclude from these preliminaries that if one were asked, "Why does Allāh create," we can reply that "His being the giver of grace has caused Him to create."

The attributes of Allāh ﷻ are not external to His Essence. The attributes of Man and other bodies are additional to their essence. For example the apple has an essence and redness and sweetness are its external attributes. The apple can be sour or green and still be an apple.

The unity of Allāh ﷻ and His attributes is a extensive theological problem that one can follow further in theology under the discussion on the unity of His attributes. What concerns us here is the fact that Allāh's ﷻ creativity, which is the purpose of creation, is one with His essence and does not lie outside His essence. Therefore, if we are asked, "Why does Allāh create," we will reply that, "because He is Allāh." Therefore, the cause for His creating is Himself. This is what our philosophers have said: the goal and the agent in Allāh ﷻ are one. It is possible to derive this meaning from some of the verses of the Qur'ān including "All affairs return to Him."[2]

What has been mentioned up to now was the goal of the agent in creation in general. However, the goal of any particular agent, such as man, requires a more specialized objective. This goal is none other than the specific perfection that Allāh ﷻ intends from the creation of man.

In order to explain, we may say that the fact that Allāh ﷻ is creative necessitates that He create every perfection possible. Before creating man,

[2] *Sūrat Hūd* (11), Verse 123:

﴿ ... وَ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ ... ﴾

Also see: *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 210; *Sūrat āli 'Imrān* (3), Verse 109; *Sūrat al-Anfāl* (8), Verse 44; *Sūrat al-Fāṭir* (35), Verse 4; *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd* (57), Verse 5

He had created other beings called angels. From the start of their creation they possessed all the perfections that were possible for them. Therefore, they will in no way obtain new perfections. Their level of existence will in no way evolve. Allāh ﷻ relates from the tongue of the angels that "There is none of us except that he has a specific station; it is we who are filled in ranks; it is we who glorify Allāh."[3]

Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ has said, "Then He created the openings between high skies and filled them with all classes of angels. Some of them are in prostration and do not raise their heads. Others are in a kneeling position and do not stand up. Some of them are in array and do not leave their position. Others are extolling Allāh and do not get tired."[4]

They worship Allāh ﷻ. This is a perfection that Allāh ﷻ has given to them. It is not possible for them to disobey Allāh ﷻ. Allāh ﷻ says, "The angels do not exceed Him in speech and they act only according to His command."[5]

He also says, "Upon it were placed mean angels. They do not shrink from acting upon what they were ordered to do."[6]

Because Allāh ﷻ is creative, He wanted to create a greater perfection, aside from the perfection given to the angels. That is the perfection of man's free-will. In other words, He wanted to create a being who would obtain all the aforementioned perfections (that belonged to the angels) with his own freewill. He therefore created man: a being who does not

---

[3] *Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt* (37), Verses 164-166:

﴿ وَمَا مِنَّا إِلاَّ لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَعْلُومٌ. وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ. وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ ﴾

[4] *Nahjul Balāghah*, Sermon 1:

...ثُمَّ فَتَقَ مَا بَيْنَ السَّمٰوَاتِ الْعُلاَ. فَمَلَأَهُنَّ أَطْوَاراً مِنْ مَلاَئِكَتِه مِنْهُمْ سُجُوْدٌ لاَ يَرْكَعُونَ، وَرُكُوْعٌ لاَ يَنْتَصِبُوْنَ، وَصَافُّونَ لاَ يَتَزَايَلُونَ، وَمُسَبِّحُونَ لاَ يَسْأَمُونَ...

[5] *Sūrat al-Anbīya'* (21), Verse 27:

﴿ لاَ يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

[6] *Sūrat al-Taḥrīm* (66), Verse 6:

﴿...عَلَيْهَا مَلاَئِكَةٌ غِلاَظٌ شِدَادٌ لاَ يَعْصُونَ اللّٰهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴾

have all the possible perfections from the start of his creation. But he is such that he can reach these perfections. It is clear that the perfection that man obtains with his own freewill is loftier than that given to the angels. Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ has said, "Allāh has created the angels from the intellect, He did not place lust in them; and He created the animals with lust, but did not place intellect in them. But He placed both intellect and lust in the sons of Ādam ﷺ. Therefore, he whose intellect overcomes his lust is greater than the angels. And he whose lust overcomes his intellect is lower than the animals."[7]

Therefore, the purpose behind the creation of man is Allāh's ﷻ creativity. Allāh's ﷻ creativity requires Him to create this kind of perfection: The greatest possible perfection.

When we ponder upon the above mentioned points we can conclude that the purpose behind the creation of man will come into existence when man has the capacity to reach perfection and strives to do so with his own freewill. If he had this perfection from the start, it is clear that it would not have come about from his own freewill and therefore the purpose of his creation would not have been met.

We must not forget that for man, obtaining even one minor perfection is accomplished by him exercising his freewill. And hence in doing this he is fulfilling the purpose of creation.

Now if man does not climb even one rung in the ladder of perfection and passes his whole life in sin and disbelief, though he may not have actualized the special purpose of his creation, he nonetheless has not escaped from the overriding reality that defines the purpose of creation in general. This is because he has actualized something that was a potential for him—for on the opposite pole of his potential to become

---

[7] *Wasā'il al-Shīʿah*, vol. 11, pg. 164:
قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ ﷺ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَكَّبَ فِي الْمَلاَئِكَةِ عَقْلاً بِلاَ شَهْوَةٍ، وَرَكَّبَ فِي الْبَهَائِمِ شَهْوَةً بِلاَ عَقْلٍ، وَرَكَّبَ فِي بَنِي آدَمَ كِلْتَيْهِمَا، فَمَنْ غَلَبَ عَقْلُهُ شَهْوَتَهُ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْمَلاَئِكَةِ، وَمَنْ غَلَبَ شَهْوَتُهُ عَقْلَهُ فَهُوَ شَرٌّ مِنَ الْبَهَائِمِ.

better than the angels, lay the potential to sink to the lowest of the low. It is Allāh ﷻ who created him in such a way that he is able to choose either perfection or failure. Therefore, even the disbeliever or sinner does not move contrary to the existential will of Allāh ﷻ.

Allāh ﷻ likes and wishes that man ascends the degrees of perfection and does not like him falling into misguidance. In other words, in the creation of man, Allāh ﷻ has an existential will and a conventional will (or wish). His existential will is that man actualizes all his potentials—whether good or bad. His conventional will or wish is that man only actualizes his potential for good.

With this explanation it can be said that the believing man has actualized both purposes of creation, existential and conventional, and that he has acted according to both the will and wish of Allāh ﷻ. The unbelieving man or sinner on the other hand, although he does not actualize the conventional purpose and is not in agreement with the wish of Allāh ﷻ, is nonetheless in line with the existential goal of creation and never escapes the overriding will of the Almighty.

25

THE SIGNS FOR THE RE-EMERGENCE OF IMAM AL-MAHDI

Question: What are the signs for the reemergence of the Master of the Age [i.e. the Twelfth Imām]?

Brief Answer

The topic of the signs of the re-emergence is a complicated one and calls for a thorough investigation of all the related narrations. However, in brief, the signs fall under two categories. One group consists of those signs which will certainly occur, foreshadowing the re-emergence: the rebellion of Sufyānī, the rebellion of Yamānī, the burst of a heavenly cry, the murder of an innocent soul, the sinking of the army of Sufyānī into the desert ground, the rebellion of Dajjāl. The remaining signs are not certain and as such might not occur.

But from another perspective, the signs can be categorized into four groups:

1. The social signs: that is, to put it in a nutshell, those social phenomena whose upshot would be the downfall of the then perverted human civilization.

2. The religious and Ideological signs: which constitute the collapse and distortion of the Divine religion.

3. The Natural Signs: changes such as alterations in the constellations.

4. The individual and miraculous signs: such as the burst of a heavenly cry, and the murder of the Innocent Soul.

Detailed Answer

A discussion regarding the signs of the re-emergence is somewhat complicated, for there are numerous narrations in the corpus of Shīʿa aḥādīth, and add to that the narrations found in the Sunni sources and even the heavenly books of previous religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Indian creeds, and all these call for a comprehensive investigation and analysis. Furthermore, the related narrations must be weighed as to the authenticity of their lines of transmission and also the soundness of their content.

Based on the Shīʿa narrations, it can be inferred that the signs fall under two categories. One group consists of those signs which will undoubtedly occur prior to the re-emergence, without any qualification or prerequisite; namely: the rebellion of Sufyānī, the rebellion of Yamānī, the burst of a heavenly cry, the murder of the Innocent Soul, the sinking of the army of Sufyānī in the desert[1], and the rebellion of Dajjāl. The second group consists of signs whose occurrence is contingent on the materialization of certain conditions. There are many such signs.

However, as mentioned before, the signs of the re-emergence can be categorized into four general groups, which will be explained in brief.

a. The Social Factors

To summarize, the appearance of these factors represent the downfall of the then misguided human civilization. Some of these factors are as follows:

1. The prevalence of injustice all over the world, or in other words, the universality and globalization of injustice.

2. The perversion of rulers. It is imperative to note that what is meant by universal injustice and perversion of rulers is that the political regimes that will govern the world would be founded on social, political, cultural, and economic injustice, and hence the rulers would exercise their power based on a spirit of domination, imperialism, and despotism. It should

[1] *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, pg. 252

not be inferred that just individuals or regimes would be nonexistent, but that the prevalent system of governance would be that of injustice.

3. Inflation and economic instability which are the concomitants of an unjust system.

4. The appearance of charlatans and Dajjāl-like characters who will claim to be social reformers. The advent of Dajjāl is one of the indisputable signs of the re-emergence to which all previous religions have also alluded. Dajjāl literally means one who covers truth with falsehood and deceit. It is likely however, based on the signs mentioned in the narrations, that Dajjāl is not a proper name of a single person rather it is a general title for all devious and deceitful individuals and regimes who deceive the masses and bar the path of truth. Some scholars have interpreted Dajjāl as being a reference to contemporary Western civilization.

5. Charlatan and debased individuals will become speakers of their societies. Incompetent individuals will have authority in their societies.

6. Righteous and honest people will be put aside and replaced by dishonest and boastful characters.

7. The rebellion of Sufyānī. However, regarding the question of whether Sufyānī refers to a specific individual or is a general title for all deceitful individuals and regimes, there can be no definite answer. But what is clear is that the name signifies an individual or individuals and regimes that are capitalist, predatory, oppressive, backward, and which (or who) propagate superstitions. Their distinctive trait is their willingness to demoralize communities. The narrations prophesy that Sufyānī and his army will vanish into the ground in the desert of Baydā'—an area between Mecca and Medina—and only one person will survive, the one who will spread the news.[2]

8. War, hypocrisy, and bloodshed will take over. In the narrations, it is divined that [global] war will break out whose instigators will be a people referred to in the aḥādīth as the Turk, which apparently constitute the

[2] *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, pp. 279-282

ethnic groups who trace their ancestry back to Turk b. Yāfith b. Nūh who today inhabit the regions of Mongolia, Punjab, Turkey, Siberia, Afghanistan, India, and in its broad meaning also includes the peoples of the Western hemisphere. The narrations also point to the killing of 23 people, but this is regarded as being among the unverifiable signs.

9. Revolutions will erupt in an effort to fight global oppression and corruption, some of which will succeed in organizing new governments. The rebellion and movement of Yamānī, which is a symbol of the struggle of truth against deviation at the End of Time, will be one such uprising. The movement of a certain Sayyid Khurāsānī who will be of the lineage of Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī ﷺ and who will rise to uphold justice is another of the factors involved. These two movements—one of which will be in Yemen and the other in Iran—will be among the elements laying the groundwork for the re-emergence of Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ. The narrations augur that the regime that will be established in Iran will, firstly, invite the people to Islām and the path of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ and will, secondly, clear its territory—which will extend to Kūfah—from injustice and corruption and will join forces with and obey the Imām ﷺ when he re-emerges.

b. Religious and ideological factors

That is, the collapse and perversion of religion. It has been narrated from the Commander of the Believers, Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ that at the End of Time prayer will be abandoned; trusts will be dishonoured; lying will be considered permissible; usury will become prevalent; bribery will be all-encompassing; religion will be relinquished in favour of the material life; women's counsel will be sought; family bonds will be severed; people will become licentious; murder will acquire normalcy; patience will be counted as a weakness; injustice will be prided on; the people of knowledge will be treacherous; the reciters of the Qur'ān will be perverse; the mosques will be embellished and the minarets built high [but without the spirituality that is their substance]; promises will be broken; and desires will be ever diverse [and conflicting].

To put it more generally, the precepts of Islām will be neglected. However, this neglect will be relative; that is, it would be the prevalent

mood of human society at the time. This is to such an extent that it has been related that when the Imām ﷺ re-emerges he will bring a new way, a new book, and a new religion; meaning that Islām will be so contaminated with superstitions, the Qur'ān so assailed with conceptual distortions [i.e. false interpretations] that their reality and inner truth will have been forgotten.

c. Natural factors

Also among the signs heralding the re-emergence of the Imām ﷺ are the natural disasters mentioned in the narrations; such as the [prodigious] lightning of the End of Time; lunar and solar eclipses which will occur outside their natural timeframe; changes in the constellations and the atmospheric conditions (in water, air, sunrise, sunset, etc.). And of course these narrations are capable of being understood in relation to certain events that are taking place in this age, just as Ayatullāh Murtaḍā Mutahharī interpreted the "rising of the sun from the west" [which is counted among the signs] as the rise of Islām at the hands of Imām Khomeini from Paris.

d. The individual and miraculous signs

1. The Burst of a Heavenly Cry - According to the narrations, before or during the event of re-emergence, an angel will cry out from the heaven proclaiming the re-emergence of the Imām ﷺ. That angel will be the Faithful Jibrā'īl whose cry will be heard in all four corners of the globe. Everyone will hear it in his own language without detecting the direction from which the cry originates. But at the same time the Devil will also call out, "'Uthmān was murdered while he was innocent" with the intention to confuse the people.[3]

2. The Murder of an Innocent Soul - The Innocent Soul will be the nickname of a certain Hashimite youth with a high degree of spiritual perfection. He will fight the Sufyānī army and on being defeated will take refuge in Medina. When the Sufyānī army reaches Medina, he will flee to Mecca. There he will invite people to the way of the Household of Muḥammad ﷺ but will be slain between the Rukn and the Maqām while

[3] *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, pp. 253-254

innocent of any crime.[4] His death will awaken the conscience of the people all over the world, which will in turn prepare them to pledge allegiance to the Imām عليه السلام. Fifteen days after his death, the re-emergence will take place.[5] He is the Imām's عليه السلام representative and envoy among the people.

There are also other signs mentioned in the narrations which we have not included here.

[4] *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Niʿmah*, pg. 331
[5] Ibid., pg. 649

26

ISSUES SUCH AS MARRIAGE, PLACE OF RESIDENCE, ETC… CONCERNING THE LIFE OF THE 12TH IMAM

Question: Is the Twelfth Imām married and if so does he have children? Where is his place of residence? What does he wear and what does he subsist on? What is the sense in praying for his wellbeing?

Brief Answer

The opinion that he has a spouse and children—although possible and not necessarily in conflict with the mission of his prolonged occultation—is not supported by any definitive evidence. It might reasonably be contended that just as Divine decree has dictated that he should remain in the shadows of mystery so too should this question remain a part of that mystery.

As to the location of his residence, there are three groups of āḥadīth that address this question. The first group do not specify a certain location but—in the case of some of them at least—indicate that he is itinerant, remaining primarily within the mountainous and desert regions. The second group state that he lives among people but without being recognized. The third group point to specific locations as to where he resides, such as Medina, or Mount Razawī in Medina, or around Mecca, in the Mountain of Zū Tuā.

Although the three groups might seem contradictory, they can be reconciled. For, it might very likely be the case that he mainly lives within cities, in Mecca or Medina, but some times due to urgent circumstances leaves for the mountains and deserts.

As to the question of his diet and clothing, it should be borne in mind that he lives an ordinary life, much like other people. On referring to the hadiths it is made clear, however, that he contents himself with the least. In a hadith Imām Husayn b. ʿAlī عليه السلام explains that his attire is rough and coarse and that his diet consists mainly of bread produced from barley.

As to why we pray for his health, it must be said that the aḥādith related from the Imāms exhort us to do so, and so we must comply in spite of being unaware of the reason. Nevertheless several possible explanations might be posited, among them the following:

1. Praying for his health is a factor conducive to his wellbeing, and as God knows that there are believers in every age who pray for his wellbeing, it is in this way that He guarantees his health. Of course, this should not imply that if no one prayed for him he would be overcome by disease. This is similar to God's guarantee that He will secure His religion, although some may renounce their belief therein.

2. What has been guaranteed on God's part is to safeguard his life until the time of his mission. Hence, this might not include minor ailments and distresses, which could possibly be covered by our prayers.

Detailed Answer

The life of Al-Mahdī عليه السلام is an enigmatic issue, and therefore questions relating to it might not be answered definitively, although one can arrive at probable answers by studying the hadiths that have been related in this regard.

One of the questions pertaining to Imām Zamān's عليه السلام life is whether he has a family. There are three possible answers to this question:

a) that he never married;

b) that he married but has not fathered children;

c) that he does in fact have children.

The implication of the first possibility would be his abandonment of a very important religious practice, which is hence very unlikely. Of course,

it might be countered that the issue of his occultation and its secrecy are of utmost importance and thus marriage—which although important is not nearly *as* important—can be abandoned. This contention however is not acceptable, for marriage and the secrecy required during his occultation are in no way at odds.

The second possibility, although free of the problem with which the previous possibility is faced, raises another question: Has he married only once—hence is his wife sharing his unusual longevity—or has he been married to multiple wives? There is no evidence to support either side, but it would not be unlikely if the latter were correct. The problem which this might bring to mind is the possibility that his identity might be revealed. However this might pose a serious problem, for according to the hadiths, in his occultation it is his identity as the twelfth imām from the progeny of Muḥammad that must be kept secret, which would not be jeopardized by personal relations if the people whom he is in contact with be unaware of his status as such.[1]

The same question can be addressed in the case of the third possibility. This possibility however is faced with an additional problem: If the Imām did in fact have children, they would sooner or later decide to search for their true identity which might in turn jeopardize Imām Zamān's عليه السلام secret mission.

There are however no aḥādith that specifically verify any of these three possibilities. As to further accentuate the dilemma, there is a hadith that has been related through two chains of transmitters with one consequential word differing in the two versions. One version related by Shaykh al-Tūsī reads, "Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليهما السلام said, 'No one of his children *(wuldihī)* or anyone else would know his whereabouts.'"[2]

---

[1] It is narrated from Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādīq عليهما السلام that "…[he] will go around amongst the people, pass through their shops and markets, and [even] step onto their carpets but they will not know him…" (Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Nuʿmānī, *Kitāb al-Ghaybah,* p. 164.

[2] *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, pg .162

…لاَ يَطَّلِعُ عَلىٰ مَوْضِعِهِ أَحَدٌ مِنْ وُلْدِهِ وَ لاَ غَيْرِهِ…

In the other version related by Nuʿmān, the ḥadith reads, "No one from his friends (*walī*) or anyone else would know his whereabouts.'"[3]

Thus due to this discrepancy, there is no reason to prefer Shaykh al-Tūsī's version. On the contrary, Nuʿmān's version seems more preferable in terms of its chain of transmitters and the wording itself. For instance, in Shaykh al-Tūsī's version there is a third person singular pronoun (*ghayrihī*) which seems to be incorrect as its antecedent is plural (*wuldihī*) which is unjustifiable, except if accounted for according to the following three possibilities:

1. That this mistake is attributable to the scribes;

2. That the hadith is indicating that the Imām only has one son;

3. Or that the hadith is not specifying whether he does in fact have a child or not but that if he did, the secrecy of his mission in occultation is so paramount that even his child wouldn't know him.

Moreover, the chain of transmitters is faulty, which even if this could be overlooked, another issue would be that it is unclear whether the hadith is about the time of occultation or is referring to the period after his reemergence.

There are two other hadiths that complicate the controversy. One is a prayer narrated by Ibn Tāwūs from Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Ridā عليه السلام: "O Allāh, grant him [i.e. the Twelfth Imām] in regard to himself, his family, his children, and his progeny …"[4]

The other hadith is related from Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Sādiq عليه السلام: "It is as though I see the *Qā'im* [i.e. the Twelfth Imām] in the Mosque of al-Sahlah with his family accompanying him."[5]

---

[3] *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, pg. 172

…لاَ يَطَّلِعُ عَلىٰ مَوْضِعِهِ أَحَدٌ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَ لاَ غَيْرِهِ…

[4] *Jamāl al-Usbūʿ*, pg. 312:

…وَ أَعْطِهِ فِيْ نَفْسِهِ وَ أَهْلِهِ وَ وُلْدِهِ وَ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ…

[5] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, pg. 317:

Some have cited the story of the "Green Isle" to claim that the Imām ﷺ has a family and numerous children who reside on the isle and have it all to themselves. This story however is only a myth. It is more akin to a tail of fiction than to reality. ʿAllāmah Majlisī who has narrated this story explains, "Since I did not find this story in any of the reliable books, I have brought it in a separate chapter."[6] Shaykh Āqā Buzurg Tehrānī asserts that this tale is a fabrication.[7]

Hence, although it is possible that Imām Zamān ﷺ has a family, it is not verifiable, as there are no authentic hadiths to the point. On the other hand, there does not seem to be any good reason why Imām Zamān ﷺ would abandon the religious practice of marriage.

Where does the Imām reside? There are three groups of hadith in this regard that at first glance might seem contradictory. The first group do not specify a location but rather say that the Imām is itinerant in mountains and deserts—such as the hadith narrated by Ibn Mahzīār and which Shaykh al-Tūsī has recorded in his *Ghaybah*.[8]

The second group are those that point to a specific location as to where the Imām resides. These hadiths are divergent however in regard to where that location exactly is. Some of these hadiths mention the city of Medina or more specifically Mount Razawī which is located on the outskirts of the city.[9] In reference to such aḥādith ʿAllamah Shūshtarī writes,

It has been ascertained in authentic hadiths that the Imām's residence in both the major and minor occultations is Mount Razawī. And the fact that the Kīsānīyyah claim it as the headquarters of Muḥammad Ḥanafīyyah does not negate its being where the Imām resides. For, the Kīsānīyyah had based their belief on the numerous accounts in which the Prophet ﷺ had prophesied the coming of the Al-Mahdī, his occultation,

---

…كَأَنِّيْ أَرَى نُزُوْلَ الْقَائِمِ فِيْ مَسْجِدِ السَّهْلَةِ بِأَهْلِه وَعِيَالِه…

[6] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, pg. 159
[7] *al-Ẕarīʿah Ilā Taṣānīf al-Shīʿah*, vol. 5, pg. 108
[8] *al-Ghaybah*, pg. 266
[9] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pg. 340

etc., but had erroneously accepted Muḥammad Ḥanafīyyah as the promised Al-Mahdī. And generally, all deviations and aberrations stem from a truth which has been wrongfully understood or manipulated.[10]

A number of these hadiths however point to an area around Mecca—namely, Zū Tūwā—as the residence of the Imām and where he will begin his revolution alongside his companions.[11]

The third group of hadiths also lacks any allusion to a specific location but points out that the Imām does in fact interact with other people normally but without being identified.[12] On examining the three groups more carefully it becomes clear that there is no discrepancy between them. The Imām leads a normal life without arising any suspicion. This mode is the most convenient for the Imām. And this is in no way at odds with him being in Mecca or occasionally retreating to mountains and uninhabited regions in urgent circumstances.

What is the Imām's عليه السلام diet comprised of and what type of dress does he wear? As mentioned above, the Imām lives a normal life. However the hadiths indicate that he contents himself with the minimum of food and the simplest of clothing. In his *Kitāb al-Ghaybah* Nuʿmānī narrates a hadith from Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليهما السلام and Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā عليهما السلام which addresses the above question: "He only wears coarse clothing and eats unpalatable food."[13]

In another ḥadīth he is related to have said, "His clothing is rough and coarse, and his food is bread made from barley."[14]

---

[10] The Series of Articles and Saying Regarding the Imām Mahdī, pg. 64

[11] *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, pg. 182

[12] *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, pg. 164 – The translation of this ḥadith was mentioned in the first footnote. It indicates that he lives amongst all others except that they don't know him.

[13] *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, pg. 233:

...فَوَاللهِ مَا لِبَاسُهُ إِلاَّ الْغَلِيْظَ وَمَا طَعَامُهُ إِلاَّ الْجَشَبَ...

[14] *Kitāb al-Ghaybah*, pg. 234:

...وَاللهِ مَا لِبَاسُهُ إِلاَّ الْغَلِيْظَ وَمَا طَعَامُهُ إِلاَّ الشَّعِيْرَ الْجَشَبَ...

How can one make sense of the common practice of praying for Imām Zamān's ﷺ health when Allāh ﷻ has guaranteed it?

Praying for the Imām of the Age ﷺ is a religious practice that necessarily has its particular wisdom, which though beyond our comprehension, nevertheless exists. Just as when our doctor prescribes a medicine for us, whose precise nature and effects we might not know, yet it is not without reason, for he knows what he is doing. At any rate, we are to comply with the exhortations of our religious authorities whom we trust and it is this trust that assures us that there must be some wisdom behind praying for the Imām's health.

There are however certain points that might shed some light on this enigma. Firstly, one of the means by which the Imām's ﷺ health is maintained is through the prayers of the believers. This however should not be understood to imply that if we cease to pray, his health would be jeopardized, for there are at all times some believers who pray for his wellbeing. Allāh ﷻ always has some agents in store to carry out His missions. This is similar to the scenario of some believers renouncing their faith. In such a case the Divine religion will not perish. Rather Allāh ﷻ will entrust the religion to another group who will safeguard it: "So if these disbelieve in them, We have certainly entrusted them to a people who will never disbelieve in them."[15] That is, if we as guardians of the divine religion—which would indeed be a great honour for us if it were so—abandon our duty, Allāh ﷻ will replace us with another community that would shoulder the duty faithfully. Or for instance, according to the general rule there is always the camp of evil, but it is one's own choice to decide to be in that camp—like in the case of Shimr who became so base and evil that he carried out the barbarous and unimaginable sin of slaying Imām Husayn b. ʿAlī ﷺ —or not.

The second point to mention in this regard is that it is very likely that the prayers of the believers are efficacious at least in relieving the Imām ﷺ of minor ailments. For what has been guaranteed by Allāh ﷻ is his life,

[15] *Sūrat al-Anʿām* (6), Verse 89:

﴿ …فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَيْسُوا بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ ﴾

and not his being free of any and all ills and distresses. It is in this way that our prayers could be of help and this is in no way against Allāh ﷻ's will.

27

THE QUALITIES OF HUMAN SOCIETY AFTER THE REAPPEARANCE OF IMAM AL-MAHDI - THE STATE OF JUSTICE, OPPRESSION, POVERTY AND SIN

Question: After the reappearance of Imām Mahdi (may Allāh hasten his reappearance), how long will it take before the rule of justice [becomes universal]? Will any poor person or tyrant remain? If no, then does that mean that no sin will ever be committed again? Is it correct that he will be martyred at the hands of a bearded old woman? How does such a crime take place despite the Imām's uprooting of oppression?

Brief Answer

What the narrations yield in this regard is that war will be waged for over a period of eight months, after which time all the various countries will fall under his reign, the rule of justice will be established worldwide, and disbelief, polytheism, and hypocrisy will be entirely uprooted. Hence, no tyrant will remain in power over any society, and the main incentives of sin, particularly social misdeeds, will be eradicated. The earth will yield its treasures of mineral deposits and crops will flourish; the share of the poor will be exacted from the oppressors and the rich and it will be distributed among the poor to such an extent that there will be no need for charity and alms, for all will be affluent and well off.

Detailed Answer

Belief in the reappearance of Imām Zamān عليه السلام is an instance of belief in the unseen realities, those realities which cannot be accepted and whose

qualities cannot be apprehended by any other means but faith and through a study of the corpus of authentic narrations. But since most of the aḥādīth and narrations have through time undergone corrosion as the result of various factors—such as, *taqīyyah* (dissimulation) on the part of the Shīʿites, fabrication and distortion of narrations by the enemies of the Shīʿites, neglect of or the lack of attention in recording the narrations on the part of the transmitters, and absence of adequate facilities for publication and preservation of the texts—a detailed understanding of the events prior to and following the reappearance of Imām Zamān عليه السلام, as desired by the truth-seeking Shīʿite, is not feasible. This becomes especially difficult when faced with some of the contradictions in the related narrations that are not reconcilable. Hence, the reply to the aforementioned question—particularly the first part—is [to a great extent] conjectural. And in order to forward an appropriate response, the question must be broken down into several parts. The answer to each part will be discussed separately.

After the reappearance of Imām Mahdī عليه السلام, how long will it take for him to establish the rule of justice?

To this question, Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir عليه السلام has replied, "For a full eight months, he will have his sword unsheathed and will kill the enemies of Allāh until Allāh is satisfied."[1]

Based on the narrations that are available to us, he will reappear in Mecca. After the elite of his followers join him there, they will then advance toward ʿIrāq, Shām (the present day Syria), and from there toward Jerusalem. Thereafter the lands of Europe, Turkey, China, Afghanistan, and of other regions will be conquered by him, and so after eight consecutive months of fighting, the rule of justice will be established and peace and security will become prevalent. But about the duration of his rule, there is inconsistency amongst the narrations. Some of the related durations are as follows: 19 years and some months; seven years; 40 years; 10 years; 309 years, each year of which is equivalent to 20

[1] *al-Ghaybah*, pp. 164-165:
...وَيَضَعُ السَّيْفَ عَلىٰ عَاتِقِهِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَشْهُرٍ هَرَجاً هَرَجاً حَتَّىٰ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ...

or 40 normal years. And 40 days after his martyrdom or demise [depending on the narration], the earth and the sky will be demolished in preparation for the Day of Judgment.

Will any needy individuals remain after his rule has been established?

After the Imām ﷺ rises and establishes the rule of justice, the earth will yield to him her treasures of mineral deposits and crops, the shares that rightfully belong to the destitute and poor will be exacted from the rich and the oppressors to be justly distributed, as the result of which no poor person will remain, to the extent that there will be no use for charities and zakāt. Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq ﷺ says, "The world will be revitalized by the implementation of justice, the sky will send down abundant rain, trees will reveal their fruit, and the earth will deliver her plants, embellishing herself for her inhabitants."

People will be so well-off that it has been narrated that on one occasion Imām Zamān ﷺ will order the announcer to inform the people that whoever is in need of financial aid should stand up. From among the entire population only one person will stand up, proclaiming his need. Imām Zamān ﷺ will tell him, "Go to the treasurer and tell him that Mahdī commands him to provide you with some money." At conveying the Imām's message to the treasurer, the latter will tell him, "Bring me your garment." Then the treasurer will fill it full. When the poor man turns away to leave, he will regret his request, saying to himself, "Why should I be the greediest of the nation of Muḥammad?" So he will return it to the treasurer, but it will not be accepted, and Mahdī will tell him, "What we have granted, we will not take back."

In describing the time of Imām al-Mahdī's ﷺ rule, the Prophet ﷺ has said, "People will be searching for someone poor who would accept charity or gifts from them, to no avail; they will put aside the zakāt of their wealth, but they will not find anyone to give it to, for all will be made well-off by Allāh grace."

After Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام establishes his rule, will there be any oppressors remaining in power?

The character trait of the universal rule of Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام will be the worldwide maintenance of peace, security, justice, and the annihilation of the foundations of corruption, decadence, oppression, and crime; just as this has been the main purpose of all the prophets, but with the difference that the success of the latter and their successors following them was not as decisive, but nevertheless, establishing worldwide peace and security has always constituted one of their promises. And so the unpolluted souls of mankind at large, ever since the beginning of human history, have been waiting for the time when those promises would be realized. Now since Allāh ﷻ, His messengers, and their infallible successors do not breach their promises, they would not raise the hopes of people without a good reason. This means that this promise will certainly be realized and that a just government will be established, consisting of the aforementioned characteristics.

This promise is so vital and real that its realization can be considered the rationale behind the creation of humankind; a promise that once realized will lead to the unity of the whole of humankind under the banner of *tawḥīd* and, by Allāh's ﷻ mercy, the uprooting of disbelief, polytheism, and hypocrisy[2] from amongst them. The narrations that express this are numerous. For instance, it has been recorded that Imām Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-ʿAskarī عليهما السلام told his son, [Mahdī] عليه السلام: "It is as though I see you when Allāh's ﷻ support has been sent upon you, relief *(faraj)* has been achieved, your magnificence and greatness has risen … it is at this moment that the rule of truth will dawn and the darkness of evil will vanish from the scene of existence. Through your hands, Allāh will break the oppressors' backs, will reinstate the religious sacraments, will enlighten the horizons of the world, and will establish calm and peace throughout the world. Your enemies will be disgraced and your friends esteemed and victorious. Not even a single oppressor, criminal, rebellious denier, encroaching enemy, spiteful opponent will remain on the face of earth, for whoever trusts in Allāh, He will provide him sufficient support.

[2] *Sūrat Hūd* (11), Verses 118 & 123

Verily, Allāh fulfils His wish and executes His definitive promise and will. Verily Allāh has set a plan for everything."[3]

Will sin be totally annihilated after Imām Zamān's عليه السلام rule has been established?

The most important motives for the human being's sinning are, on the one hand, his avarice in hoarding material wealth and, on the other hand, his sense of need for the goods of this world. If the human being possesses a sufficient amount of wealth, a good social reputation; if his mentality becomes Divine-permeated, if the world and her goods are belittled in his eyes, and he thus reaches the certainty that all Divine promises are true and as such will certainly be fulfilled, regardless of the aversion of the enemies and their effort to obstruct their realization; if he reaches the certainty that there will be a resurrection, a reckoning, that paradise and what it holds are incomparably superior to the life of this world—in such a case, there will be no motive for sinning. This is especially true based on a few narrations to the effect that at the commencement of the Imām's revolution, Satan will be slain by the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله in Jerusalem, hence putting an end to his tempting and decoying[4].

Moreover, during that time there will be innumerable obstacles in the way of sinning—such as, the inescapable and universal rule of justice, the healthy and secure environment, and the general rejection of corruption and sin by society. Therefore, there will remain very little motive for sin, and at the same time there will be obstacles in its way, which means that sin will be at its lowest ebb.

---

[3] *Sūrat al-Ṭalāq* (65), Verse 3:

﴿ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْراً ﴾

[4] *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, vol. 2, pg. 245:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ عليه السلام فِي قَوْلِ اللّٰهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى ﴿فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ. قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ﴾ قَالَ يَوْمُ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ يَوْمُ يَذْبَحُهُ رَسُولُ اللّٰهِ صلى الله عليه وآله الصَخْرَةَ الَّتِي فِي بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ.

There are also numerous narrations in this regard, such as: Imām Ja'far b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq ﷺ has thus described that era, "Illicit gender relationships, alcoholic beverages, and usury will vanish. People will turn their attention to worship and obedience; they will righteously honour their trusts. The evil people will perish, and the virtuous will remain."

In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ is recorded as having given the following good tidings: "Allāh will, through the Mahdī, relieve the hardships of the nation of Islām. He will enamour their [i.e. people's] hearts with the love of worship and obedience, and will make His justice universal. Allāh will, through him, eradicate lies; He will destroy the spirit of violence and animosity, and will free them of the disgrace of bondage."[5]

Is it true that he will be martyred at the hands of a bearded old woman? How does such a crime take place despite the Imām's uprooting of oppression?

There are various narrations about Imām Zamān's ﷺ martyrdom or demise; and as this event is due in the future, obviously the only way of unveiling the mysteries surrounding it is by studying the narrations related from the Infallibles in this regard. Nevertheless, the narration pertaining to the event of Imām Zaman ﷺ being murdered by an old woman is not accepted as authentic by most scholars. This story has only been recorded in *Ilzām al-Nāsib* and lacks authentic narration. However, if we do accept this narration, it must be noted that what is for certain is that the universal rule under Imām Zamān ﷺ will be the rule of justice

---

[5] *al-Ghaybah*, pg. 185, no. 144:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّٰه ﷺ (فِي حَدِيْثٍ طَوِيْلٍ): فَعِنْدَ ذٰلِكَ خُرُوجُ الْمَهْدِيّ وَهُوَ رَجُلٌ مِنْ وَلَدِ هٰذَا – وَأَشَارَ بِيَدِهِ إِلَى عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ ﷺ – بِهِ يَمْحَقُ اللّٰهُ الْكَذِبَ، وَيُذْهِبُ الزَّمَانَ الْكَلِبَ ، وَبِهِ يُخْرِجُ ذُلَّ الرَّقِّ مِنْ أَعْنَاقِكُمْ. قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّٰه ﷺ: يَمْلَأُ الْأَرْضَ قِسْطاً وَعَدْلاً كَمَا مُلِئَتْ ظُلْماً وَجَوْراً، يَمْلَأُ قُلُوبَ عِبَادِهِ عِبَادَةً وَيَسَعَهُمْ عَدْلُهُ.

Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl, pg.115:

عَنْ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﷺ: لَوْ قَدْ قَامَ قَائِمُنَا...وَذَهَبَتْ الشَّحْنَاءُ مِنْ قُلُوبِ الْعِبَادِ.

and equity, and as such the rule of the oppressors will be destroyed. However, this does not necessarily certify that there will be no possibility of individuals sinning.

28

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE GOVERNMENT OF IMAM AL-MAHDI

Question: What role will women play in the government of Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام?

Brief Answer

Islām incited a revolutionary change in the status of women within the family and in society, in a historically unprecedented manner. In the pre-Islāmic period, women throughout the world were viewed solely as a means of satisfying the sexual needs of men and as spineless labourers whose job was to bear children and breastfeed them. They had virtually no human rights to speak of. In the Arabian Peninsula, women were passed hand to hand as inheritance. In exceptional cases, newborn girls were buried alive beneath the sand.

Islām however, views women as the counterpart of men in terms of their humanity. It places the responsibility of the bridal gift *(al-mahr)* and the provision of her basic necessities on the shoulders of the man. It views the woman as man's partner in life to such an extent that not only is she no longer inherited by men, but rather she herself inherits from men! Like a man, it is possible for her to participate in society in the areas of religion, culture, governance and economics, on condition that she preserves her humanity and chastity.

The quintessential examples from early Islāmic history of women who played pivotal roles in the family and society are Khadījah عليها السلام and Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' عليها السلام, the wife and daughter of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم, and Zaynab b. ʿAlī عليها السلام, the daughter of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام.

The reappearance of Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام, like the original appearance of Islām itself, will instigate revolutionary changes in the world. In particular, his movement will challenge the modern "Age of Ignorance" that has witnessed a revival in the pre-Islāmic values associated with women.

As for the particular governmental roles that will be offered to qualified women at that time, little can be said with certainty because our knowledge of the particularities of that time is limited to the Qur'ān and sunnah, and little has reached us concerning this issue.

Detailed Answer

The woman of today has witnessed a regression to a modern "Age of Ignorance." By way of deceiving platitudes such as "the equality of men and women," "freedom," "women's suffrage," and "human rights," the political and economic leaders of the world have turned women into cheap labourers and playthings in the hands of men, thereby stripping them of their very humanity. A woman's chastity, no matter what position she holds, is vulnerable to such exploitation.

In the wake of this regression, the nuclear family, which is the very backbone of society, is crumbling. It is for these reasons that the world is once again in dire need of a movement like the revolution of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ to restore humanity to all people—but especially women, and to show mankind the way to true perfection.

The Shīʿa—from the time of the Prophet himself—have taken the promised appearance of the Mahdī عليه السلام to heart, and have been in a constant state of anticipation. His shall be a revolution to overturn the world. In particular, the regression in the status of women will be reversed.

In the pre-Islāmic "Age of Ignorance," women were not considered human. It followed that they were offered no rights, and in some cases, their very existence was considered such a source of embarrassment, that newborn girls were buried alive. The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ injected new life into that society. He granted women rights and responsibilities

that corresponded to the rights and responsibilities of men. The same women, who before the rise of Islām, were property in the hands of man to be gifted at his will and to be bequeathed to his sons, were themselves granted the right to hold property and to inherit property from men.

Islām raised the station of women to such an extent that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ accepted their pledges of allegiance. They were allowed to accompany the Muslim armies to the battlefield as teachers and nurses and moral support for the troops. The Muslim woman could be a teacher and defender of the law, and by fulfilling these roles could rise above the station of the angels. From one perspective the importance of her role exceeds man's role, for she "creates" other human beings and rears them. In the words of Ayatullāh Khumaynī, "It is because of the upbringing of the mother that a man ascends to his perfection."

However, with the passing of time, the status of women in both non-Islāmic and Islāmic societies has once again sunk to pre-Islāmic levels.

Imām al-Mahdī's عليه السلام revolution will overturn the world order and unify the entire world under the banner of true Islām. The status of women will be no exception from this new order, for women will be returned to their rightful station.

Our knowledge of what is to occur in the age following this revolution is limited to what we can glean from the aḥādīth concerning what is known as *"Mahdawiyyah"* (the study of the Mahdī) and historical documentation of the formative years of Islām. In some ways the Islāmic Revolution in Iran and its aftershocks throughout the world as well as the pivotal role played by women during and after that revolution, may serve as weak indicators of what the role of women might be during the rule of the Mahdī عليه السلام.

The following aḥādīth concern the role of women after the Mahdī's عليه السلام revolution: Jaʿfar al-Juʿafī narrates from Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir عليهما السلام: "The Mahdī will rise up … along with 313 men and fifty women without any previous arrangement among themselves, like separate clouds clustering in the sky, one after another. This is the meaning of the verse where Allāh says, 'Wherever you may be, Allāh will

gather you together. Allāh is capable of all things."[1] They will pledge their allegiance to the Mahdī between the Black Stone (of the Kaʿbah) and the Station of Ibrāhīm, and the Mahdī will rise up with them from Mecca."[2]

ʿAbd Allāh bin Bukayr narrates from Ḥumrān bin Aʿyan who narrates from Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir عليه السلام: "In the Age of the Mahdī, knowledge will be so pervasive that even a woman in her house will judge according to the Book of Allāh and the sunnah of the Prophet."[3]

The vast majority of narrations concerning the Mahdī mention theological arguments to establish his Imāmate, teleological phenomena that will occur before his appearance, and the new order that will take form during his rule.

With respect to many of the details and the division of labour between men and women, the narrations are silent.

Ayatullāh Khumaynī said, "Islām wants men and women to attain perfection. Islām saved women from the Age of Ignorance. Islām has not served men as much as it has served women. You do not realize what woman was and what she has become." He also said, "Not only does

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 148:
﴿ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾

[2] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, pg. 223:
يَجِيءُ وَ اللَّهِ ثَلَاثُ مِائَةٍ وَ بِضْعَةَ عَشَرَ رَجُلًا فِيهِمْ خَمْسُونَ امْرَأَةً يَجْتَمِعُونَ بِمَكَّةَ عَلَىٰ غَيْرِ مِيعَادٍ قَزَعاً كَقَزَعِ الْخَرِيفِ يَتْبَعُ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضاً وَ هِيَ الْآيَةُ الَّتِي قَالَ اللَّهُ أَيْنَ ما تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعاً إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ فَيَقُولُ رَجُلٌ مِنْ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ ص وَ هِيَ الْقَرْيَةُ الظَّالِمَةُ أَهْلُهَا ثُمَّ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ مَكَّةَ هُوَ وَ مَنْ مَعَهُ الثَّلَاثُمِائَةِ وَ بِضْعَةَ عَشَرَ يُبَايِعُونَهُ بَيْنَ الرُّكْنِ وَ الْمَقَامِ

[3] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52 pg. 352:
كَأَنِّي بِدِينِكُمْ هَذَا لَا يَزَالُ مُوَلِّياً يَفْحَصُ بِدَمِهِ ثُمَّ لَا يَرُدُّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ مِنَّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ فَيُعْطِيكُمْ فِي السَّنَةِ عَطَاءَيْنِ وَ يَرْزُقُكُمْ فِي الشَّهْرِ رِزْقَيْنِ وَ تُؤْتَوْنَ الْحِكْمَةَ فِي زَمَانِهِ حَتَّىٰ إِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ لَتَقْضِي فِي بَيْتِهَا بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَىٰ وَ سُنَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص

Shīʿism not sideline women in societal matters, it places them in their rightful position as human beings. We approve of the technological advancements of the West. However, we reject the corruption of the West." In another statement he says, "Women hold a pivotal role in societal structure. Islām has lifted women to the extent that they can break free from being a mere commodity and assume their position as human beings. Accordingly, they can assume responsibilities within an Islāmic government."

29

THE REASON FOR IMAM AL-ZAMAN'S PROLONGUED AGE

Question: Why wasn't Imām al-Zamān's birth postponed to the era of his re-emergence (zuhur)?

Brief Answer

The answer to this question can be clarified by expounding the underlying philosophy of the occultation and the waiting for his reemergence, as well as by becoming aware of the advantages and blessings that benefit us from his existence even as he is in occultation. On the one hand it is said that among the reasons for his occultation is that he not be burdened by anyone's allegiance, or that he is secure from any attempt to murder him. On the other hand there are other reasons that necessitate his being alive, i.e., there are benefits and advantages because of his mere existence.

The Imām, who is to build a new civilization on the ruins of bygone materialist civilizations, must be equipped with the appropriate knowledge and experience. This is can only be achieved by means of witnessing the ups and downs of many civilizations and in the due course of the passage of time.

Moreover, the occultation of Imām al-Zamān عليه السلام is a trial for and a means of testing the servants of Allāh ﷻ. Hence, the reasons which call for believers being tested can also support the existence of a living yet hidden Imām, who in this case becomes a vessel for the arealization of this Divine norm.

Closely associated with the term *occultation* is the term *intidhār*, "awaiting"the reemergence of the Twelfth Imām. This awaiting is very effective both in personal self-building and also in social cooperation.

Although these two effects can also be achieved without believing in a living yet hidden Imām, the presence of such a belief strengthens these two effects exponentially.

The Blessings of Imām al-Zamān's عليه السلام Existence in the Period of Occultation

In the corpus of Shīʿa ḥadith, Imām al-Zamān's عليه السلام life in the period of occultation has been likened to the sun hidden behind clouds. The following are a number of benefits that emanate from the proverbial sun of his existence:

1. The presence of the leader in the battlefield is a heart warming support for the soldiers' morale. In the same vein, the presence of Imām al-Zamān gives hope to the believers.

2. The supervision of a living Imām who oversees the conduct of his followers leaves a peculiar instructive impression on the believers, which is conducive to their spiritual self-building.

3. All the Infallible Imāms عليهم السلام, the Divine Deputies, (of whom the last one is Imām al-Zamān عليه السلام) in every age and time, are treasurers of Divine grace and knowledge. They are the vaults for Divine secrets and the guardians of the proofs of the luminous religion that is Islām, whether they are visible or hidden. They are responsible for the safekeeping of Islām from the shortsighted attempts of some to add unnecessary items or divest it of some of its elements, so as to preserve the timeless Islāmic concepts in their original form and to bring the Final Religion—which was finalized and completed with the termination of Revelation—into the body of society. This great Divine task is realized in our age through the existence of Imām al-Zamān عليه السلام.

4. There are those who are capable of ascending the clouds, directly enjoying the rays of the sun of Imām al-Mahdī's عليه السلام existence, thereby gradually purifying themselves in light of this relationship, which would in turn lead to the spiritual improvement of the masses.

5. We believe that Imām al-Zamān عليه السلام has Divine authority over the inner beings and the actions of people (*al-wilayat al-takwiniyyah*). That is,

guidance—felicity and wretchedness—is under his command. It is his obligation to guide people to the Destination, which requires that he be alive.

6. The Universal Man (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*) is the goal of creation; if some day the Universal Man would be absent from the earth, it would collapse. And there is no one else who can claim to be the Universal Man but the Imām.

7. In order to link the two realms of Essential Unity and Outer Multiplicity, there needs to be a being that has a foot in both realms, i.e., a being that is the combination of Truth and the creation. This being would serve as the vessel for the Divine effusion. This being is no other than the Universal Man—the Divine Proof—who must be present in all ages.

Detailed Answer

The answer to this question is on one hand dependent on clarifying the underlying logic of occultation and the concept of *intidhār*—awaiting the reemergence of the final Imām. On the other hand, it is also dependent on addressing the question of whether there are advantages to the presence of Imām al-Mahdi ﷺ while in occultation. But before delving into the logic and benefits of *intidhār*, we must point out that the [real underlying] cause of occultation is one of the Divine secrets to which we have no access.[1] Nevertheless, with recourse to hadith and reason we can decipher some aspects of the occultation. These aspects can be presented in two groups: 1. those that relate to Imām Mahdi ﷺ, and 2. those that pertain to other issues.

The first group are as follows:

[1] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52 pg. 91:
إِنَّ لِصَاحِبِ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ غَيْبَةً لاَ بُدَّ مِنْهَا يَرْتَابُ فِيهَا كُلُّ مُبْطِلٍ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ وَ لِمَ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ قَالَ لِأَمْرٍ لَمْ يُؤْذَنْ لَنَا فِي كَشْفِهِ لَكُم

a. It has been recorded in the ḥadith corpus that the Imām went into occultation so that he would not be burdened by anyone's allegiance.[2]

b. In some cases, the reason provided for the occultation is safety from the danger of murder.

c. It has been destined that the Imām should transform the world, carry out an all-encompassing reformation, uprooting all civilizations that are founded on power, wealth, and deception, after which he would build a new civilization based on Divine values. Such would not be possible without an abundant amount of knowledge and experience. This is achievable only through witnessing the ups and downs of bygone civilizations. This in turn necessitates a prolonged life, hence his occultation.

The second group are as follows:

a. Putting the servant of Allāh ﷻ to test is among the issues mentioned regarding the logic of occultation. Imām Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar al-Kādhim ﷺ says, "When the fifth son of the progeny of the Seventh Imām goes into occultation, be aware of your faith. Be cautious that no one should convince you to abandon your faith. O my son, the occultation of the Possessor of Authority (*ṣāḥib al-amr)* is inevitable and consequently some believers will abandon their faith. Allāh will test His servants by means of the occultation."[3]

---

[2] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51, pg. 152

عَنْ الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ : كَأَنِّيْ بِالشِّيْعَة عِنْدَ فَقْدِهِمُ الثَّالِثَ مِنْ وُلْدِيْ يَطْلُبُونَ الْمَرْعى فَلاَ يَجِدُوْنَهُ قُلْتُ لَهُ : وَلِمَ ذَلِكَ يَا ابْنَ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ ؟ قَالَ : لأَنَّ إِمَامَهُمْ يَغِيْبُ عَنْهُمْ فَقُلْتُ : وَلِمَ ؟ قَالَ لِئَلاَّ يَكُوْنَ فِيْ عُنُقِهِ لاَحَدٍ بَيْعَةً إِذَا قَامَ بِالسَّيْفِ

[3] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 51 pg. 113:

إِذَا فُقِدَ الْخَامِسُ مِنْ وُلْدِ السَّابِعِ فَاللَّهَ اللَّهَ فِي أَدْيَانِكُمْ لاَ يُزِيلُكُمْ أَحَدٌ عَنْهَا يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّهُ لاَ بُدَّ لِصَاحِبِ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ مِنْ غَيْبَةٍ حَتَّىٰ يَرْجِعَ عَنْ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ مَنْ كَانَ يَقُولُ بِهِ إِنَّمَا هِيَ مِحْنَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ امْتَحَنَ بِهَا خَلْقَهُ.

b. The expectation for the *faraj* (literally "relief", namely the reemergence of the Twelfth Imām) is a factor conducive to self-building. This anticipation is meaningful only in the context of the occultation. Without the occultation, expectation would be meaningless.

Awaiting the rule of Truth is in essence composed of two elements, one negative and one positive: being discontent with the status quo and the hope and desire for a better situation.

If these two elements penetrate into the inner of the human spirit, they bring about two results: the abandonment of any type of cooperation and compromise with the agents of oppression and corruption on the one hand, and the physical and spiritual preparation for the formation of the unifying and universal government on the other hand.

These two elements propel the human being into motion, awareness, and awakening. It is for this reason that awaiting the Relief has been considered a form of worship[4] and those who await the Relief have been described analogously as those gathered in Imām al-Mahdi's tent, unified under his banner.

Looking forward to a revolution in which sinners and oppressors are not involved stimulates the believer to embark on self-building such that he would not be of those groups.

Juxtaposing this reality with the aḥādith that explain that in his occultation Imām al-Zamān عليه السلام constantly supervises the state of his followers (reviewing their performance on a weekly basis[5]), it becomes apparent that belief in a living Imām wields a much stronger influence on the spiritual training of the believers than belief in an Imām born in some future time and who would be responsible for forming the universal and unifying government.

c. In addition to stimulating personal self-building, awaiting the reemergence of the Imām is also a potent factor in generating social

[4] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, pg. 22:

أَفْضَلُ أَعْمَالِ شِيعَتِنَا اِنْتِظَارُ الْفَرَجِ.

[5] *al-Kāfī*, vol.1 pg. 219-220

cooperation, for the program that the believers are anticipating is not a personal one, and thus the faithful believer also endeavours to reform the state of others.

d. The faithful believers do not loose hope in the face of the proliferation of corruption, for they view the goal ahead of them and so avoid being implicated in the corruption that surrounds them. Although remaining hopeful and avoiding corruption is also possible if Imām al-Zamān عليه السلام were to be born in the designated time of the age of his reemergence, nevertheless it is obvious that believing in a living Imām broadens and perpetuates these two elements (i.e., remaining hopeful and avoiding corruption).

The Blessings of the Presence of Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام during the Period of Occultation

1. Inspiriting Hope

The belief in a living Imām who might reappear at any time is similar to the presence of the leader of an army in the battlefield, which is heart warming and animates the troops with the hope of victory.

2. Stimulating Spiritual Improvement and Self-building

As was mentioned earlier, awareness of the Imām's عليه السلام monitoring the performance of his followers on a weekly basis can have a beneficial influence on the believers. For, the Qur'ānic verses (Such as: "And say, "Go on working: Allāh will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful [as well]."[6] and the numerous aḥādith[7] narrated regarding the presentation of the performance of the virtuous and the debauched and sinners on a daily basis, or every Monday, or Thursday—depending on the narration—to the dignified Prophet of Islām صلى الله عليه وآله and the infallible Imāms عليهم السلام clearly demonstrate the necessity of examination of one's conduct and of self-vigilance. The faithful see themselves in the presence of the honourable Imām and so do not dare to make any mistake lest

[6] *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9), Verse 105:

﴿ وَقُلِ اعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَ رَسُولُهُ وَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ... ﴾

[7] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pp. 219-220

they should upset his holiness. They struggle ever more vigorously in the way of progress and self-preparation in an attempt to draw ever closer to him.

3. Safeguarding the Divine Religion

The Commander of the Faithful, Imām ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام, elucidates in an illuminating saying the necessity of the presence of Divine leaders in all eons and times: "Yes, the earth is never empty of one who stands up with Divine Proof. He might be apparent or hidden. But he must be present lest the Divine signs should perish and be forgotten."[8]

With the passing of time and the incorporation of personal tastes and thoughts into the original religious tenets, various trends have developed that are inclined toward programs that might appear attractive to the masses but are deviations from the authentic religion, setting the stage for the exploitation of celestial concepts by corrupt opportunists, resulting in the alteration of a part of the religious tenets. This is very harmful. This Pure Water which has descended from the Heaven of Revelation gradually looses its purity by being channelled through the minds of various people. The shortsighted alterations of fallible individuals might become so tightly intertwined in the original body of religion that they render any attempt to rediscover the original doctrines very difficult. Considering this reality, should not there be someone to preserve the imperishable doctrines of Islām in their original form for the benefit of future generations? Should future generations be expecting the arrival of a new Celestial Revelation? Without doubt the answer is negative. The gate of revelation has been locked by the Seal of the Prophets. Then how should the original religion be preserved? How should this religion be kept unsullied from the impurities of human alterations and superstitions for the benefit of future generations? Is there any other

[8] *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pp. 178-180:
أَللّٰهُمَّ بَلىٰ لاَتَخْلُوا الْأَرْضَ مِنْ قَائِمٍ لِلّٰهِ بِحُجَّةٍ إِمَّا ظَاهِراً مَشْهُوراً أَوْخَائِفاً مَغْمُوراً لِئَلاَّ تُبْطِلَ حُجَجُ اللّٰه وَ بَيِّنَاتُهُ.

option but that the line of infallible leaders must continue, whether apparent and visible or hidden and unnoticed?

4. Training a Task Force

Imām al-Zamān's عليه السلام occultation benefits the world like the sun hidden behind clouds.[9] The sun blocked by clouds is still beneficial for existents. One of the blessings of Imām al-Zamān's عليه السلام presence during the period of occultation is that the elite of the faithful can ascend beyond the clouds, benefiting directly from the rays of the sun of his existence, building themselves through this association and in turn training the larger community of the faithful.

5. Spiritual Influence: Existential Training by Means of Existential Guardianship (al-wilayat al-takwiniyyah)

Imām al-Zamān عليه السلام is a peerless personage whose penetrating rays of existence influence the hearts of all those ready to receive them, regardless of where they are. It is by this means that the Infallible Imām works to improve the souls of people, although they themselves might not be fully aware of it. The Imām عليه السلام has authority in an inward fashion on the performance of people. He is aware of all hidden matters related to the crux and truth of the issue of guidance vis-à-vis the souls and performance of people. The good and bad conduct of humans are unveiled before him. It is he who monitors the paths to felicity and wretchedness. Thus, the station of *Imāmate* is concomitant with the Divine authority of guidance. This guidance is not limited to showing the path, which is the duty of all Divine prophets and even believers. Rather, his is the duty to shepherd the servants of God toward the Destined Goal.[10]

6. Purpose of Creation

The world of creation is like a garden. The human beings who are on their way to perfection are its fruitful trees, the deviants its wild and useless weeds. The purpose of watering this garden would be to quench

[9] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, pg. 92
[10] *al-Mīzan*, vol. 1, pp. 275-276

the fruitful trees, not the weeds: "Indeed my righteous servants shall inherit the earth."[11] And if some day all the trees of this garden die and the righteous believers become extinct, there would be no reason to continue watering the garden and the Divine effusion would cease to be. The Infallible Imām عليه السلام is the Universal Man who is the crown of the party of the righteous and thus the main purpose of creation. It is for this reason that God addresses him so: "If not for you, I would not have created the Spheres [i.e., the universe],"[12] or in another instance it, "If the earth is left without an *Imām*, it would collapse,"[13] and also, "It is due to the blessing of his existence that all else is nourished, and it is for his existence that the earth and the heaven remain in place."[14]

7. Being the Intermediary in Effusion

In the disciple of gnosis it is explained that the Truth in Its essential manifestations is absolute unity, while in the realm of multiplicity and Divine activity It manifests Itself through particular individuations. However, the former lacks any hue of multiplicity, while the latter lacks any trace of real unity. Thus, there needs to be a third form of manifestation which could combine the Station of Union with the Station of Separation, serving as the isthmus between the realm of Divine Lordship and the realm of Vassaldom, forming the fusion of Truth and creation; in a word: linking the world of nature and the world of Unity. The Universal Man—the Infallible Imām being the clearest instance—is this link and as such is the intermediary in effusion to the realm of utter multiplicity. Hence he is the manifestation of the lordship of the Truth. On the basis of this exposition, it becomes clear that the following

---

[11] *Sūrat al-Anbīyā'* (21), Verse 105:

﴿ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ... ﴾

[12] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 15, pg. 28:

لَوْلاَكَ لَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْأَفْلاَكَ.

[13] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pg. 179:

لَوْ بَقِيَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِغَيْرِ الْإِمَامِ لَسَاخَتْ.

[14] *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, Du'ā al-'Adīlah:

بِيُمْنِهِ رِزْقُ الوَرىٰ وَبِوُجُوْدِهِ تَثْبُتُ الْأَرْضُ وَالسَّمَاءُ

tradition describing the role of the Infallible Imāms is not an overstatement: "It is due to them that Allāh nourishes His servants; it is due to them that rain descends from the heaven, and it is due to them that the blessings of the earth surface [to benefit the creatures]."[15] And it is in allusion to this reality that Imām Muḥammad ibne ʿAlī al-Bāqir عليه السلام says, "We are the Beautiful Divine Names."[16]

In conclusion, the materialization of the matrix of creation, the effusion of Divine blessings to other-than-Allāh, the guidance and training and spiritual perfection of human beings, etc., are all contingent on the existence of a living Imām.

[15] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 23 pg. 19:
بِهِمْ يَرْزُقُ اللهُ عِبَادَهُ ، وَبِهِمْ يُعَمِّرُ بِلاَدُهُ ، وَبِهِمْ يُنْزِلُ الْقَطَرُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ ، وَبِهِمْ تَخْرُجُ بَرَكَاتُ الْأَرْضِ

[16] Al-Kāfī, vol. 1, no. 4

30

POSSIBILITY OF A DECLINE IN IMAM AL-MAHDI'S GOVERNMENT

Question: Historically, we see that every civilization eventually declines. Is it not possible that the government of Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام will also decline? In particular, might not people eventually become discontent with his government?

Brief Answer

Such a decline in the government of Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام is inconceivable.

Governments decline for one of two reasons: either corruption creeps into the system and the government ceases to be just; or forces outside the government act treacherously by turning the people against the government. Since neither cause can exist in Imām al-Mahdī's عليه السلام government, it will not decline.

Detailed Answer

Governments fail for one of two reasons:

1. The foundations of the government break down due to injustice and deviation from within. This leads either to a revolt of the people against the government's injustice or to the invasion of foreign powers. Historically, many governments have fallen for this very reason. For instance, in Islāmic history, the Sasanian Empire fell in the wake of the Muslim expansion; the Umayyad dynasty fell to the ʿAbbasids; and the ʿAbbasids, in turn, fell to the Mongols. In each case, injustice had reached such a level that the people felt no sense of loyalty to their rulers that they should defend their government. Rather, they sought succour in the

invading forces. Similarly, the Islāmic revolution in Iran stemmed from the injustices of the Pahlavi government. In general, all unjust governments eventually fall either because of internal revolt or at the hands of an invader who finds little or no resistance from a people who are disenchanted with their rulers.

2. The people are deceived and tricked into disenchantment with their ruler. The government of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام faced just such difficulties. The propaganda with which his political enemies bombarded his people and the wars that he was forced to fight prevented his people from being able to think clearly about the issues at hand. In addition, in the years leading up to his caliphate, corruption had crept into the upper classes of society to such an extent that the Imām عليه السلام was reluctant to accept the caliphate since he knew the insurmountable difficulties that such corruption would cause. In particular, he knew that the people, after seeing the decadence of high society, and the discrepancy between Islāmic teachings and what was being practiced by the upper echelons, would not have the resolve to defend his government. The inevitable result of these conditions was the assassination of the Imām عليه السلام and the decline of his government.

In the government of Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام, the first factor is inconceivable because like Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام government, his government will be absolutely just. For several reasons the second factor will also not come into play. For one thing, the people will have an increased level of Islāmic awareness. Secondly, his government will have control over all forms of media and information technology; hence his enemies will not be able to incite the people against him. Lastly, at that time all aspects of Islāmic law will have been put in place. In particular, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, will be practiced in its full manifestation, so neither corruption will creep into society, nor will the people become disenchanted with the rule of Allāh تعالى.

It should be kept in mind however, that at that time Satan will be as active as ever. He will be successful in deceiving some; however the vast majority of people will follow the truth for the aforementioned reasons.

31

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BLOOD MONEY OF A WOMAN AND THAT OF A MAN IN ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE

Question: Why is the blood money of a woman half of that of a man?

Brief Answer

According to jurisprudential and historical studies, blood money is an economical matter. It has been legislated in order to compensate for the loss incurred by the injured. From another point of view, in an ideal society, which Islām attempts to create, most of the economic activity is carried out by men. When we look at the general economic responsibilities of men we find that men have duties that women have been excused from. While the most important responsibility of a woman, but not the only one, is to manage the cornerstone of society, in other words the family, the most important duty of man, but not the only one, is to provide for the economic needs of the family.

When we pay attention to this matter we can easily conclude that Islām must strengthen those matters that have financial consequences for men and amongst these matters is blood money. Men play a pivotal role in the economic life of the family. From another point of view, blood money is related to the physical aspect of the human being. Hence, if someone's body were stronger his blood money would be more. Since men are more productive economically than women, their blood money is more than that of women. This does not mean of course that in Islām the position and status of a woman is less than that of a man. If blood money was related to the worth and position of individuals, then the blood money

of a scholar or the leader of society would not be equal to that of an average worker.

Another important point pertains to the role a man plays in the security of his household. It is very clear that it is the man that protects the family. This would imply that the loss inflicted on a family if the man was not present would be far greater than if the woman was not there. In the end it is necessary to keep this in mind that in every case the laws that have been presented by a religion or school of thought are always in line with the principles that that religion or school of thought has formed in regards to that matter. It is in accordance to the sum total of those viewpoints that the law been passed. In regards to blood money as well, Islām has formed its law while taking into consideration the responsibilities and rights of both men and women and the general laws that pertain to the family system. We cannot therefore look at them in a separately and object.

Detailed Answer

All of the laws of Islām are based upon certain benefits. Every law has wisdom. If something has been prohibited in Islām it is because it is harmful. If something has been made obligatory it is because it has a benefit. Of course perhaps it is not possible for us to find out all of the benefits and harms of all the laws and prohibitions, but if we rely on a sound intelligence and base ourselves on realities and of course on the sayings of the Infallibles عليهم السلام we can understand some of these things.

In regards to the blood money of a woman being half of that of a man there is definitely some wisdom behind such a law to which we will briefly refer:

1. If Islām was purely a materialistic school of thought and if the foundations of its laws were monetary and economic matters and, given this, women's blood money was half of that of men's, then this objection would be proper that why is the value of women half of that of men and why have they valued women at half the price of men. But these are not the foundations that are used and in Islām the value of human beings is

according to their Spirit and their spiritual qualities. In Islām that which is valuable is piety. Human beings can be like Mūsā عليه السلام who spoke with Allāh ﷻ or be like Marium عليها السلام who used to receive heavenly revelations. In regards to traversing the path of felicity and obtaining spiritual positions, men and women are equal. There is no difference between them in this regard in principle, and in fact, the matter depends upon their personal ambition and effort. But blood money is an economic matter. Blood money is a matter related to the physical aspect of human beings, therefore in this regard there is no difference between the blood money of a prominent member of the Islāmic society and an average labourer.

2. Generally speaking we can say that human beings, whether they be men or women, have three dimensions to their existence:

a. The human or divine dimension: In this dimension there is no difference between men and women. The path to human and divine perfection is open to both of them and both of them can progress in these regards as far as they want. In verse number 97 of Sūrat al-Naḥl (16), Allāh ﷻ says: "Whoever amongst you whether they be man or woman and they have faith without a doubt we will give them pure life in this world and in the hereafter we will give them a reward in recompense to their good deeds." In Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33), the same matter has also been alluded to.

b. The intellectual dimension: According to the intellectual dimension there is no difference between men and women. Islām does not believe that there is a difference between men and women as regards the gaining of knowledge. "Gaining knowledge is an obligation on both men and women." The Qur'ānic verses that have been revealed as regards knowledge and learning have not discriminated between men and women and these verses are almost 40 in number.

c. The economic dimension: In Islām men and women differ from each other in the economic responsibilities that been placed on each of their shoulders. These responsibilities have been divided according to the bodily and psychological strengths and weaknesses of both. Principally women are weaker than men in economic matters. Even in this age and in

societies that have apparently not discriminated between men and women, the economic output of women is less than that of men. The truth of the matter is that women must become pregnant and after giving birth they must breastfeed their children. They subsequently must take care of their children. The pregnancy and breastfeeding takes quite a bit of time and energy from the women. Even though this is a valuable matter in itself, it is not an economic matter. There is no economic output produced by such work. From another point of view the body of men and women differ drastically from one another. Women have delicate bodies and they can be injured with the slightest accident while the bodies of men are strong and generally powerful and therefore more suited for difficult tasks. For this very reason, many of the difficult jobs of society that require much power have been placed in the hands of men. It is very obvious that without men the family is more at an economic loss. It is therefore necessary that men's blood money be more than that of women.

3. The vacuum felt by a family with the loss of a man is far greater than the loss felt at the absence of a woman. According to jurisprudential and historical studies, blood money is an economical matter. It has been legislated in order to compensate for the loss incurred by the injured. From another point of view, in an ideal society, which Islām attempts to create, most of the economic activity is carried out by men. When we look at the general economic responsibilities of men we find that men have duties that women have been excused from. While the most important responsibility of a woman, but not the only one, is to manage the cornerstone of society, in other words the family, the most important duty of man, but not the only one, is to provide for the economic needs of the family. Aside from this, the daily expenses of the children are upon the shoulders of the man not the woman. Therefore with his departure some people who should be looked after find themselves at a loss. This vacuum must be filled by some means. It is only natural then that the blood money of a man should be more than that of a woman. This matter has no relation to the essence of men and women. Rather it relates to the external accidents that are incurred by a family. When we take into consideration all that has been just said, we can come the conclusion that

blood money is not a means by which we value men and women. Their difference in this matter is not something to be objected to. From another point of view the economic responsibilities of a man necessitate that in some matters (like blood money) that are directly related to economics a certain difference between men and women show up. There is no difficulty in this matter.

Men are stronger than women and are capable of performing more difficult tasks than women. Their existence provides peace and tranquillity to the family. From another point of view, with their loss some people are left without a helper and provider. It is therefore natural that their blood money be more than that of women.

We conclude this answer by turning our attention to a point that is not without subtlety and by answering two questions.

First of all, man's blood money is double that of woman's in the case that the blood money should reach one third of the required portion. In any other case, their blood money is equal. If her blood money's being half were a proof of her inferiority to that of man, then in all cases it should be half. Secondly, just as men have more blood money than women, they are also responsible to participate in the money paid to the family of someone killed or injured by one of their family members. This is while women are excused from such an obligation.

It is possible that someone may object by saying that in this era men and women work side by side in the workforce. Therefore there is no reason that in this age her blood money should be half of men's.

In answer to this objection we can say that first of all, it is true that women today participate in economic activities alongside men but in no instance can they provide the security that men can provide for their family. Secondly, there are many high paying jobs that do not suit the fragile composition of women and are therefore exclusively for men. It is natural that this would raise the economic status of men over women. At the same time we can object by saying that if the economic output of women were really equal to that of men as some of these countries that

are advocates of equality between the sexes claim, then why is it that most of the dignitaries and managers and ministers are men?

Another objection that is likely to be raised is this: Is the fact that the blood money of women is half of that of men a discrimination against her in favour of men? The answer to this question is that Islām is a religion of equality. To be male or female is no superiority in this religion but in the matter of blood money there is a wisdom that necessitates that men's be more than that of women's. There are laws in Islām that are to the benefit of women based on a certain wisdom that lies in such laws. For example if a man becomes an apostate, according to the view of many jurisprudents he is to be killed even though he may repent afterwards. But if a woman becomes an apostate and repents then she is returned to her ordinary life. Or for instance if a man becomes insane after getting married the wife has a right to end the marriage, while if the same thing happens to a woman the man has no such right.

32

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE INHERITANCE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE

Question: Why is the inheritance of women half that of men?

Brief Answer

The fact that a woman's inheritance is half that of a man's has enticed many to delve into the rationale behind this rule. In the answers that have reached us from the leaders of religion, the following point has been stressed: The reason that the inheritance of man is more is because the upkeep of women is upon the shoulders of men. In other words, aside from the fact that a man must look after himself, he is also responsible for the upkeep and expenses of his wife and children. From another point of view, it is the man who gives the dowry to the woman and she is the one who takes it from him.

In reality, it is possible to say that what the woman takes in the form of inheritance and dowry is tantamount to her savings, whereas the portion of the inheritance of the man is spent on the expenses of his daily life and that of his wife and children. Aside from this, certain other responsibilities have been placed on the shoulders of a man, which necessitate his spending money in order to carry them out. For example a man must spend money in the way of war, or if one of his relatives accidentally kills someone or injures someone he must pay certain monies to the family of the victim, whereas a woman has no responsibility in this regard. So even though what is apparent is that the share of a man in inheritance is two times that of a woman, in all practicality his share in the sum total of personal wealth is far less than hers. While on the other hand, in exchange for the "excess" inheritance,

man has heavier responsibilities to shoulder than a woman. So in brief it can be said that the inheritance of men and women being different is so as to implement a sort of balance between the rights and responsibilities of each group.

Detailed Answer

Before answering this question, it is necessary to remember that the rule that states that the portion of inheritance of a man is twice that of a woman is not true across the board. In some cases we find that men and women take an equal sum of inheritance, like for instance the father and the mother of the deceased who take an equal amount of inheritance. In this case there is no difference between man and woman.

Having said this, it is necessary to address the question of why the share of a woman's inheritance is half of that of a man's? Is this not a type of favouritism?

In a tradition, Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام was asked as to why women take one portion of inheritance when we see that they are weaker than men and they are more in need of help than them? Why is it that a man, who is stronger than a woman and whose body is more powerful than hers should get a double share of inheritance? Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام replied that the reason for this is that a man has more responsibilities and he must go to war, enduring many expenses in the process. Aside from his own expenses, a man must also take upon himself the expenses of his spouse and children. What's more, he must give money to the family of a person accidentally injured by one of his family members.[1]

[1] *al-Kafi*, vol. 7, pg. 85:
مَا بَالُ الْمَرْأَةِ الْمِسْكِينَةِ الضَّعِيفَةِ تَأْخُذُ سَهْماً وَاحِداً وَ يَأْخُذُ الرَّجُلُ سَهْمَيْنِ قَالَ فَذَكَرَ بَعْضُ أَصْحَابِنَا لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع فَقَالَ إِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْهَا جِهَادٌ وَ لاَ نَفَقَةٌ وَ لاَ مَعْقُلَةٌ وَ إِنَّمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى الرِّجَالِ وَ لِذَلِكَ جَعَلَ لِلْمَرْأَةِ سَهْماً وَاحِداً وَ لِلرَّجُلِ سَهْمَيْنِ.

In another tradition, Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام emphasized the fact that it is the man which must give dowry to the woman—this being a recompense to the loss incurred by her in her inheritance[2].

Islām's position on inheritance is in reality to the benefit of the woman. In the Age of Ignorance, the daughters and wives of the deceased were deprived of inheritance and all of the wealth of the deceased went to his sons. Islām, however, came and annulled the laws of the ignorant times and made women amongst the inheritors of the deceased. From its inception, Islām gave women an independence in ownership and monetary matters, this being a matter that has only but recently entered the laws of European nations. Even though apparently the inheritance of a man is double that of a woman, when we probe into the matter more thoroughly, we find that the inheritance of a woman is two times that of a man. The responsibilities that have been placed on the shoulders of men necessitates that they spend half of their income on women. Any given man is obligated to spend money on his spouse's home, clothes, food, and other expenses, while the cost of living of himself and his children are on his shoulders. This responsibility of upkeep is to such an extent that even if a woman's social position necessitates her having a servant and she herself does not have the means to pay for such a person, the salary of the aforementioned servant is upon her husband.

These responsibilities are on the shoulders of men, whereas we see that women are exempted from paying any living expenses, including their own–whether that be clothes or food. Therefore and in all practicality, it is woman who has more of a portion of wealth than man.

In the commentary of the Qur'ān, *Tafsīr-e-Namunah*, an example has been given that is useful in clarifying what we are trying to say. Consider, for example, that the sum total of all the wealth of the world is 30 billion

---

[2] ʿ*Ilal al-Sharāʾi,* vol. 2, pg. 570:
عَنْ عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ بْنِ سَنَانٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ عليه السلام قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِأَيِّ عِلَّةٍ صَارَ الْمِيرَاثُ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلَ حَظِّ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ؟ قَالَ : لِمَا جَعَلَ لَهَا مِنَ الصِّدَاقِ.

pounds. Say that this wealth was distributed by means of inheritance between men and women. From this amount of money, 20 billion pounds went to men and 10 billion went to women. Since women do not have to spend on themselves, they can save that 10 billion and become partners with the men in the remaining 20 billion (since the portion of men is spent on women and children). So half of the portion of men, which is 10 billion pounds, goes to women. When we add this amount to the portion that the women saved from before, their sum total becomes 20 billion pounds.

By taking into consideration what was just said, we can say that the reasons that women's portion of inheritance is less than that of men's are three:

1. Dowry: At the time of getting married, man is responsible to take into consideration a suitable dowry for the woman. Whenever the woman asks for it, the man is responsible to give it to her. So from the beginning, man is religiously responsible to allot an amount of money as the dowry of his wife. This is one of the reasons that have been alluded to in the sayings of our Noble Imāms عليهم السلام.

2. Allowance: In family life, aside from the fact that a man must look after his own expenses, he is responsible to take upon himself the expenses of his wife and children. For amongst the responsibilities of a man is the provision of food, clothes, and shelter for his wife that is in line with her social status. Even if a woman were to have a large amount of wealth, she has no responsibility in this regards. Not only does a woman have no obligation in this regards, but if she wanted to, she could ask of a wage for the work she does at home such as breastfeeding her children, cooking, etc.

3. Special responsibilities of man: Some very heavy responsibilities have been placed on men's shoulders; responsibilities that women have been excused from. A good example is warfare in the path of Allāh عزوجل. A man must wage war with his life and his wealth. In some of the verses of the Noble Qur'ān war by means of wealth has even been placed ahead of war by means of life. A man must spend from his own pocket the expenses of his going to war. Or when someone is killed by another person, the men

of the family of the culprit must pay money to the victim's family, but women are freed form such an expense.

As can be seen, Islām did not intend to pass laws for the benefit of man and to the detriment of woman, or vice versa. Islām is not an advocate of "woman's rights," or that of men's. More than anything, when passing laws Islām, has taken into consideration the eternal felicity of men, women, their children, and society as a whole. In any case, in line with the monetary responsibilities that it has relegated for men, Islām has in many instances divided wealth between men and women—such an instance being inheritance. It is not possible for us to claim that there is discrimination in this regards. Also, the whole corpus of the laws of Islām regarding men and women necessitate that the laws of inheritance be a certain way. This matter does not allow us to object to the civil laws of Islām.

In the end, it is possible for us to say that if it is true that the expenses of the woman are upon the shoulders of the man, then what use does woman have in hoarding a large amount of wealth? We can answer by saying that the dowry and inheritance of the woman is like a savings that is for her future, in case she separates from her spouse or her spouse dies. It is so she can lead a comfortable and respected life in case such events happen. But the reason that the expenses of the woman is upon the man is so that she can, without any sort of mental anxiety, raise good and pious children. In this way the family, which is the cornerstone of society, will be filled with warmth and love.

In the end we would like to point our reader's attention to the following: If it should arise that circumstances necessitate that the owner of the wealth should help out the wife or the daughters more than his sons, then this person can do this by following the procedures laid out in Islāmic Jurisprudence. For example, if the father thinks it prudent to help his daughter more, he can, in his lifetime, give as a gift, some of his wealth to her. Also he can give a larger portion than her share of inheritance by writing a specific will in this regard.

33

THE ROLE A PERSON PLAYS IN OBTAINING HIS SUSTENANCE

Question: What is the relationship between man's efforts and the sustenance that has been measured out for him?

Brief Answer

There are two kinds of sustenance. There is a sustenance that we go after and a sustenance that comes after us. In the traditions, the sustenance that comes after us is called "the sustenance that seeks," and the sustenance that we seek has been named "the sought after sustenance." The first is certain and is the sustenance that determines our very existence, our lifespan, the possibilities open to us, the environment we were put in, our family, and our predisposed talents. This kind of sustenance gives rise to the power, energy, and intelligence that we need in order to struggle and perform work; and it is in the wake of these that the door for the second kind of sustenance- the conditioned sustenance- opens up for us.

In order to obtain the "sought after sustenance," everyone must not only make their own efforts, but they must also raise their hands up towards Allāh ﷻ in utter poverty as it were. The nursing infant whose effort and struggle comes in the form of crying, pouting, and screaming will reach the milk of his mother by means of these kinds of actions. Yet when this child grows up and sets higher goals for himself, his effort and struggle will transform. It will change into thinking, working, and physical exertions. Moreover, the quality of his sustenance will also change.

In conclusion, we may say that it is only after the certain outcome of the "sustenance that seeks"—which is certain and unconditional—and after

due efforts are made and the human will-power is engaged that the "sought after sustenance" comes into being. The certain sustenance is incapable of change or increase and decrease, but the "sought after sustenance" is capable of being increased or decreased, depending upon the order, quality, and composure of the actions that precede it- being counted as amongst its prerequisites.

Detailed Answer

The answer to this question can be explained in the form of two preliminaries and one conclusion:

First Premise: The sustenance that Allāh ﷻ has taken upon Himself is the following: The allotment and portion that must reach the creatures in order for them to continue existing. Of course the Divine pledge and the giving out of sustenance that we attribute to Allāh ﷻ is different from that of creatures. If it has come in the Qur'ān that: "The sustenance of every creature is upon Allāh."[1] then one must not loose sight of the fact that the sustenance of the creatures is upon Allāh ﷻ and not any of His creatures. Allāh ﷻ is that being who has created the realm of existence and who is the Creator of all things.

For this reason, the promise of Allāh ﷻ differs from the promise of the creature that is itself part of this realm of existence and that is under the influence of the beings of this realm. To know the actions of Allāh ﷻ and His sustenance one must know the world. We are ourselves a part of this world and have responsibilities. Of course the responsibilities that we have with regards to sustenance - those which the laws of nature or laws of religion have laid upon us - are just so many minor aspects and weak manifestations of the all -pervasive sustenance of Allāh ﷻ.

The power of digestion that is in plants, the desires that are in animate beings and that guide them towards food all are manifestations of Allāh's

[1] *Sūrat Hūd* (11), Verse 6:
﴿ وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلاَّ عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي كِتَـــابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴾

ﷻ sustenance. Ultimately, it is Allāh ﷻ who has taken control of each animal by means of the sum of its desires in order for it to go after all that it is in need of and so that it struggles and works to satisfy these desires. Thought, work, and effort are but preliminaries to Allāh's ﷻ sustenance. Allāh ﷻ has created an attraction between the sustenance and the one that partakes of the sustenance - sending one after the other. There is a special kind of connection between the various parts of existence that connects them with one another.

When a person is still an infant and does not have the power to find his own nourishment, his sustenance is provided for him. As he gradually gains more abilities and can find his sustenance by means of his constant pursuits, his sustenance will not be obtained so easily. For instance his sustenance may be situated in some far off place, requiring him to set off and find it.

As a general principle, there is some form of reciprocity between the accessibility of sustenance, the measure of strength and ability of the sustained being, and the amount of guidance that has been given to that being in order to reach the sustenance. For this very reason, man is considered a higher and more subtle being than the plants and animals, and that which is sufficient for the plants and animals is not sufficient for him. The problem of his nourishment will differ from that of the other beings. The distance between the sustenance and the one who needs the sustenance in the human world is far greater.

Because of this, better means of survival have been put at his disposal and his guidance has been increased. Reason, knowledge, and thought have been given to him and revelation and prophethood have come to help him; while certain responsibilities have been put upon him. All of these are but dimensions of the sustenance of Allāh ﷻ.

In a certain poem it is said that the very existence of teeth calls forth the provision of bread for the teeth to chew on. Of course it does not mean that having teeth is sufficient in order for the bread to be cooked and made ready at the dinner table of a person. Rather it means that if there were no bread, there would have been no teeth; and if there had been no teeth, there would have been no bread. In other words, there exists a

relationship between sustenance, the one who uses the sustenance, the means of obtaining the sustenance, the digestive system, and the means of guidance. That Being who created man in nature and gave him teeth, has also created bread in the realm of nature. He has placed at his disposal thought, power, action and the sense of responsibility. All of these are manifestations of the sustenance of Allāh ﷻ.

Second Premise: Sustenance and nourishment are of two kinds: That which we seek and that which seeks us.[2] The "sustenance that seeks" comes after us even if we run away from it. It does not let us go, even as escaping form the claws of death is impossible. It has been mentioned in a ḥadīth that: "If the son of Ādam were to run from his sustenance as he runs from his death, it would still find him, even as death will eventually find him."[3] This kind of sustenance has roots in the Providence of Allāh ﷻ and hence, no kind of change is possible in it.

In connection with this matter the late sage, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī has said, "Sustenance and the one who consumes the sustenance are necessary corollaries of one another. It is meaningless to assume that the one who needs sustenance is after his nourishment in his life, but there be no sustenance for him. It is also impossible that there be sustenance, but there be nobody to use that sustenance or that the sustenance be more than his needs. For this reason sustenance is part of the predetermined Providence of Allāh."

The "sought after sustenance" is the sustenance that has been measured out for the seeker. If we seek it and fulfil all the necessary conditions and actions that are necessary for obtaining it, we will reach it. In reality the effort we make in order to reach this sustenance is a partial cause. If it is put alongside the other causes that lie in the unseen world, we will reach it for sure. In this connection our Master, the Commander of the

---

[2] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Letter 31:
وَاعْلَمْ يَا بُنَيَّ أَنَّ الرِّزْقَ رِزْقَانِ: رِزْقٌ تَطْلُبُهُ، وَرِزْقٌ يَطْلُبُكَ فَإِنْ أَنْتَ لَمْ تَأْتِهِ أَتَاكَ.

[3] *Muntakhab Mīzan al-Ḥikmah*, no. 2564:
لَوْ أَنَّ ابْنَ آدَمَ فَرَّ مِنْ رِزْقِهِ كَمَا يَفِرُّ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ لَأَدْرَكَهُ كَمَا يُدْرِكُهُ الْمَوْتُ.

Faithful, Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ has said, "Seek after sustenance, for certainly it is guaranteed for the one who goes after it."[4]

Just as effort without a guarantee of its giving fruit is meaningless, a guaranteed sustenance without any accompanying effort is also impossible (in the "sought after sustenance"). For this very reason, from amongst the two kinds of sustenance that Allāh ﷻ has allocated for His servants, He has made one unconditional (the "sustenance that seeks"), and one conditional ("the sought after sustenance").

The unconditional sustenance seeks man in all conditions and until the scales of man are not filled to their capacity with this kind of sustenance, his death will not come. According to the saying of the Noble Prophet ﷺ, "No one will die until his sustenance has been completed."[5]

The surety of the "sought after sustenance", however, is conditioned by the performance of certain actions and by taking into account certain matters. Without fulfilling these conditions and without putting them into order, this sustenance does not come into being.

The "sustenance that seeks", the one that is certain, is the sustenance that determines our very existence, our lifespan, the possibilities open to us, the environment we were put in, our family, and our predisposed talents. This kind of sustenance gives rise to the power, energy, and intelligence that we need in order to struggle and perform work; and it is in the wake of these that the door for the second kind of sustenance—the conditioned sustenance—opens up for us. In order to obtain the "sought after sustenance," everyone must not only make their own efforts, but they must also raise his hands up towards Allāh ﷻ in utter poverty as it were. The nursing infant whose effort and struggle comes in the form of crying, pouting, and screaming will reach the milk of his mother by means of these kinds of actions. Yet when this child grows up and sets

---

[4] *Muntakhab Mīzan al-Ḥikmah*, no. 2555:

أُطْلُبُوا الرِّزْقَ فَإِنَّهُ مَضْمُونٌ لِطَالِبِهِ.

[5] *Muntakhab Mīzan al-Ḥikmah*, no. 2561:

عَنْ رَسُولِ اللّٰهِ ﷺ: ...أَنَّهُ لَنْ تَمُوتَ نَفْسٌ حَتَّىٰ تَسْتَكْمِلَ رِزْقَهَا...

higher goals for himself, his effort and struggle will transform. It will change into thinking, working, and physical exertions. Moreover, the quality of his sustenance will also change.

To summarize, we may say that it is after the unconditional, certain "sustenance that seeks" that effort, struggle, work and action are created, and following this effort and desire the "sought after sustenance" comes into being. The certain sustenance is incapable of change or increase and decrease but the "sought after sustenance" is capable of being increased or decreased. As to the latter, neither does the greediness of the greedy person make it come about, nor does the sadness of the lazy one prevent it from reaching us. However it can be increased or decreased given the right conditions and if its prerequisites are met. A person asked the Noble Prophet ﷺ, "I wish that my sustenance be increased." The Noble Prophet replied, "Keep yourself in the state of ablution so that your sustenance be increased."[6]

Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام has said, "One whose intentions are pure, his sustenance will be increased."[7]

Therefore it is necessary for us to make effort and to seek the best and safest means for reaching our sustenance, to use our faculties, and to trust in Allāh ﷻ who is the creator of this path. All this after having understood the relationship between sustenance and the one who needs it, and after having known that the means for obtaining sustenance have also been created, and after having realized that the responsibility for obtaining sustenance has been placed upon us.

---

[6] *Muntakhab Mīzan al-Ḥikmah*, no. 2574:
عَنْ رَسُولِ اللّٰهِ ﷺ لَمَّا قِيلَ لَهُ: أُحِبُّ أَنْ يُوْسَعَ عَلَيَّ فِي رِزْقِي – يَدُمْ عَلى الطَّهَارَةِ يُوْسَعَ عَلَيْكَ فِي الرِّزْقِ.

[7] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 100, pg. 21:
قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عليه السلام: مَنْ حَسُنَتْ نِيَّتُهُ زِيْدَ فِي رِزْقِهِ.

34

TREATMENT OF ILLNESS AND SUPPLICATION

Question: If a person falls ill, should he seek treatment a) with a doctor, or b) by eating dust from near Imām al-Ḥusayn's grave, or c) through supplication?

Brief Answer

Each of the aforementioned actions could potentially cure his illness independently or by combining with the other two. However, the best course is to accompany all our actions—among which are medical and supernatural treatments—with supplication (which entails establishing a relationship with Allāh ﷻ and making a direct request from him). The reason for this is that the efficacy of a doctor's treatment or a given medicine or, for that matter, the intercession of Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī ؑ and the dust from near his grave, is intrinsically tied to the will of Allāh ﷻ himself.

It is also important to keep in mind that the intercession of the Prophet ﷺ and his family ؑ and supplications are not solutions limited to circumstances where one's hope in natural means is lost. At the same time, making use of intercession and supplications does not imply that one should neglect natural solutions altogether because the divine plan for this world is that things occur as per their natural causes. Therefore, one can make use of all three aforementioned treatments. That is to say, along with supplicating to Allāh ﷻ and seeking the blessings of Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī ؑ, one should refer to a doctor and seek medical treatment so that Allāh ﷻ accepts the Imām's ؑ intercession, and thereby allows the medical treatment to confer its desired effect.

In short, under no circumstances should one lose hope in the favour of Allāh ﷻ and the intercession of the Prophet's family. Similarly, by no means should one cease to take advantage of the natural means at his disposal.

Detailed Answer

Medical treatment, the intercession of saints (especially by means of the dust from near Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's عليه السلام grave), and supplicating to Allāh ﷻ, are all means of treating the sick, so long as the person's time of death has not arrived.

Just as it is possible for each of these three treatments to act independently by the will of Allāh ﷻ, thereby sufficing us of the remaining two, it is also possible that all three cures combine in order to cure the sick. In particular, supplication could cause the Imām's عليه السلام intercession to be accepted so that the dust from near his grave confers its healing effects. This in turn could cause the medical treatment to have its optimal effects so that the person progresses swiftly towards well-being.

However, it should be noted that the efficacy of medical treatments, and even the intercession of the Imām عليه السلام and the dust from his grave, is intrinsically tied to the will of Allāh ﷻ. Therefore, as a precondition to these other treatments, supplication to Allāh ﷻ holds a special place. Supplication establishes a direct connection with Allāh ﷻ and reaffirms our belief that nothing other than him can act independently (this is known as "Allāh's unity in action" or "*al-tawḥīd fīl afʿāl)*. It is for this reason that we have been strongly advised to begin every action—including seeking the intercession of saints—by supplicating to Allāh ﷻ for His aid, special favour, and His acceptance of their intercession. Such advice is especially well-spoken considering the difficulties entailed in finding a skilled doctor, diagnosing an illness accurately, prescribing effective medicines, followed by a strenuous recovery—all of which make seeking Allāh's ﷻ aid a vital necessity.

An additional difficulty in seeking a miraculous cure through the dust of Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī عليهما السلام, is that the efficacy of this cure requires the

following prerequisites, the observance of which is difficult in this day and age:

1. The dust must be from within the sanctuary[1] of Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī ﷺ and must be reddish in colour.

2. Once removed from the *ḥaram* complex, the dust must be wrapped in a cloth so as not to be touched by those *jinn* who hold an enmity toward the Shīʿa and lay in wait for an opportunity to touch the dust thereby neutering its miraculous effects.

3. Only a minute amount of the dust must be used.

4. It must be used with a pure intention without an inkling of doubt in its power to heal.

5. It must be accompanied by supplications to Allāh ﷻ for the acceptance of the intercession of Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī ﷺ.[2]

However, not to make things seem hopeless, seeking the intercession of Imām Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī ﷺ, the rest of the Prophet's family, or other saints, and seeking the blessings of the dust from each of their respective graves, when accompanied by a pure intention, is not without its effects, as testified to by numerous people's experiences. It should be noted that for prayers to be answered and for the intercession of saints to be accepted by the will of Allāh ﷻ, the following conditions must be fulfilled:

---

[1] Or "*Ḥā'ir,*" a radius of about 357 metres around the shrine of the Noble Imām.

[2] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 98, pg. 132:

فَإِذَا أَكَلْتَ مِنْ طِينِ قَبْرِ الْحُسَيْنِ عليه السلام فَقُلْ: أَللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ الْمَلَكِ الَّذِي قَبَضَهَا وَ بِحَقِّ النَّبِيِّ الَّذِي خَزَنَهَا وَ بِحَقِّ الْوَصِيِّ الَّذِي هُوَ فِيهَا أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ لِي فِيهِ شِفَاءً مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ وَ عَافِيَةً مِنْ كُلِّ بَلاَءٍ وَ أَمَاناً مِنْ كُلِّ خَوْفٍ بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ وَ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِهِ وَ سَلَّمَ. وَ تَقُولُ أَيْضاً: أَللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَشْهَدُ أَنَّ هَذِهِ التُّرْبَةَ تُرْبَةُ وَلِيِّكَ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ أَشْهَدُ أَنَّهَا شِفَاءٌ مِنْ كُلِّ دَاءٍ وَ أَمَانٌ مِنْ كُلِّ خَوْفٍ لِمَنْ شِئْتَ مِنْ خَلْقِكَ وَ لِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ.

1. The suppliant must be sincere and focused and should accompany his supplication with salutations and prayers *(ṣalawāt)* for the Prophet and his family ﷺ along with heartfelt repentance for past sins.

2. He must have performed all obligatory acts of worship and must have paid all mandatory Islāmic taxes *(khums and zakāt)*.

3. He must not hold any belligerence to the way of life *(sunnah)* of the Prophet and his household ﷺ.

4. He must act according to the teachings of the Qur'ān.

5. He must be thankful to Allāh ﷻ under all circumstances.

6. He must actively fulfil his duty to enjoin the good and forbid the evil *(al-amr bi'l ma'rūf wa'l nahyu 'ani'l munkar)*.

7. He must accompany his prayers with the appropriate natural and supernatural means at his disposal (that is to say, his prayers should not issue from laziness and farfetched hopes).

8. He should have no unfulfilled obligations to people.

9. He must be wont to fulfil all promises and pledges.

Occasionally, it occurs that despite the fact that none of the aforementioned conditions is fulfilled, a prayer is answered or the intercession of an Imām ﷺ is accepted. The philosophy behind such an apparently unwarranted acceptance might be one of several things:

1. It might be to soften the person's heart by showing him divine grace.

2. Perhaps it is to fulfil the divine call *(itmām al-ḥujjah)* upon a person. In the extreme circumstances surrounding sickness, when all natural means seem to fade away, the favours of Allāh ﷻ and in turn the Prophet's family ﷺ, increase, thereby closing the doors of doubt to even the greatest sophist. If this person, after experiencing divine grace, returns to his past improprieties, he will be left with no excuse on the Day of Judgment.

3. It is also possible that Allāh's ﷻ acceptance of this person's supplications was a reward for a past act of goodness or an act of

devotion with respect to one of Allāh's ﷻ saints in such a way as to take the place of the person's reward in the next life.

In conclusion, it is important to keep in mind that one must not look to prayer and intercession as a last resort to be used only when all hope in natural causes—and in particular medical treatment—fades, only to be forgotten when treatment is successfully achieved. This kind of misappropriation is treated with severity in the Qur'ān and aḥādīth[3]. If one were to make such an opportunistic use of supplication, his prayers may be answered and full health might be restored; however, in the afterlife, he would be severely punished, since despite experiencing divine grace, he turned away from Allāh after being cured.

On the other hand, one must never lose hope. As Imām Ja'far b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq ﷺ has said, "Allāh refuses to make things happen except through (their) causes."[4]

Allāh ﷻ is the Cause of all causes, however, just as He is the Cause of all causes, He can also destroy all causes as evidenced by the knife that did not cut Ismā'īl's ﷺ throat or the fire that did not burn Ibrāhīm ﷺ. Other times, without any material cause, Allāh ﷻ acts independently through unseen causes as is evidenced by the story of the camel of Ṣālih ﷺ and the staff of Mūsā ﷺ. In short, while we make use of all natural causes at our disposal, it is advisable to maintain an active relationship with Allāh ﷻ through supplications, and with Allāh's ﷻ friends.

---

[3] *Sūrat Luqmān* (31), Verse 32:
﴿ وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلاَّ كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُورٍ ﴾
See also: *Sūrat al-'Ankabūt* (29), Verse 65; *Sūrat Yūnus* (10), Verses 12, 22 & 23

[4] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pg. 183:
عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ ﷺ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: أَبَــى اللّٰهُ أَنْ يَجْرِيَ الْأَشْيَاءَ إِلاَّ بِأَسْبَابٍ...

35

THE CANONIZATION OF THE QUR'AN

Question: It is clear that when the Prophet Muḥammad dictated the verses of the Qur'ān, his designated scribes would write down the verses. However, when exactly was the entire Qur'ān compiled into the form we know today?

Answer

There are three prevailing views concerning the compilation of the Qur'ān:

1. It was compiled during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ. The compilation took place under his supervision—which is tantamount to divine inspiration—although he himself neither wrote the text of the Qur'ān nor collected the verses directly.

2. The Qur'ān that we have today was compiled by Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام after the Prophet's death but before people finally accepted him as a caliph.

3. The Qur'ān was compiled after the Prophet's death by a handful of the Prophet's companions (other than Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام).

Most Shīʿī scholars—especially contemporary scholars—accept the first view. Some Shīʿī scholars have taken the second stance. However, many Sunnī scholars have accepted the third view. Orientalists have also accepted this view and have added that the Qur'ān written by Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام was virtually ignored by the companions.

Obviously, on the basis of the first two opinions, the compilation of the Qur'ān, its division into *sūrahs* (chapters), and the order within and

among the *sūrahs* can be attributed to the divine will. In particular, based on the verse that reads, "He does not speak of his own will; he only speaks what is revealed to him,"[1] whatever the Prophet utters (especially that which relates directly to religious matters) is divinely inspired. Additionally, Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ, though he was not a prophet, served in his capacity as an Imām, as the continuation of the mission of prophethood, and possessed the prophetic gifts of infallibility and divine knowledge. Therefore, any compilation undertaken by either the Prophet ﷺ or Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ was necessarily divinely inspired.

Those who favour the third view cannot logically defend any claim that the division of the Qurʾān into sūrahs or the order into which the sūrahs have been arranged is divinely inspired. In fact, the third view, in essence, rejects any Divine hand in these two matters. Rather, it attributes the division and arrangement of the sūrahs to the personal judgement of the Prophet's companions.

[1] *Sūrat al-Najm* (53), Verses 3-4:

﴿ وَ مَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ. إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ وَحْيٌ يُوحـــــىٰ ﴾

36

THE NAMES OF THE IMAMS IN THE QUR'AN

Question: Why aren't the names of the Imāms expressly mentioned in the Qur'ān?

Brief Answer

It must be noted that although the names of the pure Imāms عليهم السلام are not specified in the Qur'ān, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله did assert their names, especially the name of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام. A very clear instance of such assertion occurs in ḥadīth Ghadīr, which is considered the official announcement of the caliphate of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام. Regarding the question of transmission, this ḥadīth is *mutawātir* [i.e. it has been narrated through so many lines of transmission that it can be accepted without doubt.] and its content reveals clear evidence for the Imāmate of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام.

Moreover, there are several verses in the Qur'ān that pertain to the status of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام, the most important of which is verse 55 of Sūrat al-Mā'idah; "Your guardian is only Allāh, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakāt while bowing down." In books of exegesis and history, both among the Shīʿite and Sunnī sources, it has been pointed out that this verse was revealed after the event in which Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام gave his ring to a poor beggar as charity while he was bowing down in prayer, and so this verse refers to no other than Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام. Thus, although Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام has not been mentioned in the Qur'ān by name, there are evident references to him.

But as to why the Imāms عليهم السلام have not been mentioned by name, at least two answers could be propounded.

Firstly, the normal pattern of the Qur'ān is to deal with issues in a general tone, providing the general principles and rules, without getting into the explanation of the minute details. This is the method the Qur'ān takes up in many instances and it is for this reason that when Imām Ja'far b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام was asked about this question, he replied that, "It is the same case with the daily prayer, the zakāt, and ḥajj: Allāh has mentioned only their general rules in the Qur'ān but has not elucidated the details. It was the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله who expressed the precise method of carrying out such duties and their related details. In the same vein, regarding the question of succession, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله himself specified the names of 'Alī and his household عليهم السلام as his successors and so there was no need for their names to have been expressed in the Qur'ān itself.

Secondly, in such an issue, where there was a good chance of opposition, prudence necessitated that the Qur'ān mention the issue indirectly and through allusions for there was the possibility that opposition to the issue of Imāmate might lead to opposition to the Qur'ān and the main core of Islām, which was certainly not in the interest of the Muslims. That is, if there were a verse specifying the succession of 'Alī عليه السلام, the opponents would have distorted it out of their opposition to him, and this would have violated the value of Islām and the Qur'ān as the final religion and the eternal and divine book. For, it should be borne in mind that one of the ways by which the Qur'ān could be preserved—for Allāh تعالى has asserted, "Indeed We have sent down the Reminder [i.e. the Qur'ān] and indeed We will preserve it."[1]—is to remove the natural motives for opposition and distortion.

Hence, the Qur'ān, firstly, refrains from expressing the names of the Imāms عليهم السلام; and secondly, places the verses that are related to the question of Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام successorship, the Verse of Tablīgh (which regards the official announcement of Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's عليه السلام successorship), and the Verse of Tathīr (which regards the

[1] *Sūrat al-Ḥijr* (15), Verse 9:

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَ إِنَّا لَهُ لَحٰفِظُونَ ﴾

infallibility of the Prophet's household) between other apparently unrelated verses so as to diminish, as much as possible, the motives for distortion and in so doing secure the Qur'ān against all possible attacks.

Detailed Answer

To begin with, the reader's attention should be drawn to the fact that the names of the Imāms ﷺ were mentioned expressly by the Prophet ﷺ, especially the blessed name of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ, whose successorship was affirmed by the Prophet ﷺ on several occasions.

One occasion was at the beginning of the Prophet's ﷺ mission when he embarked on spreading his message to his clan and family, saying, "The first [of you] to believe in me will be my spiritual heir *(waṣī)*, my vizier, and my successor." To this offer no one gave a positive answer except for Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ, and so finally the Prophet ﷺ said, "After me, you will be my spiritual heir, my vizier, and my successor."[2]

Another occasion was the event at Ghadīr Khum in which he expressly said, "Whomever I am his master, then ʿAlī ﷺ is also his master."[3]

Another of such assertions appears in the ḥadīth of Manzilat in which the Prophet ﷺ is related as having told Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ, "You are to me what Hārūn was to Mūsā, except that there will be no prophet coming after me."[4]

---

[2] *al-ʿUmdah*, pg. 121,133; *Ghāyat al-Marām*, pg. 320; *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 2 pp. 278-279:
فَأَخَذَ بِرُقْبَتِي ثُمَّ قَالَ: إِنَّ هٰذَا أَخِي وَوَصِيِّي وَخَلِيفَتِي فِيكُمْ فَاسْمَعُوا لَهُ وَأَطِيعُوا.

[3] This hadith is *mutawātir* and exists in both Shī'ah and Sunnī books. 'Allāmah Amīnī, in his book *al-Ghadīr* (vol. 1 pg. 114), has gathered the narrators of this hadith from all sources and put them in chronological order. At the top of this list are 60 of the Noble Prophet's companions which Sunnī books use as narrators. In his book *'Abaqāt,* Mīr Hamid Husayn has also proven this ḥadith to be mutawātir. (refer to: Ibn al-Maghāzilī, *Manāqib*, pp. 25-26)

[4] *al-ʿUmdah*, pg. 173-175; *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 3 pg. 32; *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, pg. 51, also vol. 3, pg. 197-201
فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَمَا تَرْضىٰ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنِّي بِمَنْزِلَةِ هَارُونَ مِنْ مُوسىٰ إِلاَّ أَنَّهُ لاَ نَبِيَّ بَعْدِي؟

It should be noted that the related sayings of the Prophet ﷺ regarding the successorship of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ؑ are too numerous to be impugned, and this point has been alluded to in many Sunni and Shīʿite books.[5]

In another ḥadīth, the Prophet ﷺ is recorded to have specifically mentioned the names of all the Imāms—starting with Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ؑ and up to Imām Mahdī ؑ — to Jābir b. ʿAbdullāh Ansārī.[6]

Thus this fact must be kept in mind that although the names of the Imāms ؑ do not appear in the Qur'ān, but the Prophet ﷺ — whose sayings are, according to the Qur'ān, all true and are essentially revelations[7]—did specify their names and reiterated their successorship and leadership.

Furthermore, in the Qur'ān there is an allusion to the Commander of the Faithful' position of leadership, and although his name has not been mentioned there, nevertheless, the majority of the exegetes, whether Shīʿite or Sunni, admit that the allusion refers to ʿAlī's ؑ status, and as

---

[5] ʿAllāmah Amīnī and Mīr Ḥāmid Ḥusayn have put forth much effort in proving the *tawātur* of hadith's on the Imāmate of Imām ʿAlī ؑ. Fādil Qūchānī, a Sunnī scholar who has rejected the *tawātur* of some of these hadith's, has accepted the *tawātur* of some others.

[6] *Yanābīʿ al-Mawaddah*, vol. 3, pg. 398-399:

سَمِعْتُ جَابِرُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ الْأَنْصَارِيُّ يَقُولُ: قَالَ لِي رَسُولُ اللّٰهِ ﷺ: يَا جَابِرُ إِنَّ أَوْصِيَائِي وَأَئِمَّةَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِي أَوَّلُهُمْ عَلِيٌّ، ثُمَّ الْحَسَنُ، ثُمَ الْحُسَيْنُ، ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ، ثُمَّ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيّ الْمَعْرُوْفُ بِالْبَاقِرِ سَتُدْرِكُهُ يَا جَابِرُ فَإِذَا لَقِيْتَهُ فَاقْرَأْهُ مِنِّيْ السَّلَامَ، ثُمَّ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، ثُمَّ مُوْسىٰ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ، ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُوْسىٰ، ثُمَّ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ، ثُمَّ عَلِيُّ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، ثُمَّ الْحَسَنُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ، ثُمَّ الْقَائِمُ اسْمُهُ اسْمِيْ وَكُنْيَتُهُ كُنْيَتِيْ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ عَلِيّ، ذٰاكَ الَّذِي يَفْتَحُ اللّٰهُ – تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالـــىٰ – عَلىٰ يَدَيْهِ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا، ذٰاكَ الَّذِي يَغِيْبُ عَنْ أَوْلِيَائِهِ غَيْبَةً لاَ يُثْبِتُ عَلىٰ الْقَوْلِ بِإِمَامَتِهِ إِلاَّ مَنِ امْتَحَنَ اللّٰهُ قَلْبَهُ لِلإِيْمَانِ.

[7] *Sūrat al-Najm* (53), Verses 3-4:

﴿ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ. إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ ﴾

such applies to no other than him.[8] The verse in which that allusion occurs is verse 55 of Sūrat al-Mā'idah, which reads, "Your guardian is only Allāh, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakāt while bowing down."[9]

Considering that in Islām there is no such rule that the Muslim should give zakāt while bowing down in prayer, it becomes evident that this verse is referring to an incident that really took place. That incident took place on the day when Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ was performing the ritual bow in the prayer, a beggar came up to him and asked him for some help. In response, Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ pointed to his ring, and so the beggar took the ring off of his finger and left.

According to the reading derived from the aforementioned historical incident, the verse asserts that the leadership of the Muslims is "only" in the hands of Allāh ﷻ, his Apostle, and Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ, and no other but them enjoys that status.

Hence, up to this point, it has been clarified that the names of the Imāms ﷺ were expressly mentioned by the Prophet ﷺ and that there is an unmistakable allusion in the Qur'ān to the Commander of the Faithful' position of leadership. These points are such that if an impartial person intends to clarify the truth for himself, he will, with only a little amount of research, realize that the Prophet's ﷺ opinion regarding the question of successorship and leadership was in favour of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ and his pure sons.

But as to why their names are not specifically mentioned in the Qur'ān, two justifications could be proposed.

---

[8] Refer to tafsīr books under verse 55 of Sūrat al-Mā'idah such as: *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* by Fakhr Rāzī; *Tafsīr-e-Namūneh*; *al-Durr al-Manthūr*. Some Sunni books of tradition have also mentioned this event - refer to: *Dhakhāyir al-ʿUqbā*, pg. 88; *Lubāb al-Nuqūl*, pg. 90; *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, vol. 6 pg. 391. A list of books containing other books can be found in *Tafsīr-e-Nemūneh*, vol. 4, pg. 425.

[9] *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5), Verse 55:

﴿ إِنَّـــمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ ﴾

First, the normal procedure that the Qur'ān takes up is dealing with issues in a general manner and in the form of general rules and principles without enumerating their details, such as is the case about many of the fundamental and minor principles mentioned in the Qur'ān. This answer has been suggested in a ḥadīth narrated from Imām Ja'far b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليهما السلام, and according to the narration, the Imām عليه السلام corroborates his answer by providing three examples.

1. One is how the issue of the ritual prayer is dealt with in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān's mention of the prayer is only a general description without elucidating the quality [i.e. the method] or quantity [i.e. how many times each act must be repeated during the course of a prayer] of every prayer. But the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله explained to the Muslims the manner in which the prayer should be preformed and the number of the *raka'āt* [pl. of *rak'ah*, the most general part of the ritual prayer, consisting of recitation of parts of the Qur'ān while erect, then bowing, thereafter standing up and from there going down for prostration, after which one sits up and then again falls in prostration before Allāh عليه السلام].

2. Another example that the Imām عليه السلام cited was the issue of zakāt, which has been introduced in the Qur'ān in a general manner, and it was the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله who determined the items to which zakāt pertained and the amounts with which the zakāt of each item is identified.

3. His third example was the issue of ḥajj, about which the Qur'ān only expresses its obligatory nature, while it was the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله who personally demonstrated to the Muslims the method by which this ritual should be carried out.[10]

---

[10] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pg. 286-287:

عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ سَأَلْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عليه السلام عَنْ قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ﴾ فَقَالَ: نَزَلَتْ فِي عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ وَالْحَسَنِ وَالْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلاَمُ. فَقُلْتُ لَهُ: إِنَّ النَّاسَ يَقُولُونَ: فَمَا لَهُ لَمْ يُسَمِّ عَلِيًّا وَأَهْلَ بَيْتِهِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلاَمُ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ؟ قَالَ: فَقَالَ: قُولُوا لَهُمْ: إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وآله نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ الصَّلاَةُ وَلَمْ يُسَمِّ اللَّهُ

Thus, it is unreasonable to expect that the Qur'ān should examine the details of all religious issues. And so it is with regards to the issue of the leadership of the Prophet's household ﷺ, the fact that the names of the Imāms ﷺ have not been specified should not be cited as grounds for rejecting the school of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ (the household of the Prophet), just as one should not curtail the noon prayer from four rakʿats to two rakʿats, for instance, with the excuse that the Qur'ān does not specify that it should be four rakʿats, or just as one should not refrain from performing the ritual cycles around the Kaʿbah with the excuse that it has not been expressed in the Qur'ān.

The second justification is that regarding such a controversial issue, where there existed a high risk of opposition, prudence dictated that the Qur'ān mention the issue in an implicit manner, for there was the risk that opposition to the issue of the Commander of the Faithful' leadership might even jeopardize the integrity of the Qur'ān itself. Thus a direct mention of the issue was certainly not in the interest of the Muslim community. For, it should be noted that one of the methods for preserving the Qur'ān from any distortion, as promised by Allāh ﷻ, "Indeed We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will preserve it;"[11], is precisely this: To express the issues in such a way as to eliminate any motives on the side of the pseudo-Muslim hypocrites for distortion, so that groups that do carry strong motives for distortion, out of material desires or opposition to the truth, would not alter the Qur'ān to conform it to their inclinations, thereby violating the integrity of the Qur'ān.

لَهُمْ ثَلاَثاً وَلاَ أَرْبَعاً، حَتَّى كَانَ رَسُولُ اللّه ﷺ هُوَ الَّذي فَسَّرَ ذٰلكَ لَهُمْ، ونَزَلَتْ عَلَيْه الزَّكَاةُ وَلَمْ يَسمْ لَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَرْبَعينَ درْهَماً درْهَمَ، حَتَّى كَانَ رَسُولُ اللّه ﷺ هُوَ الَّذي فَسَّرَ ذٰلكَ لَهُمْ، وَنَزَلَ الْحَجُّ فَلَمْ يَقُلْ لَهُمْ: طُوفُوا أُسْبُوعاً حَتَّى كَانَ رَسُولُ اللّه ﷺ هُوَ الَّذي فَسَّرَ ذٰلكَ لَهُمْ.

[11] *Sūrat al-Ḥijr* (15), Verse 9:

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴾

Ayatullāh Mutahharī expresses this explanation in the following manner: "As to the question of why the Qur'ān has not specifically mentioned the issue of ʿAlī's ﷺ successorship, they answer is as follows: Firstly, the norm of the Qur'ān is to express issues in the form of general principles, and secondly, the Prophet ﷺ or Allāh ﷻ did not want to propound this issue [i.e. the issue of the leadership of the Muslim community]—an issue that was at risk of being manipulated by men out of egocentrism and ambition—so bluntly. For, just as they [i.e. the opponents] so readily disregarded what the Prophet ﷺ had said about this issue on the basis of various excuses—including the claim to *ijtihād* [i.e. that what the Prophet ﷺ said in this regard was his own personal view and we also have the right to put forward and follow our own opinions]—and so justified their position by claiming that the Prophet ﷺ did not intend the leadership of ʿAlī ﷺ when he said those things about him, but rather he actually meant such and such, if there were a verse in this relation, they would just as well have misinterpreted it.

The Prophet ﷺ in his statements said very clearly, "This here ʿAlī ﷺ is his [i.e. the Muslim's] master." Would you like anything more frank than this! But there is a difference between discarding a statement of the Prophet ﷺ, albeit so clear, and that of a verse of the Qur'ān clearly mentioning the issue, especially only a day after the demise of the Prophet ﷺ. It was for this reason that I related the following story in the preface to my book, *Succession and Leadership:* During the Commander of the Faithful reign, a Jew wanted to scold the Muslim community concerning the events surrounding the Prophet's death—and they did really deserve scolding! He told ʿAlī ﷺ, "You had not buried your prophet before you opposed each other regarding him." The Commander of the Faithful retorted, "We opposed each other not regarding him but regarding a verdict that he had addressed to us. But as to you; your feet were still soaked from the sea [which Mūsā had miraculously split in half] when you told your prophet, 'make for us a God like the gods that they have.' He [i.e. Mūsā] said, 'You are indeed an ignorant lot.' So there is a big difference between what happened amongst us and what happened amongst you. We did not quarrel over the Prophet himself, but

rather about what was the actual content of his command. These two are very different."

It is very different to justify a mistake—although this justification might not be the real cause for the mistake but only a pretext for the real cause of the mistake—by saying that those who made the mistake thought their claim was in accordance with what the Prophet ﷺ intended, and in so doing manipulated the Prophet's statement—such justification is better than to say that those who made the mistake discarded the related Qur'ānic verse despite its clarity, to say that they distorted the Qur'ān.

Therefore, it can be said that the main point in not specifying the names of the Imāms عليهم السلام in the Qur'ān, or at least the name of the Commander of the Faithful, was securing the Qur'ān against any distortion.

Thus, as can be witnessed, the Verses of *Ṭathīr*, *Tablīgh*, and *Wilāyat* are inserted among the verses regarding the wives of the Prophet ﷺ, or the verses about the rules pertaining to the People of the Book and those explaining that Muslims should not make friends with them [i.e. the People of the Book], which apparently have no bearing on the issue of the leadership of the pure Imāms عليهم السلام and Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام. Thus an impartial researcher can, with the slightest attention realize that the tone of the part of the verse pertaining to the issue in question diverges from the main body of the verse and that it has been placed there for a certain reason [namely, concealment].

37

IMAMATE AT CHILDHOOD

Question: How is it possible for some of the Imāms to reach Imāmate while still children?

Brief Answer

According to the undisputed belief of Imāmī Shīʿism taken from numerous verses and Prophetic traditions, the Imāmate is a Divine position. So if it is established that someone has been divinely appointed to this position a Muslim must submit to his command and authority without question obeying Allāh ﷻ as He says, "Allāh best knows where to place His messengership."

There are several ways to ascertain whether Allāh ﷻ has appointed a particular person to this position:

1. Prophetic traditions.

2. Being introduced and specified by other Imāms, particularly the previous Imām.

3. Possessing the other conditions of Imāmate, such as inherent knowledge, more knowledge than anyone of their time, infallibility, soundness and moderation of body and spirit, and ability to perform miracles and extraordinary deeds.

The Shīʿas contemporary to young Imāms—that is, Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Taqī ﷺ at eight years, Imām ʿAlī b Muḥammad al-Naqī ﷺ at nine years, and Imām al-Mahdī ﷺ at five years—were not unaware of these things, and it was after great searching and effort that they attained certainty about their Imāmate and submitted to their authority. Later generations in turn rely on research, historical records, and traditions.

On the other hand, the position of Imāmate, unseen Divine endorsement, and manifestation of extraordinary deeds at the hands of these personages prevent them from being compared to normal human beings.

In addition, for a Muslim who believes in the Qur'ān, the granting of a Divine station on the basis of Divine wisdom, knowledge, and grace to someone of young age should not be surprising, since the prophethood of ʿIsā ﷺ, Yaḥya ﷺ, and Sulaymān ﷺ also took place at a young age. This is why the noble verses that indicate this point were frequently cited by the Imāms ﷺ.

Detailed Answer

Imāmate, in the view of Imāmi Shīʿas, is the practice by the Walī (Divinely appointed authority) of his authority over people (wilāyah); in other words, Imāmate is a Divinely-appointed station for managing the people's worldly and religious affairs as well as guiding them to the peak of felicity and humanity. Thus, the Imām cannot be determined or selected by the people, since inherent knowledge and inner infallibility are unseen qualities which no one but Allāh ﷻ knows, and these are the two most important qualities of the Divinely-appointed Walī.

A monotheist who has submitted to Divine authority over him or herself is wholly obedient to the commands and prohibitions of his or her Allāh ﷻ. Thus, in accepting the authority of the leaders appointed by Him as well, he or she must be fully obedient, submit to their authority, and avoid comparing them to others or baselessly second-guessing their appointment. There are several ways to recognize the divinely appointed Imām/Walī (guardian):

1. Studying their conduct and actions.

2. Referring to the attributes and signs that the previous Walī has mentioned for the succeeding Walī.

3. Seeking miracles and verifying the presence of the conditions and necessary corollaries of Imāmate

It is possible to find out about their lives and character by referring to books of history and biography, and by looking at collections of traditions one can find the traditions that have come down from the Prophet ﷺ; and finally by examining at the traditions of each Imām, one can come to recognize the next Imām. The Imāms عليهم السلام performed miracles both in their lifetimes and after their martyrdoms. The occurrence of such extraordinary deeds for those who sought recourse to them is so frequent that it is beyond reckoning, and it is something that everyone searching for truth can experience.

So there is no specific age necessary to attain the station of Imāmate. The spiritual, intellectual, and mental maturity required for the position can be granted by Allāh ﷻ from the day of his birth. This fact is one of the extraordinary phenomena that prove their Imāmate, it does not detract from it. Obviously, from a superficial and shortsighted viewpoint, it appears difficult for prominent personalities, scholars and the old and young to submit to the authority of a boy; for ordinary people accepting such an authority would not be as easy as accepting older Walī.

The contemporaries to the young Imāms—that is, Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Taqī عليه السلام who became Imām at the age of eight, Imām ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Naqī عليه السلام who attained the Imāmate at the age of nine, and Imām al-Mahdī عليه السلام who became Imām at the age of five—were no exceptions to this rule, and they posed this very question to Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā عليه السلام.

For example, there are the following traditions: It has been narrated from Ḥasan ibn Jahm that he was in the presence of Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā عليه السلام. Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Taqī عليه السلام, still a child, was also present. After a long conversation Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā عليه السلام said to me, "Ḥasan! If I tell you this child is to be your Imām, what would you say?" I said, "May I be your ransom! Whatever you say, I say the same thing." The Imām عليه السلام said, "You speak the truth." Then Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā عليه السلام exposed the shoulder of Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Taqī عليه السلام and showed me a symbol that was similar to two fingers, and he said, "A

comparable symbol was in the same place in the body of Imām Mūsā b. Jaʿfar al-Kāẓim ﷺ."[1]

It has also been narrated from al-Maḥmudī that he said, 'I was in Ṭūs (an area in Central Asia near present-day Mashhad) in the presence of Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā ﷺ. One of his companions said, "If something were to happen to the Imām, who would be the divinely chosen Imām after him? The Imām ﷺ turned to him and said, "Regarding the issue of Imāmate, after me refer to my son Jawād (Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Taqī ﷺ)." He (al-Maḥmudī) said, "He is still a child!" Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā ﷺ replied, "Allāh chose ʿIsā ﷺ as His messenger though he was younger than Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Taqī ﷺ."[2]

In spite of these traditions some of Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā's ﷺ followers out of anxiety still went in search of his successor. ["]Some of them went after ʿAbdullāh ibn Mūsā, the brother of the eighth Imām ﷺ. Since they weren't willing to accept anyone's Imāmate without evidence, they presented to him some questions, and when they found him unable to answer they forsook him.["] This is because what was important to them was the manifestation of this divine aspect in the Imāms' knowledge. This is also why they would apply this principle to all

[1] *Mowsūʿah al-Imām al-Jawād*, vol. 1, pg. 137:
وَرُوِيَ عَنْ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ الْجَهْمِ قَالَ: دَخَلْتُ عَلى الرِّضَا عليه السلام وَأَبُو جَعْفَرٍ عليه السلام صَغِيْرٌ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ فَقَالَ لِيْ بَعْدَ كَلاَمٍ طَوِيْلٍ جَرىٰ لَوْ قُلْتُ لَكَ يَا حُسَيْنُ إنَّ هَذَا إمَامٌ مَا كُنْتَ تَقُوْلُ؟ قَالَ: قُلْتُ: مَا تَقُوْلُ لَهُ لِيْ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ. قَالَ: أَصَبْتَ، ثُمَّ كَشَفَ عَنْ كَتِفِ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عليه السلام فَأَرَانِيْ مِثْلَ رَمْزِ إِصْبَعَيْنِ فَقَالَ لِيْ: مِثْلُ هَذَا كَانَ فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا الْمَوْضِعِ مِنْ أَبِي مُوْسىٰ صَلَوَاتُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ.

[2] *Dalāʾil al-Imāmah*, pg. 388
عَنِ الْمَحْمُودِي قَالَ: كُنْتُ وَاقِفاً عَلىٰ رَأْسِ الرِّضَا عليه السلام بِطُوسٍ فَقَالَ لَهُ بَعْضُ أَصْحَابِه: إِنْ حَدَثَ حَدَثٌ فَإِلَى مَنْ؟ قَالَ: إِلَى ابْنِي أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ. قَالَ: فَإِن اسْتَصْغَرَ سِنُّهُ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَبُو الْحَسَنِ: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَعَثَ عِيسىٰ بْنَ مَرْيَمَ قَائِماً بِشَرِيعَتِه فِي دُوْنِ السِّنِّ الَّتِي يَقُوْمُ فِيْهَا أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ عَلىٰ شَرِيْعَتِه.

the Imāms and subject them to various questions, and only when they felt that they were able to answer them (along with the textual declarations of their Imāmate) would the Imāmi Shīʿas recognize them as infallible Imāms. The young Imāms were no exceptions to this rule; the leaders of the Shīʿas would examine them to become certain of their level of knowledge and ability to perform clear miracles.

On the other hand, the enemies of the Imāms, who were always waiting for an opportunity to marginalize the Imāms and disperse the Shīʿas from around them, did not sit by idly. Arranging intellectual gatherings and the like they strove to make the young age of these Imāms an excuse to altogether marginalize them from society. But the more effort they made, the more they debased themselves, and the superior knowledge of the Imāms stood out to their knowledgeable contemporaries.

In addition, it is obvious to those familiar with the Qur'ān and stories of the prophets that several of them reached the station of prophethood, messengership and even Imāmate at a young age, like ʿIsā عليه السلام[3], Yaḥyā عليه السلام[4] etc. The majority of prophets reached this stage, however, at the age of forty or older.

In sum this issue should be referred to the Divine wisdom and knowledge, and as in all judgments one should make use of all available contexts, evidences, and proofs. As Allāh ﷻ says "Say, O Lord! Yours is the dominion of the sky and the earth; You give the kingdom to whom You please and take it from whom You please, and You grant honor to whom You please and debase whom You please. All good is in Your hands. Verily You have power over all things."[5]

---

[3] *Sūrat Maryam* (19), Verses 29-30:
﴿ فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا. قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا... ﴾

[4] Ibid., Verse 12:
﴿ يَا يَحْيَى خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا ﴾

[5] *Sūrat āli ʿImrān* (3), Verse 26:

Allāh ﷻ explains similar objections of the Tribes of Israel and replies in these words: "The Prophet told them, Verily Allāh has made Tālūt your king. They said how can he be king, while we are more worthy of kingship than he, and he is lacking in wealth? He [their prophet] said Allāh has chosen him over you and has granted him intellectual and physical abilities, and Allāh gives His kingdom to whomever He pleases, and Allāh is all-encompassing, all-knowing. And the prophet said to them, Verily the sign of His kingdom is that there shall come to you the chest in which there is tranquility from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the children of Mūsā and the children of Hārūn have left, the angels bearing it"[6]

﴿ قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾

[6] *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2), Verse 247:

﴿ وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَنْ يَشَآءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴾

38

THOSE CONDITIONS THE FULFILMENT OF WHICH GUARANTEES THE ACCEPTANCE OF A PRAYER

Question: What are the conditions that guarantee the fulfilment of a prayer?

Brief Answer

The word duʿā (supplication) literally means "to call", "to request a favour", "to seek help" and in some cases it is used to denote the general meaning of calling. But in its [popular and] technical sense, it refers to the act of making a request from Allāh ﷻ. The word duʿā and its derivatives have been used in the Qur'ān in approximately thirteen different meanings.

As supplication is a form of worship, it has like all other forms of worship certain requirements, the fulfilment of which makes the supplication effective in that Allāh ﷻ grants the supplicant's request and elevates him to higher stations of proximity to Himself.

It is important to note that the acceptance of supplication does not mean that the request will be instantaneously granted, and that its consequences will become immediately manifest. Hence, in some cases, the result of the acceptance might appear after some forty years, or in yet other cases Allāh ﷻ may postpone the granting of the request for the hereafter, wherein He will bestow on the supplicant blessings many times greater than what he had asked for, and this experience will so overwhelm the blessed believer that at that moment he will wish that none of his other requests had been granted in the world.

Scholars of Islāmic sciences have extracted from the Qurʾān and the aḥādīth of the Infallibles ﷺ certain conditions which, if respected, will guarantee the acceptance of the supplication. Mullā Muhsin Fayd Kāshānī enumerates ten such requirements. Ten other requirements have been recorded in *ʿUddatul Dāʿī*, while seventeen conditions have been put forth in *Duʿāhā Wa Tahlīlāt-i-Qurʾān*.

By studying the various phrases that are recorded in the aḥādīth relating to this topic, it is possible to formulate the conditions that guarantee the acceptance of one's supplications, such as: not asking for a request that is in contradiction with the "best universal order" that governs the world; the immutable Divine will (in which case the supplication will be disregarded); beginning and ending the supplication with blessings upon Prophet Muḥammad and his household ﷺ; possessing a thorough knowledge of Allāh ﷻ, putting our trust only in Allāh ﷻ and no other but Him; being sincere and feeling desperately in need of Allāh ﷻ; the harmoniousness of one's heart and tongue in supplicating; being disposed to carry out our duties and refrain from committing what Allāh ﷻ has forbidden; pleading for forgiveness of one's sins; being persistent in beseeching Allāh ﷻ without loosing hope; knowing that Allāh ﷻ hears His servants and heeds their supplications; asking Allāh ﷻ to take care of one's needs the way He deems appropriate and in accordance with what is best for him, [not what he himself whimsically desires]. If all these conditions are met, the supplicant should have no doubt that the request will be granted, although it be at a later time.

Detailed Answer

Before venturing to answer the question, the meaning of duʿā and the reason for its necessity from the perspective of the Qurʾān will be examined briefly.

The necessity of supplication is not an issue confined to Islām; it was also a given among the religions of the ancient prophets, and thus they informed their people regarding this issue. Moreover, there are many instances where the supplications of the ancient prophets have been recorded, one of which is Ibrāhīm's ﷺ supplication and its acceptance

recounted in Sūrat Ibrāhīm, verse 37. Another instance is Mūsā' supplication related in Sūrat Ṭāhā, verses 25-28. Allāh ﷻ in many verses exhorts the believers to supplicate Him (See, among others 2:186 and 40:60).

The literal meaning of duʿā (supplication) is "calling", "asking a request", and "pleading for help." Although in some contexts it denotes merely "calling."

In its religious usage however, it refers to asking a favour from Allāh, the Exalted. The word duʿā and its derivatives that appear in the Qur'ān hold approximately thirteen different meanings, some of which are: "calling", "supplicating", "asking Allāh", "hollering for someone", "to invite to a cause or to someone", "pleading for help", "worship", etc.

From some verses and aḥādīth, it can be inferred that supplication is a form of worship of Allāh ﷻ. Furthermore, in some aḥādīth, we come across phrases like "Supplication is the core of worship." In this light, it becomes clear that supplication, like all other forms of worship, has certain positive and negative conditions. In other words, in order for a supplication to be valid and complete and therefore conducive to Divine proximity, the supplicant must furnish certain prerequisites and conform to certain manners and pay heed to certain obstacles. It is after realizing these conditions that it becomes clear why some supplications are not accepted. For Allāh ﷻ is most wise and knowledgeable and, as such, all His actions are based on wise and reasonable grounds, and thus His granting a request is contingent on whether or not it is conducive to the well-being of the supplicant.

To better understand this; let us imagine a generous and benevolent individual who tells people that he will grant any request that is made to him. Now, if someone approaches him and asks him for something that is detrimental to the his own well-being or something that will entail his certain destruction—wrongly thinking that it is advantageous to him—in such a case, it is obvious that the appropriate response on the part of the generous and benevolent individual should be the rejection of the request. On the contrary, to grant the request in question would be an act of oppression against the requester [in spite of the latter's feelings]. And

it should be noted that most of the requests that human beings make to Allāh ﷻ are harmful for and disadvantageous to them.

This has been expressed in a sacred ḥadīth; it reads, "There are those amongst My servants for whom only wealth is suitable [as opposed to poverty], and were I to consign them to anything else, they would have certainly perished. And indeed there are those amongst my servants for whom only poverty is suitable, and were I to consign them to anything else, they would have indeed perished."[1]

At this point, a question might arise in the reader's mind: Considering the fact that Allāh ﷻ knows what is good for us better than anyone else and that He will carry out what He wishes, so what need is there for supplication, to request something from Allāh ﷻ? In reply, it suffices to say that some of the Divine existential decrees *(muqaddarāt)* are contingent on the supplication of the servant. That is, if the servant supplicates, that will be grounds on which the Divine will would allow the bestowal of the request, and if the servant does not supplicate, that ground would be lacking, and hence the request would not be granted. For instance, if one beseeches Allāh ﷻ to grant him eternal life, Allāh ﷻ will not accept such supplication, for it contradicts the Divine will as made clear in the Qur'ān (3:185.; or if one asks Allāh ﷻ to prevent him from ever being in need of anyone else, such a request would also be denied. It has been narrated that one day Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ؑ overheard someone telling his friend, "May Allāh never afflict you with any tribulation or mishap." On hearing this, Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ؑ addressed the person and said, "You just asked Allāh for your friend's death." That is, as long as one is alive, one will be afflicted with tribulations and hardships.

In commenting on a ḥadīth, ʿAllāma Majlisī forwards some justifications as to why some supplications are not accepted:

---

[1] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 352:
وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لاَ يُصْلِحُهُ إِلاَّ الْغِنَى وَلَوْ صَرَّفْتُهُ إِلى غَيْرَ ذٰلِكَ لَهَلَكَ، وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لاَ يُصْلِحُهُ إِلاَّ الْفَقْرَ وَلَوْ صَرَّفْتُهُ إِلى غَيْرَ ذٰلِكَ لَهَلَكَ.

1. Allāh's ﷻ promise to grant the requests made to Him is conditioned on whether they are in accord with His will, for Allāh ﷻ says, He will remove that for which you supplicated Him, if He wished (6:41..

2. What is meant by "replying" in the ḥadīth is the concomitant meaning; that is, to hear the supplication of the servant. Allāh ﷻ accepts the supplication right away but postpones granting the supplicant's request so that the latter would continue in his supplication, for the believer is the beloved of Allāh ﷻ and He loves to hear His beloved.

3. Allāh ﷻ grants only those requests that are to the advantage of the supplicant, for Allāh ﷻ is wise and as such does not jeopardize what is advantageous to His servant and conducive to his felicity in trying to meet the whimsical wishes of His servant which are in actuality detrimental to his well-being. Thus it becomes clear that when such a promise (to grant the requests of those who beseech Him) is made by a wise being, it must be understood as to pertain only to those requests that are to the supplicant's advantage.[2]

In *Usūl al-Kāfī*, four possibilities have been provided regarding the meaning of "reply" [i.e. Allāh's reply to His servants' supplications]:[3]

1. Allāh ﷻ grants the supplicant's request right away;

2. Allāh ﷻ accepts the supplicant's request but postpones granting it for some time, as He likes to hear the voice of the supplicant;

3. Allāh ﷻ accepts the supplication but fulfils it not by granting what the supplicant had asked for but by erasing the supplicant's sins, placing it as compensation for his wrongs;

4. Allāh ﷻ accepts the supplication but fulfils it not by granting what the supplicant had asked for but by reserving it for the supplicant as provision for the hereafter.

In some cases Allāh's ﷻ acceptance of the supplication is by way of bestowing on the supplicant several times more than what he had asked for in the hereafter as he was not aware of what was really in his good,

[2] *Mir'āt al-'Uqūl*, vol. 12 pg. 19-20
[3] *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, pg. 330

and so when he beholds what bounties Allāh ﷻ has granted him in lieu of what he had asked for, he will wish that none of his requests had been granted and at that point he will confirm that his supplications have been fully accepted.[4]

Up to here, the meaning of duʿā and its importance have been illustrated. The conditions of the acceptance of supplication and why some supplications are not accepted were also analyzed. Now it is time to consider the question: under what circumstances are supplications accepted? Scholars of Islām and Qurʾānic exegetes have, based on their understanding of the Qurʾān and the aḥādīth, enumerated certain conditions for the supplication and the supplicant, which if observed would render the supplication effectual and thus the request would be granted.

In *Duʿāhā Wa Tahlīlāt-i Qurʾān*, the author mentions seventeen conditions for supplication and the manners according to which it should be carried out, some of which are: knowledge of Allāh ﷻ; the concordance of the supplicant's heart and tongue; carrying out the obligatory duties and refraining from the forbidden acts; repentance; uttering the formula of blessings upon the Prophet and his household, etc.

Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī also provides ten conditions in *Maḥajjah al-Baydāʾ*, in addition to the ten that he quotes from Aḥmad ibn Fahd al-Hillī's *ʿUddatul Dāʿī*. They are, among others: determination in supplication; supplicating as a group; supplicating with a real devotion of the heart [and not perfunctorily]; relying solely on Allāh ﷻ in one's needs, etc.

In the aḥādīth regarding the guaranteed acceptance of supplications, there are some phrases whose mention is not without benefit.

[4] *Mirʿāt al-ʿUqūl*, vol. 12 pg. 1-5

Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام says, "Supplications are always behind veils that bar them from reaching the Divine Throne unless they are accompanied by blessings to the Prophet and his household."[5]

It is narrated in another account that Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said, "Whenever any of you decides to supplicate his Lord, he should commence it by blessing the Prophet, for such a blessing is accepted before Allāh and certainly Allāh is not such that He would accept part of the supplication while rejecting the rest."[6]

And yet in another narration, it is recommended that the supplicant bless the Prophet at the close of his supplication as well as at the commencement.

Imām Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Mujtabā عليه السلام says, "If a person is vigilant to prevent temptations and thoughts that are displeasing to Allāh from entering his heart, I will guarantee that he would be *mustajāb al-daʿwah* [i.e. that Allāh will grant all his requests indiscriminately].[7]

Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام has been related as having said, "Sever all ties of hope from other-than-Allāh until it [i.e. your hope] relies on no other power but Allāh, then supplicate, for then surely it will be accepted."[8]

Also, it has been narrated that the supplication of the oppressed, who has no other refuge but Allāh عز وجل, is certainly accepted.

Thus if the supplication is made in the tone of seeking help, the supplicant will not be repelled and his request will be granted. For, the Agent Who overlooks the affairs of the creatures and He Who grants the requests is perfect and beyond perfect, and His blessings are also perfect and beyond perfect, and so if the blessing is not manifest and does not affect the creatures, it is due to the defective capacity of the receptacle. Thus if the recipient be capable of receiving the blessings, which gush forth from an endless reservoir that never shows any sign of scarcity, the

[5] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 491
[6] *Amālī*, Shaykh Sadūq, vol. 1, pg. 157
[7] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 67
[8] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 72, pg. 107

infinitely abundant and rich mines of Divine grace will pour down on him.

Hence, it has been said that human affairs are of three types: one type are those which are willed by Allāh without any need for supplication, in which case whether or not the recipient supplicates, he will receive what has been allocated for him; the next type are those which will not be willed by Allāh ﷻ regardless of whether or not the individual supplicates, in which case even if the individual supplicates his request would not be granted; the third group are those which Allāh ﷻ wills, provided the beneficiary supplicates, and as such Allāh ﷻ will not will it without the beneficiary's supplication. In the latter case, Allāh's ﷻ granting the request is contingent on the supplication of the beneficiary, and as the human being is ignorant of the advantageousness or disadvantageousness of what he desires, he must not fail to supplicate for all he wants. Although, he must not be disappointed if it is not granted, for he should know that it was not to his benefit.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, supplication is a form of worship, rather it is of the best forms of worship, and as such, is very effective in gaining proximity to Allāh ﷻ, which is of the most valuable achievements that can be sought through worship [and thus the supplicant should not be so much concerned as to whether his request is granted or not].

After raising one's hands in supplication, it is recommended, according to the aḥādīth and the traditions of the Infallibles عليهم السلام, that he rub his hands on his face, for Allāh's ﷻ grace has replied to those hands [although it might appear that the supplicant's request has not been granted]. The hands which have been extended toward Allāh ﷻ in supplication will definitely be blessed and so the supplicant will not terminate his supplication empty handed, and the hands that have been blessed by Allāh ﷻ are sacred. Thus, it is recommended that the supplicant rub his hands on his face.

39

SINS AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

Question: What is the reality of sin and how does it affect the soul and psyche of the human being?

Brief Answer

The above question must be answered in four parts:

The Reality of Sin

Sin, which in ʿArabic is referred to as *ithm* and *ʿisyān*, means to disobey the order of the Master and to slip in complying with His wishes. The sinful individual, in lieu of following the dictates of reason, obeys his desire and anger, which means that he may commit any sin imaginable, which if he does, he has actually betrayed himself. Sin is the snare of Satan. The inner reality of sin is fire while on the outside it deceives the individual by a fleeting sense of pleasure and lust, in temptation of which the oblivious human being incurs Divine chastisement.

The Effects of Sin

Sin entails harmful consequences for the individual as well as for society at large. Its consequences for the individual are, among others: the darkening and hardening of one's heart; depriving the sinner of knowledge of the Divine secrets and gnosis; the transformation of the heart into a niche for Satan; being barred from self-knowledge; relinquishing the pleasure of Divine conversation; the invalidation of the sinner's worship; leading the sinner to denying the hereafter and Allāh's ﷻ reward and punishment.

The social repercussions of sin consist of the decadence and retrogression of the sinful society, although it might appear as though it is headed in

the direction of progress. For, in reality, such a society is drawing near to its extinction due to neglecting human and moral values.

The Cause of Sin

Religious authorities arraign ignorance and obliviousness as the main causes for sin. The most effective tactic of an enemy and its first means of infiltration is to distract its opposing party. Ignorance is the fountainhead of corruption—ignorance of the existential values of humanity, of the valuable results of sexual purity *('iffah)*, of the effects of sin, etc.

The Way of Salvation

Several ways can be enumerated here:

1. Repentance (which is returning to Allāh ﷻ with the resolute intention of abstaining from sin and which encompasses a multitude of grades) and pleading for forgiveness.

2. Reminding oneself of one's sins.

3. The remembrance of Allāh ﷻ.

4. A resolved will [to remain on the straight path].

Thus, after the clarification of the meaning of sin and the other related issues, attributing sin to Allāh ﷻ becomes meaningless. The issues of guidance, being led astray, and the variations in the natures of human beings in creation will be dealt with separately.

Detailed Answer

Sin—the 'Arabic equivalents of which are *ithm* and *'isyān*—signifies disobeying the injunctions of the Lord and the failure to comply with His wishes. In other words, the committing of an action which is displeasing to the Lord, the Creator, (due to the harm it entails) or to avoid an action that has been obligated by Him (due to the benefit it entails). Hence, sin is contradictory to the spirit of obedience.

In essence, the sinner has deposed the rightful king of his faculties—in wit, reason—and has supplanted it with desire and anger, which should be in the service of reason. When desire and anger have taken power as the rulers of the soul, they will be the sinner's beloved. Thus, whatever, he wishes to do must be pleasing either to desire or to anger, and it is for this reason that he commits sin.

Sin: The Snare of Satan

In the aḥādīth related from the Ahlul Bayt عليهم السلام, material attachments and sins are described as snares of Satan. That is, sins are traps with which Satan hunts human beings and ropes with which he enthrals them. Of course these ropes are multitudinous, colourful, and come in different sizes. Satan lures every person in a special way. Some he entraps with wealth, some with positions of power, and others by exploiting their sexual drive.

The flames of Hell are intertwined with sinful and lustful pleasures; that is, the interior of the snare is fire and the exterior is pleasure, and the human being falls in the trap in the vain attempt to reach the apparent pleasures.[1]

The Consequences of Sin

The consequences of sin can be divided into those that befall the individual and those that pertain to society. The consequences of sin for the individual are:

1. It contaminates and pollutes the soul. The sinner neither enjoys a beneficial sleep in which he would attain any knowledge in the form of a truthful dream, neither does he acquire any gnosis in his waking life, nor does he find the opportunity to benefit others by teaching them something useful to them. Therefore, if the soul—the soul which Allāh ﷻ designated as the recipient of Divine revelation and by which He swears in His book—is darkened, many secrets would be withheld from it. If it is said that the spiritual journeyer should be reticent and careful of what

[1] *Nahjul Balāghah*, Sermon 176:

...إِنَّ النَّارَ حُفَّتْ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ...

he eats, it is so that he would be able to hear the Divine afflatus, for if one desires to hear the inner voice, he must himself keep quiet.

2. When one pledges allegiance to Satan, submitting to his temptations, his heart gradually metamorphoses into the dwelling of Satan, becoming his host; and this is a reality expressed by the Qur'ān.[2] The heart of a liar is the abode of Satan. But he who is honest in his knowledge and is also faithful in the financial trusts that are made to him, the heart of such an individual is too pure to host Satan.

3. Sin is a veil that prevents self-knowledge. The human being forgets Allāh ﷻ as a result of his sins and this forgetting of Allāh ﷻ obstructs the acquisition of self-knowledge.[3] When one capitulates to corruption, he has forfeited his life eternally and has enthralled himself, after which nothing, not even the flames of Hell, can emancipate, for although fire has the potency to melt metal, but if the metal is fiery, that is to say if it is fire solidified, then nothing can melt it.

4. Another entailment of sin is that the sinner is deprived from enjoying the pleasures of worship, and so he always wishes that he could enjoy his worship, but due to his sins and hardheartedness, he has extirpated the capacity of his heart [for such spiritual joys]. Shaykh as-Sadūq narrates in his valuable work *al-Tawhīd* that the eighth Imām, ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā علیه السلام was on one occasion asked, "Why is Allāh veiled?" in whose response, the Imām said, "He is not veiled. That you do not see Him is due to the excess of your sins, which like a veil, blinds your heart to witnessing [Allāh]."[4]

---

[2] *Sūrat al-Shuʿarā'* (26), Verse 221-222:

﴿ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَى مَنْ تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيَاطِينُ. تَنَزَّلُ عَلَى كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴾

[3] *Sūrat al-Mujādilah* (58), Verse 19:

﴿ إِسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ ذِكْرَ اللّٰهِ أُوْلٰئِكَ حِزْبُ الشَّيْطَانِ أَلاَ إِنَّ حِزْبَ الشَّيْطَانِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴾

[4] *al-Tawḥīd*, pg. 252:

5. In the corpus of aḥādīth, the topic of the veiling of sins is abundantly treated. For instance, in one ḥadīth, the Prophet ﷺ is narrated as having said, "When one commits a sin, a black speck appears on his heart. If he disowns it and repents, his heart will be purified. But if he repeats the sin, the spot spreads, until it overtakes the entire heart."[5]

6. In another ḥadīth, he is recorded as having said, "The excess of sins destroys the heart."

7. Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام says, "There is nothing more destructive to the heart than sin. Sin affects the heart and eventually overwhelms it."[6]

8. Another ḥadīth related from the latter reads, "I advise you to be pious, to abstain from sin, and to be diligent in the course of worship. Be aware; worship without abstaining from sin is sterile."[7]

9. A Prophetic ḥadīth addressed to Abū Dharr reads, "O Abū Dharr, the crux of religion is abstaining from sin and the secret of religion is obedience to Allāh. Beware that should you pray to the extent that your back bends like a bow and fast until you are as thin as an arrow—such worship would not avail you unless it is coupled with abstaining from sin. O Abū Dharr, those who have relinquished the forbidden pleasures

---

... إِنَّ الْإِحْتِجَابَ عَنِ الْخَلْقِ لِكَثْرَةِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ« فَأَمَّا هُوَ فَلاَ يُخْفَى عَلَيْهِ خَافِيَةٌ فِي آنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ وَ النَّهَارِ.

[5] *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī*, vol. 19, pg. 259:
عَنْ رَسُولِ اللّٰهِ ﷺ قَالَ: إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ إِذَا أَخْطَأَ خَطِيْئَةً نَكَتَتْ فِي قَلْبِهِ نُكْتَةٌ سَوْدَاءُ، فَإِذَا هُوَ نَزَعَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ اللّٰهَ وَتَابَ، صُقِلَ قَلْبُهُ، فَإِنْ عَادَ زِيْدَ فِيهَا، حَتّٰى تَعْلُوْ عَلٰى قَلْبِهِ.

[6] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 268 and pg. 271:
عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ عليه السلام قَالَ: كَانَ أَبِي عليه السلام يَقُولُ: مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَفْسَدُ لِلْقَلْبِ مِنْ خَطِيئَةٍ، إِنَّ الْقَلْبَ لَيُوَاقِعُ الْخَطِيئَةَ فَمَا تَزَالُ بِهِ حَتّٰى تَغْلِبَ عَلَيْهِ فَيَصِيْرُ أَعْلاَهُ أَسْفَلَهُ.

[7] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, pg. 78:
قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ عليه السلام أَوْصِنِي، قَالَ أُوْصِيْكَ بِتَقْوىٰ اللّٰهِ وَالْوَرَعِ وَالِاجْتِهَادِ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لاَ يَنْفَعُ اِجْتِهَادٌ لاَ وَرَعَ فِيهِ.

of this world and have taken up ascetic lives, they are indeed the friends of Allāh."[8]

10. The Denial of the Hereafter. Sin obstructs the knowledge of the hereafter from taking effect. That is, it is possible that one be certain of the hereafter, but that certainty be buried under multitudinous layers of lustful pollutions, such as that would render that certainty futile.[9]

In *Sūrat al-Mutaffifīn*, the Qur'ān mentions those who utterly deny the hereafter, then it says, "Woe to deniers on that day, who deny the day of retribution; and none denies it except every sinful transgressor. When Our signs are recited to him, he says, 'Myths of the ancients.' No indeed their hearts have been sullied by what they have been earning.[10]" It can be clearly inferred from these verses that sin ruins the lustre of the heart, such that spiritual truths are not reflected in that originally Divine mirror. Otherwise, the signs of the Truth, especially in regard to the Origin and the Destination are clear and obvious.

The Social Effects of Sin

Sin leads to social decadence and the increase of crime. It hinders even the activities of the effective individuals of society due to the far-reaching consequences of sin, thus obstructing the progress of that society.

---

[8] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 74, pg. 86-87:
يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ أَصْلُ الدِّينِ الْوَرَعُ وَ رَأْسُهُ الطَّاعَةُ يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ كُنْ وَرِعاً تَكُنْ أَعْبَدَ النَّاسِ وَ خَيْرُ دِينِكُمُ الْوَرَعُ يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ فَضْلُ الْعِلْمِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ فَضْلِ الْعِبَادَةِ وَ اعْلَمْ أَنَّكُمْ لَوْ صَلَّيْتُمْ حَتَّى تَكُونُوا كَالْحَنَايَا وَ صُمْتُمْ حَتَّى تَكُونُوا كَالْأَوْتَارِ مَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ ذَلِكَ إِلاَّ بِوَرَعٍ يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ إِنَّ أَهْلَ الْوَرَعِ وَ الزُّهْدِ فِي الدُّنْيَا هُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ اللَّهِ حَقّا

[9] *Sūrat al-Jāthīyah* (45), Verse 23:
﴿ أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللّٰهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللّٰهِ أَفَلاَ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴾

[10] *Sūrat al-Mutaffifīn* (83), Verses 10-14:
﴿ وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ. وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهِ إِلاَّ كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ. إِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ. كَلاَّ بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴾

The Cause of Sin: Ignorance and Obliviousness

The most effective of weapons of an enemy and the quickest way for the enemy to infiltrate is by heedlessness. If Satan succeeds in making human being heedless, then there is no need for him to make the extra effort of deceiving the human being by compound ignorance. If by Satan's temptations, the righteous thought is effaced from one's mind, Satan will be at ease. Ignorance is the fountainhead of the spreading of corruption.

The verses pertaining to the story of Yūsuf عليه السلام illustrate that sinful love and sexual perversion stem from ignorance: ignorance of the existential values of humanity, of the valuable results of sexual purity and moderation, of the repercussions of sin and ultimately ignorance of the injunctions of Allāh ﷻ.

The Way of Redemption from Sin

Several methods may be mentioned for extrication from sin:

1. Repentance and pleading for forgiveness. Tawbah (repentance) literally means "to return." When a servant returns to his master, it is said that he has done tawbah. The Most Sacred Essence in the Qur'ān exhorts all believers to repent.

2. Remembering One's Sins.

3. The Remembrance of Allāh ﷻ.

4. The Human Will Factor.

40

MAGNANIMITY

Question: What is magnanimity (kirāmah)? How can we become magnanimous? In Allāh's ﷻ view, what stations do the magnanimous hold?

Brief Answer

Magnanimity means to be far away from lowliness. The soul of he who is pure from every low attribute is called magnanimous. Magnanimity is opposed to lowliness. To reach the highest peak of magnanimity, one must be equipped with piety, which is staying away from anything that leads to sin.

As the Commander of the Faithful, Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ has said, "He who is pious will achieve what he desires and Allāh will make him to dwell in the house of magnanimity; the house that is Allāh's alone. Its ceiling is the Throne of The Lord; its brightness comes from Divine Beauty; angels and the friends and companions of prophets frequent this house."

Detailed Answer

Magnanimity means to be far away from lowliness. The soul of he who is pure from every low attribute is called magnanimous. Lowliness stands in opposition to magnanimity.

Magnanimity from the Infallibles' Viewpoint

According to a saying of the Noble Prophet ﷺ, "The Almighty Allāh is magnanimous and he likes magnanimity."[1]

As Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام has said:

1. "He who gives before he is asked to is magnanimous."[2]

2. "The troubling times do not have an effect on the magnanimous person's soul."[3]

3. "The magnanimous person is he who stays away from what is forbidden of him and is free from all faults."[4]

4. "The magnanimous person is disgusted with every thing that the low person takes pride in."[5]

5. "The magnanimous person is he who uses his wealth to protect his honour but the low person protects his wealth with his honour."[6]

6. "The person who fathoms the magnanimity and grandeur of the human spirit comes to see the entire world and all that is in it as being of little worth and consequence."[7]

---

[1] *Muntakhab Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, no. 5493:

عَنْ رَسُولِ اللّٰهِ ﷺ: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَرِيـــمٌ يُحِبُّ الْكَرَمَ.

[2] *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, no. 1389:

عَنِ الْإِمَامِ عَلِيٍّ عليه السلام: أَلْكَرِيـــمُ مَنْ سَبَقَ نَوَالُهُ سُؤَالَهُ.

[3] Ibid., no. 1555:

اَلنَّفْسُ الْكَرِيـــمَةُ لاَ تُؤَثِّرُ فِيهِ الْنَكَبَاتُ.

[4] Ibid., no. 1565:

اَلْكَرِيـــمُ مَنْ تَجَنَّبَ الْمَحَارِمَ وَ تَنَـــزَّهَ عَنِ الْعُيُوبِ.

[5] Ibid. no. 1771:

أَلْكَرِيـــمُ يزدجر عما يفتخر بِهِ الْلَئِيمُ.

[6] Ibid. no 2159:

اَلْكَرِيـــمُ مَنْ صَانَ عِرْضَهُ بِمَالِهِ، وَ اللَّئِيمُ مَنْ صَانَ مَالَهُ بِعِرْضِهِ.

[7] Ibid. no. 9130:

The opposition between magnanimity and lowliness has been clearly demonstrated by traditions of the noble Imāms عليهم السلام. Magnanimity is an ethical value. It is one of the names of Allāh ﷻ. In contrast, everything that distances man from Allāh ﷻ has its roots in lowliness. As the Noble prophet ﷺ has said, "The love of the world is the root of every sin and the start of every transgression."[8] The world has been named dunyā because it is lesser than everything.[9]

When we pay attention to the fact that lowliness is in opposition to magnanimity and because the words danī, dināʾat, and dunyā are etymologically from the same root (d-n-y, "to be low"), we cannot seek magnanimity in the love of the world. This is because, as Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام has said, "The world makes man abased,"[10] and magnanimity stands in opposition to abasement.

In order to reach the peaks of magnanimity we must arm ourselves with the weapons of piety and stay away from every kind of worldliness. As the Commander of the Faithful, Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام has said, "Magnanimity cannot come into existence without piety."[11]

Allāh ﷻ says, "The most honourable amongst you with Allāh is the most pious."[12]

Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام says, "Honour is piety."[13] He has also stated, "Piety means to stay away from everything that causes one to sin."[14]

مَنْ كَرُمَتْ نَفْسَهُ صَغُرَتِ الدُّنْيَا فِي عَيْنِه.

[8] Ibid., no. 2194:

حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا أَصْلُ كُلِّ مَعْصِيَةٍ وَ أَوَّلُ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ.

[9] Ibid., no. 2121:

إِنَّمَا سُمِّيَتِ الدُّنْيَا دُنْيَاً لْأَنَّهَا أَدْنَـــى مِنْ كُلْ شَيْءٍ...

[10] Ibid., no. 2192:

الدُّنْيَا تَذِلُّ.

[11] *Nahjul Balāghah*, short saying no. 113:

لاَ كَرَمَ كَالتَّقْوىٰ.

[12] *Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt* (49), Verse 13:

He has also said, "Certainly fear of Allāh is the medicine for your hearts; sight for the blindness of your spirits; the cure for the ailments of your bodies; the rectifier of the evils of your breasts; the purifier of the pollution of your minds; the light of the darkness of your eyes; the consolation for the fear of your hearts and the brightness for the gloom of your ignorance. Therefore, make obedience to Allāh the way of your life and not only your outside covering. Make it your inner habit instead of only an outer routine, subtle enough to enter your ribs through your heart; the guide for all your affairs; the watering place (on the Day of Judgment); the intercessor for the achievement of our aims; asylum for the day of your fears; the lamp of the interior of your graves; the company of your loneliness and deliverance from the troubles of your abodes. Certainly, obedience to Allāh is a protection against encircling calamities, expected dangers and the flames of burning fires. Therefore, whoever has fear of Allāh, troubles remain away from him after having been near, affairs become sweet after their bitterness, waves (of trouble) recede from him after having crowded over him, difficulties become easy for him after occurring, generosity rains fast over him after there had been famine, mercy bends over him after it had been loath, the favours of Allāh spring forth on him after they been dried and blessings descend over him in showers after being scarce."[15]

﴿ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ. إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴾

[13] *Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, no. 6664:

لاَ عِزَّ كَالطَّاعَةِ.

[14] Ibid., no. 6683:

التَّقْوَى أنْ يَتَّقِيَ الْمَرْءُ كُلَّمَا يُؤْثِمُهُ.

[15] *Nahjul Balāghah*, Sermon 192:

...فَإِنَّ تَقْوَىٰ اللَّه دَوَاءُ دَاءِ قُلُوبِكُمْ وَ بَصَرُ عَمَىٰ أَفْئِدَتِكُمْ وَ شِفَاءُ مَرَضِ أَجْسَادِكُمْ وَ صَلَاحُ فَسَادِ صُدُورِكُمْ وَ طُهُورُ دَنَسِ أَنْفُسِكُمْ وَ جِلَاءُ عَشَا أَبْصَارِكُمْ وَ أَمْنُ فَزَعِ جَأْشِكُمْ وَ ضِيَاءُ سَوَادِ ظُلْمَتِكُمْ فَاجْعَلُوا طَاعَةَ اللَّه شِعَاراً دُونَ دِثَارِكُمْ وَ دَخِيلًا دُونَ شِعَارِكُمْ وَ لَطِيفاً بَيْنَ أَضْلَاعِكُمْ وَ أَمِيراً فَوْقَ أُمُورِكُمْ وَ مَنْهَلًا لِحِينِ وُرُودِكُمْ وَ شَفِيعاً لِدَرَكِ طَلِبَتِكُمْ وَ جُنَّةً لِيَوْمِ

The Noble Qur'ān introduces man's spirit as a noble being. If man becomes noble, he has transcended his natural being and found his original kernel. Because obedience to Allāh ﷻ is in accordance with the kernel of man, disobedience and sin are secondary to him. Honour however is not like this, because it is in the nature of man. Allāh ﷻ says, "We honoured man."[16] If man was created just from dust, honour and magnanimity would not be essential to him. Man however has both a principal and a secondary nature. His secondary nature returns to dust and his essence is related to Allāh.

In the Noble Qur'ān, Allāh ﷻ attributes the spirit to himself and the body to the earth.[17] He doesn't say I created man from dust and an immaterial spirit. Rather He says, I created man from dust then blew of My Spirit into him. Because man's spirit pertains to the Allāh the all-Noble and the all-Honourable, it therefore has a portion of honour. Thus the Spirit of Allāh ﷻ is no different from the spirit of nobility.

As Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ has said, "Allāh has enjoined you to piety. He made it the extent of His happiness and His wish from His servants. Therefore, fear Allāh in whose presence you stand and in whose hand is your will, and who sees all your actions and movements. If you hide something, He knows it, and if you show it He will record it. He uses

---

فَزَعِكُمْ وَ مَصَابِيحَ لِبُطُونِ قُبُورِكُمْ وَ سَكَناً لِطُولِ وَحْشَتِكُمْ وَ نَفَساً لِكَرْبِ مَوَاطِنِكُمْ فَإِنَّ طَاعَةَ اللَّهِ حِرْزٌ مِنْ مَتَالِفَ مُكْتَنِفَةٍ وَ مَخَاوِفَ مُتَوَقَّعَةٍ وَ أُوَارِ نِيرَانٍ مُوقَدَةٍ فَمَنْ أَخَذَ بِالتَّقْوَى عَزَبَتْ عَنْهُ الشَّدَائِدُ بَعْدَ دُنُوِّهَا وَ احْلَوْلَتْ لَهُ الْأُمُورُ بَعْدَ مَرَارَتِهَا وَ انْفَرَجَتْ عَنْهُ الْأَمْوَاجُ بَعْدَ تَرَاكُمِهَا وَ أَسْهَلَتْ لَهُ الصِّعَابُ بَعْدَ إِنْصَابِهَا وَ هَطَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ الْكَرَامَةُ بَعْدَ قُحُوطِهَا. وَ تَحَدَّبَتْ عَلَيْهِ الرَّحْمَةُ بَعْدَ نُفُورِهَا وَ تَفَجَّرَتْ عَلَيْهِ النِّعَمُ بَعْدَ نُضُوبِهَا وَ وَبَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ الْبَرَكَةُ بَعْدَ إِرْذَاذِهَا...

[16] *Sūrat al-Isrāʾ* (17), Verse 70:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ... ﴾

[17] *Sūrat Ṣād* (38), Verses 71-72:

﴿ إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِنْ طِينٍ. فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي... ﴾

honourable angels to record your actions. Neither do they forget to record what deserves to be written nor do they record what does not exist. You should remember that he who takes up piety, frees himself from mischief, flees darkness by means of the light of guidance, Allāh places him in the way station of honour, the house that is reserved for Allāh. Its roof is the throne of Allāh. Its light is the illumination of Allāh's Greatness. Its pilgrims and friends are the angels and its inhabitants are the Divine Prophets."[18]

[18] *Nahjul Balāghah*, sermon 183:
...وَ أَوْصَاكُمْ بِالتَّقْوَىٰ وَ جَعَلَهَا مُنْتَهَىٰ رِضَاهُ وَ حَاجَتَهُ مِنْ خَلْقِه فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِعَيْنِه وَ نَوَاصِيكُمْ بِيَدِه وَ تَقَلُّبُكُمْ فِي قَبْضَتِه إِنْ أَسْرَرْتُمْ عَلِمَهُ وَ إِنْ أَعْلَنْتُمْ كَتَبَهُ قَدْ وَكَّلَ بِذَلِكَ حَفَظَةً كِرَاماً لاَ يُسْقِطُونَ حَقّاً وَ لاَ يُثْبِتُونَ بَاطِلًا وَ اعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجاً مِنَ الْفِتَنِ وَ نُوراً مِنَ الظُّلَمِ وَ يُخَلِّدْهُ فِيمَا اشْتَهَتْ نَفْسُهُ وَ يُنْزِلْهُ مَنْزِلَ الْكَرَامَةِ عِنْدَهُ فِي دَارٍ اصْطَنَعَهَا لِنَفْسِه ظِلُّهَا عَرْشُهُ وَ نُورُهَا بَهْجَتُهُ وَ زُوَّارُهَا مَلاَئِكَتُهُ وَ رُفَقَاؤُهَا رُسُلُه...

41

PURE WINE IN THE NOBLE QUR'AN

Question: What is the "sharāban tahūran" mentioned in the Qur'ān (sometimes translated as "pure wine")?

Brief Answer

"Sharāb" means something which can be drunk and *"tahūr"* means that which is in itself pure and uncontaminated and also makes other things pure. We can gather from various verses that in heaven there are various kinds of drinks that are pure and refreshing. The term *"Sharāban Tahūran"* has been mentioned in one of these verses: "Their Lord will serve them with the pure drink."[1]

There are three views as to what this drink is:

1. Some have said this drink is what believers will drink in paradise after having eaten heavenly foods. This drink will clear all internal wastes. The only thing left will appear in the form of a fragrant perspiration on the skin.

2. Others have taken this drink to be spiritual blessings for spiritual progress. As narrated from Imām Ja'far b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام, "When the believer drinks the 'pure drink' he forgets everything other than Allāh and turns solely towards his Master."

A narration from Imām Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Bāqir عليه السلام says "When the believers drink from it Allāh cleans their hearts from envy."

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Insān* (71), Verse 21:

﴿ ...وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا... ﴾

3. A third group has combined the previous two opinions. They have said that since man is a beautiful combination of the dark soil and a divine soul, he needs not only material sustenance but also spiritual blessings.

Just as the spiritual wayfaring of people differs so too does the rewards they receive in heaven. In some verses of the Noble Qur'ān the drinks in paradise have been mentioned in very beautiful phrases: the most beautiful cup-bearers; tall with pretty faces and deep-set eyes, going around with chalices of a pure drink amongst the believers in heaven; a very clear drink that gives them an indescribable feeling. This drink does not demolish the intellect, nor do they become intoxicated and drunk with it.

Other verses relate that the *"abrār"* will drink from a refreshing drink called *"rahīq makhtūm."* This drink has a scented seal on it which keeps it from any type of contamination.

The *"muqarrabūūn's"* share will be from the spring called *"tasnīm."* The cup-bearer will be the Lord himself and the chalice will be the truth of knowledge and love towards Him.

There is a narration from the Noble Prophet ﷺ that he said "Tasnīm is the noblest drink in paradise which Muḥammad ﷺ and his progeny will drink and the *Aṣḥāb Yamīn* and the rest will drink from a mixture that contains some of it."

Thus, as people are of different levels in this world, they will be in different levels in paradise as well. What they enjoy from paradise will be according to their spiritual capacity. This is why the Noble Qur'ān mentions them with different terms calling a group "aṣḥāb yamīn" others "abrār" and some "muqarrabūn." Their rewards will also be according to their ranks.

Detailed Answer

"Sharāb" means something which can be drunk. It has been used in the Qur'ān with this meaning. "Many fruits and drinks are at their

disposal."[2]

Allāh ﷻ also says, "He sends down water from the sky from which you drink."[3] The word "Tahūr" means that which is in itself pure and uncontaminated and which also makes other things pure, just as He says in the Qur'ān, "We sent down purifying water from heaven."[4]

We can gather from various verses that in heaven there are various kinds of drinks that are pure[5] and refreshing. The liquids that flow in the riverbeds of heaven differ from the drinks of this world not only in their substance but also in their qualities. This is because the rivers of this world only flow with water and after a while their water becomes rancid. But the rivers of heaven are special in both regards.

The Noble Qur'ān points to four kinds of liquid that flow in four different riverbeds in heaven: the river of water that quenches thirst; the river of milk that satiates hunger; the river of honey that gives pleasure and strength; and the river of wine for happiness.[6] These liquids have been created in such a way that the passing of time does not corrupt them. In other verses an indication is made to a drink called *"Raḥīq Makhtūm"* or that which is mixed with camphor[8] or zanjabīl[9]. In one

---

[2] *Surat Ṣād* (38), Verse 51:

﴿ ... يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَابٍ ﴾

[3] *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16), Verse 10:

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ ﴾

[4] *Sūrat al-Furqān* (25), Verse 48:

﴿ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً طَهُوراً ﴾

[5] This apparently does not refer to the legal sense of purity [i.e. *ṭahārah* opposite to *nijāsah*], because there cannot be filth or *nijāsah* in paradise. There are only different levels of perfection.

[6] *Sūrat Muḥammad* (47), Verse 15:

﴿ مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ مَآءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ خَمْرٍ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ عَسَلٍ مُصَفًّى ... ﴾

[7] *Sūrat al-Mutaffifīn* (83), Verse 25:

﴿ يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ ﴾

verse mention is made of a pure drink[10] that the Lord will give; the *sāqī*, or cupbearer, being Allāh ﷻ himself.

We can summarize the viewpoints of Qur'ānic commentators regarding the special "wine" of heaven into three basic views:

1. The meaning of "pure drink" is a type of drink which the people of heaven drink after eating heavenly food. It cleans all inner wastes. Only perspiration is excreted by the body which gives off a beautiful fragrance. This is a materialistic interpretation of the blessings of heaven with the difference that what is found there is better and more long-lasting than what is found here. The traditions[11] and verses of the Qur'ān have described the drinks of heaven in the most beautiful of ways with the most extraordinary cupbearers who revolve around the people of heaven and give them an intensely white drink in which there is no corruption of the mind and by which they do not become inebriated.[12]

2. The meaning behind the aforementioned drink is spiritual blessings. In the Qur'ānic commentary, *al-Mīzān*, there are indications that this "pure drink" cleans one spiritually from forgetfulness of Allāh ﷻ and removes the curtains and barriers between us and Him.

As narrated from Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليه السلام, "When the believer drinks the 'pure drink' he forgets everything other than Allāh

---

[8] *Sūrat al-Insān* (76), Verse 5:

﴿ إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا ﴾

[9] *Sūrat al-Insān* (76), Verse 17:

﴿ وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلاً ﴾

[10] Ibid., Verse 21:

﴿ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا ﴾

[11] One example is ḥadith no. 30 in *Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, vol. 5, pp. 32-33.

[12] *Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt* (37), Verses 45-47:

﴿ يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَعِينٍ. بَيْضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ. لاَ فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلاَ هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنْزَفُونَ ﴾

Also see *Sūrat al-Zukhruf* (43), Verse 7

and turns solely towards his Master."[13] In the Qur'ānic commentary, *Ayab al-Bayān*, it is written that the "pure drink" cleans the hearts of the good from evil attributes and bad ethical traits and from the imaginary desires and from all sadness and misery.

In a narration from Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir ﷺ, he mentions that "When the believers drink from it Allāh cleans their hearts from envy."[14]

Some great personalities have said that since drawing ourselves in the love of Allāh ﷻ and cutting off all ties from other than Allāh ﷻ is the ultimate purity, everything which lacks that, lacks the quality of purity. This is a general principle and is one of the pearls of wisdom of the noble family of the Prophet ﷺ. Its message has been communicated by Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq ﷺ when he said: "This drink cleans their bodies and their souls from other than that Pure Essence. It is only That Noble Essence of Allāh and His remembrance that cleans man from impurities."[15]

3. It can be gathered from some Qur'ānic commentaries that they have attempted to combine the above two viewpoints. They say that since man is a combination of lowly mud and the Spirit of Allāh ﷻ, he needs not only material sustenance but also spiritual blessings.

Just as the spiritual wayfaring of people differs, so do the rewards they receive in heaven. Some like the good taste of the refreshing drink of *"Raḥīq Makhtūm"* and are satiated by it. It is a drink which has been sealed with the musk of immaculateness from falsehood.

---

[13] *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 10, pg. 223:

يُطَهِّرُهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سِوَى اللّٰهَ.

[14] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, pg. 96:

...وَ عَنْ يَمِينِ الشَّجَرَةِ عَيْنٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ مُزَكِّيَةٌ قَالَ فَيُسْقَوْنَ مِنْهَا شَرْبَةً فَيُطَهِّرُ اللَّهُ بِهَا قُلُوبَهُمْ مِنَ الْحَسَدِ...

[15] *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 10, pg. 223:

يُطَهِّرُهُمْ عَنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سِوَىٰ اللّٰهَ، إِذْ لاَ طَاهِرَ مِنْ تَدَنُّسٍ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْأَكْوَانِ، إِلاَّ اللّٰهِ.

The drink of those drawn near *(muqarrabīn*) is the water of *tasnīm*. In a tradition from Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Sādiq عليه السلام, it has been stated that "Tasnīm is the most blessed of drinks in heaven, from which Muḥammad and his Noble Progeny drink. The rest of the people of heaven drink from a mixture of that."[16] The cupbearer of that drink is Allāh ﷻ Himself[17] and the chalice will be the truth of knowledge and love towards Him.[18]

From what we have said, we can understand that just as in this world people differ in their degrees of perfection; in heaven they also have different degrees of perfection. Their share of the blessings of paradise is equivalent to their spiritual capacity. That is why they have been called by different names in the Noble Qur'ān. What is certain is that the blessings of heaven are filled with pleasure and happiness, but not exactly like the pleasures of this world.

---

[16] *Biḥar al-Anwār*, vol. 8, pg. 150:
اَلتَّسْنِيمُ أَشْرَفُ شَرَابٍ فِي الْجَنَّةِ يَشْرَبُهُ مُحَمَّدٌ وَآلُ مُحَمَّدٍ صَرْفاً، وَيُمْزَجُ لِأَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ وَسَائِرِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ.

[17] *Sūrat al-Insān* (76), Verse 21:
﴿ ... وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا ﴾

[18] *Sūrat al-Mutaffifīn* (83), Verses 27-28:
﴿ وَمِزَاجُهُ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ. عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴾

42

THE PREREQUISITES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE QUR'AN

Question: What are the prerequisites for understanding the Qur'ān?

Brief Answer

The Qur'ān is the eternal miracle of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. It is a book that illuminates all things. Though it is composed of simple words and phrases, it is stated in a high literary style and conveys ideas that soar far beyond the comprehension of a normal human being. To perceive its essence and accurately derive laws from it, is immensely difficult. Thus, despite the fact that the Qur'ān is "clear," to properly understand it and act upon it takes great effort.

The prerequisites to understanding the Qur'ān are of two kinds:

Exoteric: One must have a firm grasp on:

a. The ʿArabic language with all its intricacies;

b. The history of Islām;

c. The circumstances that surrounded the revelation of the various verses;

d. Narrations that are directly relevant to the exegesis of the Qur'ān;

e. The general verses and the specific ones; the unqualified verses and the qualified; the verses that abrogate and those that are abrogated.

Esoteric:

a. One must have the spiritual purity that comes from the fear of Allāh ﷻ.

b. One must not be arrogant.

Detailed Answer

Among the basic tenants of Islām is the belief that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the final prophet and his religion is the final religion. It follows that the Qur'ān must accompany man until the Day of Judgment providing him with guidance. Thus, after the prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ, there is no excuse left to those who wish to flee from their duty toward Allāh ﷻ.

On the one hand, this book describes itself as "light"[1], "clear"[2], "a clarifier"[3], and "a proof."[4] It claims with emphasis that it is easy to understand and easy to benefit from.[5] On the other hand, the Qur'ān repeatedly calls its readership to ponder and criticises those who fail to do so.[6] Our challenge is to find the harmony between these two sets of verses.

The Qur'ān is "light" because it originates with the One who is the Light of the Heavens and Earth.[7] It therefore, is not only luminous, but it illuminates other than itself. It follows that it is "clear" and evident to all. It is a "*clarifier*" because it also clarifies all that is external to itself. It is a

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Taghābun* (64), Verse 8:

﴿ فَآمِنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَ النُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْنَا ﴾

[2] *Sūrat Yāsīn* (36), Verse 69:

﴿ إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ ذِكْرٌ وَ قُرْآنٌ مُبِينٌ ﴾

[3] *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16), Verse 89:

﴿ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَاناً لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ ﴾

[4] *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), Verse 174:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ ﴾

[5] *Sūrat al-Dukhān* (44), Verse 58:

﴿ فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴾

[6] *Sūrat Muḥammad* (47), Verse 24:

﴿ أَفَلاَ يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا ﴾

[7] *Sūrat al-Nūr* (24), Verse 35:

﴿ اَللّٰهُ نُورُ السَّمٰوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ ﴾

"proof" because it removes all doubt and provides overwhelming proof against anyone who chooses to disbelieve in it.

Its surface meaning is comprehensible to all as attested to by anyone who understands ʿArabic. It uses no confounding words or phrases. It does not employ any strange ʿArabic dialects. It also refrains from using the jargon specific to any particular field that its reader would require specialized knowledge to comprehend it.

The content of the Qur'ān is far from the decadence of the Age of Ignorance. It does not speak of lustful desire or power mongering and pillaging. Rather the Qur'ān has provided guidance to man from the time it was revealed until now, and will continue to do so until the Day of Judgment. It leads him to the epitome of humanity and everlasting felicity. It leads him to the gnosis and benefaction that lead to the perfection of the soul. It warns him of the lethal danger of saturating one's base desires in worldly pleasures.

Despite all this, much of the Qur'ān's content is supernatural though it has been written using a very material vocabulary. To convey these ideas, it employs parables, stories, vernacular phrases, argumentation, words of admonishment, warnings and promises, and theological proofs. It is for this reason that the Qur'ān requires an interpreter. The first exegete of the Qur'ān is the Qur'ān itself. According to the Qur'ān the next interpreter is the Prophet ﷺ and then the Imāms ﷺ. In the wake of the Infallibles, scholars have striven to collect aḥādīth related to the exegesis of the Qur'ān.

Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib ﷺ says, "This is Allāh's book. Through it you gain insight. Through it you speak. And through it you hear. Some of its verses explain others. Some of its verses bear witness to others."[8] It was the practice of the Imāms ﷺ to bring several disparate verses together in

[8] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 133:
كِتَابُ اللّٰهِ تُبْصِرُونَ بِهِ، وَتَنْطِقُونَ بِهِ، وَتَسْمَعُونَ بِهِ وَيَنْطِقُ بَعْضُهُ بِبَعْضٍ، وَيَشْهَدُ بَعْضُهُ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ.

order to derive a law. They would explain the meaning of the verses to their disciples.

The Qur'ān states: "I swear by the places where the stars set. Indeed it is a great oath, should you know. This is indeed a noble Qur'ān, in a guarded Book—no one touches it except the pure—gradually sent down from the Lord of the Worlds."[9]

And in another place it says: "Allāh only desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and to purify you thoroughly."[10]

According to these two verses, it is the Prophet ﷺ and his household that are pure and have a comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'ān. In other verses the Qur'ān introduces the Prophet as its exegete and commands the believers to submit to his command.[11]

In turn, the Prophet ﷺ has introduced the members of his household as the inseparable cohorts of the Qur'ān. He informed us that the two can never diverge and that neither one suffices us of the other.[12] For this reason, we not only need to work to understand the Qur'ān, but must also struggle to comprehend the traditions of the Infallibles. Accordingly, we must investigate the tools that will enable us to comprehend these two bodies of knowledge and the obstacles we must overcome to comprehend them.

---

[9] *Sūrat al-Wāqi'ah* (56), Verses 75-80:
﴿ فَلاَ أُقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ. وَإِنَّهُ لَقَسَمٌ لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عَظِيمٌ. إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ فِي كِتَابٍ مَكْنُونٍ. لاَ يَمَسُّهُ إِلاَّ الْمُطَهَّرُونَ. تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

[10] *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* (33), Verse 33:
﴿ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴾

[11] *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4), Verse 59:
﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ... ﴾

[12] *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, pg. 176:
أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ كِتَابُ اللّهِ وَ عِتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي...إِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّىٰ يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ...

The prerequisites for understanding the Qur'ān and aḥādīth are of two kinds:

1. One must attain a purity of soul and a desire to seek the truth so that he can approach the "pure ones." As the Qur'ān says, "Only the humble can be reminded."

From the other side, one must eliminate arrogance and prejudice and approach the Qur'ān with fear and humility, for just as arrogance distances one from Allāh's ﷻ proximity, so does it blind the heart, thereby preventing it from comprehending the Qur'ān.

2. The exoteric prerequisites for understanding the Qur'ān are as follows:

a. One must have a thorough knowledge of the 'Arabic language: both its vocabulary and grammar. These can be attained through the disciplines of morphology, syntax, rhetoric, style and vocabulary.

b. One must have an in-depth knowledge of Islāmic history and the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the verses. He must know the Qur'ānic sciences. For example, he must know the general verses and the specific ones; the unqualified verses and the qualified; the verses that abrogate and those that are abrogated.

c. He must seek protection from Allāh ﷻ from the cunning of Satan and from the trickery of his own lower soul.

Saying:

أَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

d. He should start by saying the *bismillāh*.

e. He should know all the verses that are in any way related to the verse in question as well as all the narrations that speak to the verse. The latter is especially important because the verses of the Qur'ān have deeper, hidden meanings that no one other than the Infallibles can access.

f. One must put aside all personal bias so that he can effectively comprehend what the Qur'ān has to say. If he finds that the Qur'ān

contradicts his previous understanding, he must accept the Qur'ān's teaching and abandon his prejudice. Otherwise, he will end up imposing his own view on the Qur'ān *(al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y)*.

g. One must look at the Qur'ān from a metaphysical viewpoint so that he does not attribute physical traits to Allāh ﷻ nor liken him to his creation. To do this, he must interpret equivocal verses *(al-mutashābihāt)* in light of unequivocal ones *(al-muḥkamāt)* and authentic traditions.

h. One must also be aware of the needs of the day. He should be aware of scientific advancements and should keep a look out for the fulfilment of certain divine promises that are found in the Qur'ān. In this way he will better be able to satisfy the needs of the younger generation. As Imām Ja'far b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq ﷺ says: "Allāh has not sent this Qur'ān for one age or another, not for one people or another. Rather, it is perpetually fresh and attractive to all people."[14]

However, one must be careful not to impose his own view on the Qur'ān. The Prophet ﷺ says, "Learn the Qur'ān and recite it. It is a means of remembering Allāh. It is both a provision for you and a burden. Thus, follow the Qur'ān, and do not make it follow you. If the Qur'ān leads someone, it leads him to Paradise. But if one leads the Qur'ān, it shoves him into hellfire."

i. One's intention in reading and studying the Qur'ān should not be limited to attaining the reward for reading it, nor to using the verses in speaking and writing. Instead of making the Qur'ān an investment for this world, he should make it an investment for the afterlife. He should seek insight and understanding, and should seek to act according to its precepts. Allāh ﷻ forbid that his studies subject him to the punishment of the scholar who fails to act according to his knowledge.

---

[14] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 89, pg. 15:
عَنِ الرِّضَا عَنْ أَبِيهِ عليهما السلام أَنَّ رَجُلاً سَأَلَ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللّٰهِ عليه السلام: مَا بَالُ الْقُرْآنِ لاَ يَزْدَادُ عَلَى النَّشْرِ وَالدَّرْسِ إِلاَّ غَضَاضَةً ؟ فَقَالَ: لِأَنَّ اللّٰهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لَمْ يَجْعَلْهُ لِزَمَانٍ دُونَ زَمَانٍ، وَلاَ لِنَاسٍ دُونَ نَاسٍ، فَهُوَ فِي كُلِّ زَمَانٍ جَدِيدٌ، وَعِنْدَ كُلِّ قَوْمٍ غَضٌّ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ.

j. When he reads verses concerning Allāh's ﷻ mercy and his promises of Paradise, he should feel hopeful and should enjoin himself to obey Allāh ﷻ and to abandon sin. And when he reads verses containing threats of hellfire and descriptions of its punishment, he should frighten himself of sinning against Allāh ﷻ. All this is to purify his heart and prepare the way to eternal felicity.

k. When he reads verses that describe the believers and those who fear Allāh ﷻ and do righteous deeds, and when he reads verses describing the disbelievers, the pagans, the beliers and the hypocrites, he should weigh himself against the scale of the Qur'ān. He should take account of himself, and purify himself of all bad attributes and adorn himself with righteousness. As Allāh ﷻ has said, "I have only created Mankind and the Jinn to worship me."

43

A QUESTION REGARDING VERSE 80 OF SURATUL KAHF

Question: Regarding verse 80 of Sūrah al-Kahf, where Khidr عليه السلام explains his reason for killing the young boy- in view of the Divine principle of not recording evil deeds or punishing people for them before they have taken place, some questions arise…

1. Although Allāh ﷻ knew that this youth would commit evil deeds in the future, why wasn't he granted respite (in accordance with the Divine method) until he could witness his own evil deeds in the future? Is this not predeterminism?

2. Was that youth favored with Divine grace because of his believing parents, and since he died before performing those evil deeds, will he no longer be punished?

3. Or since Allāh ﷻ knew that he would disobey Him in the future, will he be punished in the hereafter?

Answer

In view of the explanations that emerge from Qur'ānic commentaries, traditions, and the context of the verses, the incident of killing that teenage boy (ghulām) was not a chance event or as a result of a conflict; rather, Khidr عليه السلام proceeded to kill him without any preliminary exchange of words. So there is no possibility of there being any mental inclination or anger involved in this event, and the questioner's mind comes to accept the fact that though there were no provoking or inciting factors involved, without doubt the killing had wisdom and special reason behind it. It did not follow from base desires. The action was

undertaken by someone about whom the Qur'ān says, "One of Our servants whom We granted mercy from Ourselves and whom we granted knowledge from Ourselves"[1]—one of Our servants whose hearts' vessel We filled with Our exclusive mercy and whom We taught from Our select knowledge.

So we can be certain that personal desire was not involved. But in terms of its emotional wisdom and how it can be believed that such a person would undertake to kill a young man, an answer is required, which is presented as follows.

It is understood from some traditions that when Prophet Mūsā ﷺ saw this scene, he was profoundly shocked, and because he saw the killing as unjustified based on its outward appearance, he turned to Khidr ﷺ and said, "Did you kill an innocent person who wasn't worthy of death? What you have done is unacceptable and abhorrent."

At this point, Khidr ﷺ briefly explains his reason for what he did "The Divine will and wisdom are superior to all things, and the unsophisticated intellect of human beings cannot comprehend the finer points of Allāh's ﷻ affairs and His will. Thus, human intellects have no authority over His will; rather, His will holds sway over human intellects. So don't just rely on your reasoning and its superficial understanding, and for now patiently bear whatever I do..."[2]

Looking carefully into this tradition, we conclude that:

1. Every thing has an outer aspect and an inner reality. If something has a good and innocent-looking outer form but underneath is evil and sinful, it is not possible to simply rely on laws pertaining to the outer aspect.

---

[1] *Sūrat al-Kahf* (18), Verse 65:

﴿ فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا ﴾

[2] *'Ilal al-Sharāyi'*, vol. 1, pg. 60-61:

فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلاَمًا فَقَتَلَهُ الْخِضْرُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ فَغَضِبَ مُوْسى وَأَخَذَ بِتَلاَبِيْبِه وَقَالَ لَهُ : أَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا ، قَالَ لَهُ الْخِضْرُ إِنَّ الْعُقُوْلَ لاَ تَحْكُمُ عَلى أَمْرِ اللهِ تَعَالى ذِكْرُهُ بَلْ أَمْرُ اللهِ يَحْكُمُ عَلَيْهَا ، فَسَلِّمْ لِمَا ترىٰ مِنِّيْ وَاصْبِرْ عَلَيْهِ

2. Sometimes Allāh ﷻ decides, on the basis of some overriding good, to act beyond the limits of apparent recompense and desires to apply the [laws of the] inner dimension, along with its reward or punishment.

3. The killing of the young man was entirely dependent on Allāh's ﷻ command; Khidr ؑ did not perform this deed without a Divine command, but was merely executing His will.[3]

Here the question presents itself as to whether by killing that youth, Allāh ﷻ has punished him before any crime has been committed on his part. The points below can help us answer this question.

1. If a person is born to Muslim parents and then denies his or her faith after attaining maturity, the rules of an "apostate from nature" *(murtadd fiṭrī)* will apply to him or her. If that person is a man, he will be worthy of death. It has come in several traditions: "[Though the Qur'ān clearly states that] the parents of that young man were believers, their son was an disbeliever, to the extent that there was no hope of his heart opening up to the truth, and the seal of obstinacy and rejection of faith had been placed on it."[4]

So while it is true that his apparent conduct in playing with his friends did not reveal his disbelief (just as Mūsā ؑ, relying on this outward state, thought him innocent), the reality of his heart and beliefs proved his disbelief (as demonstrated in the Divine knowledge and its revelation to Khidr ؑ). As a result, his being killed was merely a result of his choosing to be an apostate, which carries the consequence in this world of termination of physical life.

2. Allāh ﷻ knew that the continuation of the young man's life would lead to nothing but more spiritual and material loss for him because he would mislead his believing parents, break apart family ties, and deprive them of the worldly and otherworldly blessings of faith for the family and for society. Thus, since the good in his life up until that point had come to

---

[3] *Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, vol. 3, pg. 283-284

[4] *'Ilal al-Sharāyi'*, vol. 1, pg. 61:

...وَ أَمَّا الْغُلَامُ، فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنَينِ وَ طُبِعَ كَافِراً...

an end, Allāh ﷻ determined to terminate his life and put in place the means of taking his life—just as a person takes care of things as long as their good outweighs their harm, but then no longer takes an interest in them when that is not the case.

In this instance, though the soul was seized by the angel Jibrāʾīl and his servants, Allāh ﷻ wished for the apparent executor of His will (ending the life of that young man) to be one of His chosen and merciful servants who had knowledge of His special sciences, namely Khidr عليه السلام. In other words, his action was based on Allāh's ﷻ creational and legislative will with respect to the death of that young man, and in this respect his death was like all other deaths that are caused by accidents or other causes (with the difference that an accidental killing is not in accordance with Allāh's ﷻ legislative will and He has not commanded it to take place; but the killing under discussion and all natural deaths take place in accordance with Allāh's ﷻ permission and indication both legislatively and creationally [i.e. natural causality].

Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليهما السلام solving this problem, says, "…Khidr's concern was for events not to take such a turn that he would be prevented from carrying out what he was commanded, such that he would remain deprived of the reward of carrying out Allāh's will, that is, ending the life of that young man (the beginning and end of which are both in accordance with Divine grace and the greater good, not in accordance with what the human being deserves)—especially since carrying out this command was a source of mercy for the parents of that youth (since as the Qurʾān clearly says, Khidr عليه السلام knew that in place of that son Allāh would give them a child who would be pure and a source of unity for the family. In addition, the coming to pass of this Divine will allowed Khidr عليه السلام to be able to reveal Divine secrets and explain hidden truths to Mūsā عليه السلام."

It is worthy of note that "When Khidr عليه السلام began explaining his reasons, he said, 'In any case, we feared that the young man would later become rebellious and lead his parents towards disbelief.'" That is, in explaining the process of performing this action, he doesn't make mention of his own will at all and instead uses the plural verb "we feared" to show that

as executor of Divine will he did not act alone, but Divine assistance and the intermediaries of His court were with him—with the difference that fear cannot be attributed to Allāh ﷻ, but Khidr ؑ and others are subject to fear.[5] (The issuance and execution of the command is shared, while the fear of failure in fully executing the Divine command is exclusive to Khidr ؑ).

Why is it that though Allāh ﷻ knew that the young man would fall into disobedience in the future, He gave him no respite (in accordance with the Divine Way) and did not allow him to witness his own evil deeds in the future? Isn't this predeterminism?

It is clear from the preceding explanation that:

1. Life itself is a Divine blessing; no one has an entitlement to it. From this perspective the issue of demanding a continuation of life doesn't arise, let alone for one to ask for a reason for its non-continuation.

2. Allāh ﷻ had willed for that young man's life to be ended in accordance with His wisdom and the greater good.

But in answer to this question it is possible to bring up other aspects of this issue as well:

1. The youth was culpable in two respects: he was an "apostate from nature"; and he had the ability to destroy the foundation of his parents' faith. Allāh ﷻ observed that he didn't use the respite He had given to

---

[5] *'Ilal al-Sharāyi'*, vol. 1, pg. 61:

فَاشْتَرَكَ بِالْأَنَانِيَّة بِقَوْلِه : ﴿ فَخَشِيْنَا أَنْ يَرْهَقَهُمَا طُغْيَاناً وَكُفْراً فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْراً مِنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبُ رُحْماً ﴾ وَإِنَّمَا اشْتَرَكَ فِي الْأَنَانِيَّة لِأَنَّهُ خَشِيَ وَاللهُ لاَ يَخْشىٰ لِأَنَّهُ لاَ يَفُوْتُهُ شَيْءٌ وَلاَ يَمْتَنِعُ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ أَرَادَهُ ، وَإِنَّمَا خَشِيَ الْخِضْرُ ، مِنْ أَنْ يُحَالَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ مَا أُمِرَ فِيْهِ فَلاَ يَدْرِكُ ثَوَابَ الْإِمْضَاءِ فِيْهِ ، وَوَقَعَ فِي نَفْسِهِ أَنَّ اللهَ تَعَالَىٰ ذِكْرُهُ جَعَلَهُ سَبَبًا لِرَحْمَةِ أَبَوَيِ الْغُلاَمِ فَعَمِلَ فِيْهِ وَسَطَ الْأَمْرِ مِنَ الْبَشَرِيَّة.

reform himself and make amends or abandon unbelief and apostasy. Therefore, He carried out the command of killing him.[6]

2. If the young man were to remain alive, he would put into practice his intention (of leading others to disbelief), and in this case greater harm and damage would result. Thus, to prevent those future consequences, the command to end the life of such a being was issued. In addition, it can be gleaned from the apparent sense of the verse that this son was not as obedient and beneficial as he ought to be and in that short time after attaining maturity had already committed sins and misdeeds. In this way, he worked to lead his parents astray.

3. As verse 81 of Sūrah al-Kahf indicates, Allāh ﷻ had decreed to reward the parents of that young man for their faith by granting them a model child. From this it can be understood that not only would his remaining alive result in his parents' going astray and him not receiving the punishment of his apostasy, it would also prevent another good from reaching them. This point is clearly explained in the traditions: "Allāh had willed to give them in place of that son a daughter who would bear a son in whose line would be numerous prophets, one after the other, such that seventy prophets would descend from that one daughter."[7]

Thus, another result of not granting respite to that young man was for that line of prophets to come into being.

It goes without saying that it is the Divine Way (sunnah) for the parents of prophets to be believers. So if the son remained alive and pulled his parents towards unbelief, it would contradict this Divine principle. This is why the question doesn't arise as to why it wasn't possible for both the son to live and the line of prophets to come into being.

Was the young man availed of Divine grace on account of his parents and, since he died before committing those evil deeds, was he no longer

---

[6] This has only been put forth as a possibility by some analysts and it is not necessarily the correct.

[7] *Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, vol. 3, pg. 286, no. 170-173:
أَبْدَلَهُمَا اللّٰهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مَكَانَ الْإِبْنِ إِبْنَةً، فَوُلِدَ مِنْهَا سَبْعُونَ نَبِيًّا.

subject to punishment? Or, since Allāh ﷻ knew that he would disobey Him in the future, will he be punished?

In view of the preceding explanation and following points, it can be deduced that this putting to death was a source of mercy for all involved: the young man who was killed, Khidr عليه السلام who killed him, and the parents of the young man.

a. The good that came to young man as a result of being put to death:

1. He received punishment in this world for his apostasy, which may lessen his punishment in the hereafter.

2. If he remained alive, he would make his parents unbelievers and would be responsible for the sin of their apostasy and unbelief.

3. Creedal disbelief leads to decadence and sinful behavior. Thus, his death in youth forever sealed his scroll of evil deeds, and on the Day of Judgment he will not be punished for all the sins he would have committed had he lived longer.

4. He wasn't capable of fulfilling his duties towards his parents, and the pain he would thus cause his parents itself would increase his burden of sins and his parents' aversion to him.

b. The good that came to his parents:

1. Their faith remained unharmed.

2. To resist such a son wouldn't lead anywhere, and their parental love and emotions would soften their hearts towards him and weaken their faith. Thus, they were also saved from the tension and unease that would result from his remaining alive.

3. Their patience and contentment with Allāh's ﷻ will were tested, and they were able to be successful in this test.

4. In place of an immoral and rebellious son, they were granted a pure, devoted, and blessed daughter.

5. They were blessed with becoming the progenitors of seventy prophets, whose reward and forgiveness they benefited from.

6. Their memory was eternally recorded in the everlasting revelation of the Qur'ān, and they became an example for others.

c. The benefit that came to his killer:

1. He was granted the ability to carry out a Divine decree (Divine will).

2. He was the cause of blessings for a Muslim family.

3. He was able to teach some of the secrets of revelation and unseen realities to Mūsā عليه السلام.

Imām Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad as-Ṣādiq عليهما السلام describes these blessings in these words: "Allāh knew that if he stayed alive, the young man would lead his parents to disbelief and he would become a source of corruption and hardship for all. Thus Khidr عليه السلام was commanded to finish his life so that as a result all of them (the killer, the killed, and his parents) would attain honor and Divine grace."[8]

[8] *Tafsīr Ṣafī*, vol. 3, pg. 256:
فِي الْعِلَلِ عَنِ الصَّادِقِ عليه السلام: عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ إِنْ بَقِيَ كَفَرَ أَبَوَاهُ وَافْتُتِنَا بِهِ وَضَلاَّ بِإِضْلاَلِهِ فَأَمَرَنِيَ اللَّهُ بِقَتْلِهِ وَأَرَادَ بِذَلِكَ نَقْلَهُمْ إِلَى مَحَلِّ كَرَامَتِهِ فِي الْعَاقِبَةِ.

44

THE EXISTENCE OF THE SPIRIT WITHIN ANIMALS AND ITS DIFFERENCE FROM THAT OF THE HUMAN BEING

Question: Do animals possess souls and if so how does the animal soul differ from the human soul?

Brief Answer

Before embarking on the answer to this question, it must be noted that the answer provided below is based on the school of Transcendent Theosophy, i.e., Sadrian philosophy. In this light, the answer will be expounded under two main headings and several subtopics.

Under the first heading, "The Existence of Spirit in Animals", the following topics will be examined:

1. In all philosophical discussions pertaining to the question of the spirit, animal spirit is always enumerated as an indubitable instance of spirit. However, obviously the various forms of spirit possess their own peculiarities which distinguish them from one another.

2. What comprises the essence of an animal is its animal spirit, and to imagine the animal without an animal spirit would be to downgrade it to the lower degree of existence—i.e., vegetable existence.

3. In several animals, such as the honey bee, the spider, etc., the signs of an indwelling spirit are clearly noticeable.

4. Scholars provide various sorts of evidence for the existence of animal spirit—among them: the presential knowledge of animals of their own essences, the role that will plays in animal behaviour, the resurrection of animal spirits in the Hereafter.

5. The fact that animals can comprehend imaginal and immaterial forms and the performance by them of varying dissimilar actions.

The topics covered in the second heading, "The Difference between the Animal and the Human Spirit", are as follows:

1. Human nature is different from animal nature. The material components of the human body are relatively finer and more perfect.

2. Human spirit also differs from animal spirit in many respects; including the human capacity to communicate by employing letters, words, thoughts, etc., and the human psychological variations—such as laughter, weeping, etc.—in response to different external phenomena.

3. The existence of art, industry, and human innovation display clearly the superiority of the human soul as they have no place in the realm of animals.

4. The essential difference of the human soul from the animal soul is that the former is intellectual while the latter is imaginal.

5. In addition, the sole pursuit of the animal soul is the gratification of the corporeal needs while the scope of human soul, in terms of its conceptual and practical aspects, stretches to the farthest reaches of existence.

Detailed Answer

This question will be considered in the light of Sadrian philosophy, i.e., Transcendent Theosophy. In the numerous works by Mullā Sadrā and the subsequent philosophers who espoused his philosophy, there are numerous allusions and in some cases detailed expositions of the question in hand in the chapters dealing with the topics of soul, Resurrection, knowledge, and comprehension. The material prepared for this question will be presented under two main headings and five shorter sections. The essay will then end with the topic of the difference between the human soul and the animal soul.

The Existence of Spirit in Animals

The Animal Soul as One of the Instances of Spirit in Existence

In philosophical inquiries into the topic of the soul, where the soul is defined, it is commonly divided into three classes: vegetable soul, animal soul, and human soul. Despite the fact that each one of these classes possesses its own peculiarities which distinguish it from its counterparts, they all share a common reality and essence. The soul is a spiritual and immaterial existent which incorporates spiritual faculties, whether it be the intellectual soul, the imaginal soul[1], or the vegetable soul.

The Creation of the Animal Spirit as One of the Phases of the Origination of the Realm of Materiality

Mullā Sadrā is among those thinkers who hold that the origination of material existents was carried out in stages, starting from the simplest and advancing to the stage of the most perfect elements. In some of these stages, the mere combination of material ingredients was not enough and thus the addition of an immaterial element to the composition was called for, so as to satisfy the requirements of that particular order of creation. One such stage was the creation of the animal. The spirit that was infused in the composition to bring about the animal existence is termed the "animal spirit".

Hence, not only does the animal possess a soul, furthermore it owes its essence to that soul. The addition of the soul to the material ingredients is a requirement of the order of the realm of materiality. And the same case applies to the realms of the human being and the vegetable. The immaterial spirit or soul is what distinguishes some material entities from others. In the inanimate, the lack of such a spirit is what makes their nature, while in others the possession thereof makes them what they are. And among the animate, it is the variation in the degrees of the spirit that sets them apart in differing levels of existence. The vegetable soul lies at the bottom while the human spirit enjoys the apex and the animal spirit the median seat.

[1] This term will be explained further in the text.

The Outward Manifestations of the Soul in the Animal

The appearance of certain traits in various animals—such as the building of the hexagonal hive by the honeybee, the weaving of the delicate web by the spider, the monkey's and the parrot's mimicking the human being, the cleverness of the horse, the authority of the lion, the faithfulness of the dog, the deceptiveness of the crow, etc.—are, in the view of Mullā Sadrā, evidence of the existence of a limited intelligence which indicates the presence of a soul in the animal. The character traits of some of these animals are so complex as to render them very close to the level of the human being.

Scientific Indications Corroborating the Existence of an Animal Spirit

All animals possess an imaginal soul that is similar to the human imaginal soul. The animal spirit is at the level of imaginal immateriality, which is the intermediate level between the realm of the sensible and the realm of Intellection. The zenith of animal existence is the imaginal existence, hence accommodating the imaginal soul. It is due to this degree of immateriality and spiritual potency that it possesses presential self-knowledge, for no inanimate object can ever have self-knowledge.

According to Mullā Sadrā, all actions in the cosmos derive from will. This is so even in the case of the vegetable and the inanimate, with the difference that in their case the will in question is that of the higher intellects and spirits. That is, the inanimate and the vegetable are involuntarily the means of the realization of the higher wills. But in the case of the animal and the human being, the prerequisites for the actualization of an action that falls in the scope of their volition must be realized by themselves, and it is for this reason that the actions of animals and human beings are unpredictable while those attributed to the inanimate and the vegetable are monotonous. The source where animal action originates is the imaginal and the conjectural faculty while in the human being it is the practical intellect. Imagination, speculation, intellection, will, etc., are all manifestations of a soul and as such are the traits that distinguish the creature possessed of a spirit from that which lacks it.

In addition to the worldly effects of the soul, one can also point to the issues of eschatology and the Resurrection of the body and soul of all animate creatures possessed of a soul. For this reason, all the philosophers who have dealt with the question of eschatology have designated a part to the subject of the resurrection of animal souls, its conditions, and other relevant details.

Proofs for the Existence of Spirit in the Animal

The animal is undoubtedly endowed with a spirit, i.e., an immaterial aspect, for it possesses the imaginal faculty which is capable of comprehending ghosts and imaginal forms. These things are not sensorially tangible and hence are not inhabitants of the material world. Therefore, the imaginal faculty, which is the receptacle for the comprehension of these immaterial existents, is also not sensorially tangible and as such is not corporeal. For, every material existent occupies a certain material location. This also holds true of the dependents of that material existent. This is while the imaginal forms and ghosts comprehended by the imaginal faculty do not occupy a certain material location, and so it follows that the imaginal faculty, which is the receptacle for their impressions, also lacks material location and hence is not corporeal.

Moreover, the variety of the actions performed by the animals does not only corroborate the existence of a soul in them but can also stand as a cogent argument for substantiating this claim. For the effects derived from material existents and inanimate objects are immutably monotonous and repetitious. Thus, when the state of an existent is so unpredictable as to make it difficult to even catch two identical actions from the same agent due to it altering its reactions based on varying external and internal circumstances—in such a case, reason rules that there must be some other immaterial factor involved.

The Difference between the Animal Soul and the Human Soul

It was pointed out that from the perspective of philosophy, the existentiation of the material realm was a progressive process carried out in various stages, each more complex than the preceding stage. In this

light, although the material constitution of the animal was a finer composition in comparison to that of the vegetable, which qualified it for receiving the animal soul, yet it still needed to be perfected further in order to accommodate the human spirit so as to bring about the human being, the being which had been selected as the dominant creature capable of utilizing all other creatures in his service, as he was the goal and end of creation.

Although the human being in a strictly logical categorization is from the same material as that which constitutes the animal, the thing that makes it unique is so profound that if, by way of analogy, all the rest of the animals were set on one side of a scale and the human being on the opposite, he would definitely weigh heavier. The human being is capable of speech and as such is able to communicate his thoughts and intentions with fellow human beings in the form of letters and words, which can be formed into innumerable permutations and combinations. But the capacity of animals like the parrot in manipulating words is limited and confined to mimicking and is devoid of any thought. Also the communication of certain animals in the form of sounds and signals—like the honey bee, the ant, etc.—which has been scientifically observed, is a fixed method not capable of change during the course of their lives. But in the case of the human being, although initially learning many of his language skills by way of imitation, eventually every individual comes to possess a distinct method of communication.

The psychological impressions that the human being receives from the environment and the physiological and psychological states that result thereof—such as amazement and laughter in response to rare but pleasing events, grief and weeping in response to adverse circumstances, shamefulness following unbecoming conduct, and anxiety and hope vis-à-vis the past, the present, and the future—and the planning and decisions that the human being makes based on these states are unique qualities. And although the ant's performance in storing food can be considered as a sort of forethought, it is nevertheless an instinctual and involuntary behaviour, for it is always done in the same manner and in the same timeframe. This is in contrast to the human being whose seemingly passive psychological states—such as laughter, weeping, etc.—are

absolutely voluntary and thus are manageable in special circumstances and through prudence.

Craftsmanship, art, industry, innovation, and, in the words of Mullā Sadrā, "the amazing practical innovations" that have flourished in the course of human history, and the fact that man has single-handedly changed the face of the world and has either manipulated all the elements of this world or is on the verge thereof is proof of the inimitable spiritual superiority of the human being, for not even a slight fraction of this sort of activity has appeared in the animal realm. The entire lifespan of an animal is occupied merely by roaming about in pursuit of the dictates of its imaginal and conjectural faculties.

The animal's imaginal and conjectural planning revolve around its personal or specific benefit. In keeping itself safe from various dangers and securing water and food and satisfying its sexual appetite, it is, on the one hand, safeguarding its individual interests and, on the other hand, contributing to the survival of its species. It is for this reason that the animal soul is referred to as "the imaginal soul". The summit of the imaginal soul is the beginning point for the human soul. The animal can advance only up to the point where the human domain begins. In other words the final reaches of the realm of the imaginal soul is just the beginning of the domain of the intellect; it is the threshold through which one enters into the human realm, to which there is no conceivable end. It is the intellect that defines the human being. Hence, those who do not take advantage of their intellects remain at the level of the beast.

Through the theoretical intellect, the human being is able to comprehend immaterial concepts and thereby to transform his ignorance to knowledge. The human being draws a mental image of all that he encounters by the senses. It then uses these concepts to form another set of concepts which are more universal and abstract. The latter concepts enhance the mind's innovative capabilities. The human mind uses the latter concepts to arrive at various sorts of rules, judgments, and arguments and by juxtaposing them in a systematized fashion produces systematic thought, philosophy, and the sciences. If the human being persists in this endeavour, every new day will expand the horizon of his

cognition until he passes from the human domain—which is the admixture of body and soul, of corporeal needs and intellectual faculties—to the domain of pure intellection, where he is united with the *Madonna Intelligenza* at which stage he finds the whole world realized within the scope of his knowledge.

The genuine human being makes his practical intellect—which derives its directives from the knowledge acquired by the theoretical intellect—the guide of his conduct. The theoretical and practical intellects have limitless power in both the material and the spiritual directions. The human being has succeeded in obtaining knowledge previously not even imaginable, thereby reshaping his surrounding world. The innermost reality of the world is just as much accessible to him, this being demonstrated by those who have attained to human perfection. By the light of their esoteric knowledge—which can best be referred to as *'irfān*—they have traversed the path to Divine proximity. That is, they have conquered the visible realm, the Realm of Intellection, the Supreme Dominion, and the Domain of Invincibility, thereby ascending to the zenith of human perfection.

The interesting point is that these two paths of infinite possibilities, i.e., the paths of exoteric and esoteric knowledge, are in no way at odds. To the contrary, the more one studies the worldly phenomena, given that he be fair and unbiased, the better he acknowledges the profundity of this world and the greatness of its creator. Likewise, he who has traversed the path of *'Irfān* understands all the more acutely the necessity of studying the worldly phenomena so as to better admire the majesty of the Creator.

45

THE NUMBER OF THE AHLUL BAYT

Question: Why do you limit the Ahlul Bayt عليهم السلام to a few people?

Brief Answer

The limiting of the *Ahlul Bayt* عليهم السلام to the fourteen infallibles is not a human decision; it is an exclusivity understood from the Divine words in the Verse of Purification and the traditions of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله.

There are numerous discursive and traditional proofs than can be relied on to prove this claim.

Discursive and textual proofs

a. The Qur'ān consists of the words of Allāh عز وجل that He revealed to His Prophet in the Arabic language. And Allāh's عز وجل words, like His actions, are free of any sort of defect; it is not possible for them to contain any type of grammatical mistake.

Now, if the term Ahlul Bayt in the Verse of Purification were to refer to all relatives of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله, it would be in violation of the rules of Arabic grammar and detrimental to the eloquence and perfection of the Divine word. This is because the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله had more than fifteen wives and for a masculine pronoun to be used in the Verse of Purification to refer to a group, the majority of which were women, would be contrary to

proper ʿArabic speech. Thus, the pronouns in the verse refer to the descendents and trustees of the Prophet ﷺ in the house of Fāṭima عليها السلام.

b. To determine the meaning of a word, it is necessary to look at the context in which it originated in order to understand its true exact sense. In the Verse of Purification, the word *ahl* (family or people) is under discussion. This word must always be in a possessive phrase, at least in meaning if not in words. That is, its meaning is incomplete unless it is attributed or related to something else. In this verse as well it has been attributed to *al-bayt*, or the house of prophecy; and we know that this can apply to no house aside from that of Fāṭima عليها السلام. If *al-bayt* referred to an inhabited house, for the other wives of the Prophet ﷺ to be included in this phrase, Umm Salamah—in whose house the verse was revealed—should be the first person to be included in the phrase. But the opposite is true, since the Prophet ﷺ—with Umm Salamah's agreement—did not consider her to be among the Ahlul Bayt.

Traditional proofs

a. There are a group of traditions in which the Prophet ﷺ aimed to clarify and delimit the Ahlul Bayt عليهم السلام in the Verse of Purification. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ said that this verse was revealed about five people: himself, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn عليهم السلام.

b. Another group of traditions that mention the Prophet's actions in this regard, since practical teachings are more lasting than oral teachings. Thus, it has been narrated that for six months the Prophet ﷺ would come to the door of Fāṭima's عليها السلام house at prayer times and say, "Prayers, O People of the House!" and he would recite the Verse of Purification.

c. A third group are the accounts that indicate that it was well-known to the people that the Ahlul Bayt are limited to these people, the details of which have been mentioned in books of Qur'ānic exegesis.

Detailed Answer

To prove that the Ahlul Bayt عليهم السلام in the Verse of Purification are limited to the five "people of the cloak" (*ahl al-kisa'*: the Prophet, ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, upon whom be peace), various textual and

traditional proofs that are accepted by Sunnis and Shīʿas can be forwarded. We will look at each of these proofs separately.

Discursive or Textual Proofs

a. The Qurʾān is the word of Allāh ﷻ and is a miracle from more than just a single aspect. The most accessible and easily grasped of those aspects is the Qurʾān's eloquence.

That is, there exists no literary mistake in the matter, style, or choice of wording of the Noble Book. We know that in ʿArabic there are separate feminine pronouns used in the second and third persons. In using a pronoun, numerous aspects are taken into account. For example, when there are significantly more women in a group than men, a feminine pronoun is used.

Now, if a masculine pronoun were to be used in addressing a group consisting primarily of women, it would be considered a grammatical mistake. If a person uses masculine pronouns in place of feminine ones or vice versa, it would be an amusing mistake. Far be it from the Qurʾān, the Word of Allāh and the Prophet's ﷺ eternal miracle, to make such a mistake.

The Verse of Purification has the words *ʿankum* and *yutahhirakum*, in which the pronouns are masculine, though Allāh ﷻ is well aware that there were more women in the Prophet's household than men. So if we were to hold that this verse refers to all of his household and family, we would have to say that we have found a grammatical mistake in the Qurʾān, that is, the use of two masculine pronouns in place of feminine ones—a mistake that is clear and undeniable.

It is obvious that this is inconsistent with the Muslim belief in the Qurʾān's miraculousness and Allāh's ﷻ Knowledge and Wisdom, and is thus unacceptable. Thus, the two pronouns must refer to a group that would permit masculine pronouns to be used. And this is only the case if we take the pronouns in the verse to refer to the Prophet's household in the house of Fāṭimah, that is, the Prophet, Fāṭimah, ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn عليهم السلام.

b. The word *ahl* (family) in Arabic must always be part of a possessive phrase in meaning. That is, it must be related or attributed to something else for its own meaning to become clear, as in *ahl al-kitāb* (people of the book), *ahl al-imān* (people of faith, or believers), and *ahl al-nifāq* (people of hypocrisy, or hypocrites).

Thus part of the meaning of the word *ahl* is denoted by the word to which it is attributed. So, if we wish to know what *ahl* means in the Verse of Purification we must first determine the meaning of the word *bayt* (house).

The word *bayt* means "house" or "abode" and denotes a place. Now what is meant by this word in different usages is something that is explained by contextual clues, both internal (verbal) and external (nonverbal).

The same holds true for the topic under discussion, that is, the expression "Ahlul Bayt." So if there are no contextual clues to limit, expand, or clarify what Allāh intended with this expression, if we were to ignore the literary objection that would result, it would be possible to take "Ahlul Bayt" to refer to everyone related to the Prophet ﷺ in his houses. In this case, the word *bayt* would mean "home" or "residence".

But with a little attention to some external contextual clues, such as the situation in which the verse was revealed, we will realize that such a meaning is untrue, because although the verse was revealed in the very house of Umm Salamah, the Prophet ﷺ clearly said she was not one of the Ahlul Bayt عليهم السلام. If *bayt* were to refer to a residence, Umm Salamah—in whose home the verse was revealed—should be its first addressee and more worthy of this title than anyone else.

But it has already been shown that this is contrary to reality. In this regard, it would be good to refer to a tradition that Wahidī Nishāpurī has narrated:

"Umm Salamah relates that the Prophet ﷺ was in [my] house and food was before him when Fāṭimah عليها السلام entered. The Prophet ﷺ said, '[Fāṭimah,] call your husband and sons to come to me.' ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn عليهم السلام came and sat down. While they were eating, the Prophet ﷺ fell asleep.

"There was a Khaybari cloak under the Prophet ﷺ during this time, and I was in the [adjoining] room praying. Then Allāh revealed the Verse of Purification.

"After this, the Prophet ﷺ covered them [ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn] with his cloak as well. Then he took out his hands and, facing the sky, said: 'O Allāh! These are my Ahlul Bayt and the closest ones to me. Remove from them all uncleanliness and purify them.'

"At that time I came to their room and asked, 'Am I too with you O Messenger of Allāh?' He replied, 'You are on the right [path]. You are on the right [path].'"[1]

In this way, the Prophet ﷺ praised Umm Salamah without considering her to be one of the Ahlul Bayt.

There are numerous traditions with the above purport in Sunni hadith collections[2]. This is the same tradition that is well-known among Shīʿas as the tradition of the cloak (ḥadith al-Kisā) and which is found in most books of hadith and supplications.

Traditional Proofs

There are numerous traditions that clarify what Allāh ﷻ meant by Ahlul Bayt in the verse of Purification. In view of the various details and aspects explained in these traditions, we have divided them into three groups and will mention one example from each group. It is worthy of mentioning that only Sunni sources have been used for the following traditions, though comparable traditions are abundant in Shīʿa sources as well.

a. The first group consists of traditions that explain the Prophet's ﷺ words regarding the purport of the expression Ahlul Bayt in the verse of Purification.

Muḥammad ibn al-Muthanna, with a chain reaching Abū Saʿīd al-Khidrī, narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "This verse was revealed regarding five people—me, ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn: 'Verily, Allāh only

[1] *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pg. 287
[2] *Sunan Tirmizhi*, vol.5, pg. 30 is only one example

wishes to remove all uncleanliness from you, O people of the house, and purify you thoroughly.'"[3]

b. The second group consists of traditions that came after the meaning of Ahlul Bayt had been explained verbally and that clarify its meaning in actions through the conduct of the Prophet ﷺ.

Ibn Waki', in a chain leading to Anas, relates that he would say, "For six months after the Verse of Purification was revealed, whenever the Prophet ﷺ would go for prayers, he would stand outside the door of Fāṭimah's house and say, '[It is time for] the prayers, O people of the house!' and then he would recite this verse."[4]

Does this prophetic action, which continued for 180 days, five times a day, in explaining the meaning of Ahlul Bayt leave any room for doubt?

c. The third group consists of traditions that are historical in nature and explain the thoughts and actions of the people of that era with respect to the Verse of Purification and who it addresses. In view of these traditions, it can be said that this issue—the limitation of the Verse of Purification to the five people of the cloak عليهم السلام—was so well-known among the Muslims that whenever they would see one of them, they would say, "I saw so-and-so, who is of the Ahlul Bayt." Or they would indicate them and say, "So-and-so is of the *ahl al-bayt*." As an example, one can refer to the story of Abu Mijlaz, the details of which have been mentioned in Sunni books of tafsir[5] (Qur'ānic commentary).

[3] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 22, pg. 9
[4] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 22, pg. 9
[5] *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 25, pg. 70

46

RELIGION AND POLITICS

Questions: Is religion compatible with politics?

Brief Answer

A religion that has come in order to explain the path to felicity from now until the end of time cannot remain indifferent to a matter that all societies need, that is, government. In other words, the rules and regulations of Islām are such that they depend on a government and without which Islām cannot remain alive.

Detailed Answer

Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā عليه السلام has said the following in one of his statements regarding the necessity of an Islāmic government: "We have not found any nation that has survived without a leader. This is because the regulation and management of their religious and worldly needs depends upon a responsible leader. It is far from the wisdom of Allāh to leave His servants without a leader while He well knows that they need a ruler who would give the society structure and stability. A leader that would lead the people in war against the enemies, distribute the wealth amongst them, lead the Friday prayers, and protect the oppressed against the tyrants." [1]

[1] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 6, pp. 60-61

فَإِنْ قَالَ فَلِمَ جَعَلَ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ وَ أَمَرَ بِطَاعَتِهِمْ قِيلَ لِعِلَلٍ كَثِيرَةٍ مِنْهَا أَنَّ الْخَلْقَ لَمَّا وَقَعُوا عَلَى حَدٍّ مَحْدُودٍ وَ أُمِرُوا أَنْ لاَ يَتَعَدَّوْا ذَلِكَ الْحَدَّ (تِلْكَ الْحُدُودَ) لِمَا فِيهِ مِنْ فَسَادِهِمْ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَثْبُتُ ذَلِكَ وَ لاَ يَقُومُ إِلاَّ بِأَنْ يَجْعَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهِ أَمِيناً يَمْنَعُهُمْ مِنَ التَّعَدِّي وَ الدُّخُولِ فِيمَا حُظِرَ

From another point of view the rules and regulations of Islām are such that they depend on a government and without which, Islām cannot remain alive. Because of this Imām ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā ﷺ has referred to the Friday and congregational prayers being conducted by the leader. In another statement he says: "If Allāh had not placed a reliable and trustworthy leader amongst the people, the religion of Allāh would surely have finished, the laws of Allāh would have changed, innovations would have arisen in religion, irreligious people would have changed the faith of Allāh and added and subtracted things from it, and doubts would have arisen about Islām amongst the Muslims."

For this very reason it was well known amongst the Muslims, and even amongst the non-Muslims, that Islām has a specific system of government and that the government of the Noble Prophet ﷺ in Medina was a clear example of such a system.

In the year 1343 AH, ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Razzāq, in his book *Islām and the Principles of Government,* denied the Prophetic government and claimed that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was simply a prophet sent by Allāh ﷻ to

---

عَلَيْهِمْ لِأَنَّهُ لَوْ لَمْ يَكُنْ ذَلِكَ كَذَلِكَ لَكَانَ أَحَدٌ لاَ يَتْرُكُ لَذَّتَهُ وَ مَنْفَعَتَهُ لِفَسَادِ غَيْرِهِ فَجَعَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَيِّماً يَمْنَعُهُمْ مِنَ الْفَسَادِ وَ يُقِيمُ فِيهِمُ الْحُدُودَ وَ الْأَحْكَامَ وَ مِنْهَا أَنَّا لاَ نَجِدُ فِرْقَةً مِنَ الْفِرَقِ وَ لاَ مِلَّةً مِنَ الْمِلَلِ بَقُوا وَ عَاشُوا إِلاَ بِقَيِّمٍ وَ رَئِيسٍ لِمَا لاَ بُدَّ لَهُمْ مِنْهُ فِي أَمْرِ الدِّينِ وَ الدُّنْيَا فَلَمْ يَجُزْ فِي حِكْمَةِ الْحَكِيمِ أَنْ يَتْرُكَ الْخَلْقَ مِمَّا يَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لاَ بُدَّ لَهُمْ مِنْهُ وَ لاَ قِوَامَ لَهُمْ إِلاَّ بِهِ فَيُقَاتِلُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّهُمْ وَ يَقْسِمُونَ بِهِ فَيْئَهُمْ وَ يُقِيمُ لَهُمْ جُمُعَتَهُمْ وَ جَمَاعَتَهُمْ وَ يَمْنَعُ ظَالِمَهُمْ مِنْ مَظْلُومِهِمْ وَ مِنْهَا أَنَّهُ لَوْ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُمْ إِمَاماً قَيِّماً أَميناً حَافِظاً مُسْتَوْدَعاً لَدَرَسَتِ الْمِلَّةُ وَ ذَهَبَ الدِّينُ وَ غُيِّرَتِ السُّنَّةُ وَ الْأَحْكَامُ وَ لَزَادَ فِيهِ الْمُبْتَدِعُونَ وَ نَقَصَ مِنْهُ الْمُلْحِدُونَ وَ شَبَّهُوا ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ لِأَنَّا قَدْ وَجَدْنَا الْخَلْقَ مَنْقُوصِينَ مُحْتَاجِينَ غَيْرَ كَامِلِينَ مَعَ اخْتِلاَفِهِمْ وَ اخْتِلاَفِ أَهْوَائِهِمْ وَ تَشَتُّتِ أَنْحَائِهِمْ فَلَوْ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُمْ قَيِّماً حَافِظاً لِمَا جَاءَ بِهِ الرَّسُولُ ص لَفَسَدُوا عَلَى نَحْوِ مَا بَيَّنَّا وَ غُيِّرَتِ الشَّرَائِعُ وَ السُّنَنُ وَ الْأَحْكَامُ وَ الْإِيمَانُ وَ كَانَ فِي ذَلِكَ فَسَادُ الْخَلْقِ أَجْمَعِين

the scholars of the world and that he in no way took steps towards the formation of a government. He did this at a time when Kamal Ataturk rejected the government of the Ottomans and laid the foundations of his secular government.

At the same time in Egypt, the followers of the caliphate chose Sultan Fuad as the leader of the Muslims and placed him in the seat of power. The fact that these events occurred concurrently shows that ʿAbd al-Razzāq was influenced by the secular thoughts of the West and wrote these matters by taking inspiration from the writings of secular philosophers and political scientists.

ʿAbd al-Razzāq claimed two things:

1. What the Noble Prophet ﷺ established in Medina was not a government.

2. What was set up in Medina was not religious.

In order to prove the first point he places emphasis on the fact that what the Noble Prophet ﷺ created in Medina did not have any of the qualities of a government.

In order to prove the second point he says that the degree and stature of Prophethood spurns politics and government.

In order to answer the first point we must pay attention to the fact that the consequence of holding that a specific form of government should be the standard by which we judge if something is a government or not would be that none of the nations of the past have ever had any governments. Therefore a more general definition of government must be given so that it can be true for various forms of government. Such a definition can be put in the following way: Government is a collection of organized powers that has as its duty the management of the affairs of society. In this definition, government is comprised of various governmental structures like the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government. According to this definition of government then, that which the Noble Prophet ﷺ created in Medina was a government in the real sense of the word since he created an organized

power structure that had as its responsibility the management of the affairs of society. From the time of the Prophet until now, many books have been written regarding the management system of his government.

Now when we pay attention to the following points, the religious nature of the Prophet's government will become clear:

1. The rules and regulations of Islām are such that without a government, they cannot be implemented; for example rulings pertaining to the executive, judicial, or monetary systems of Islām.

2. We have proofs to show that the rule and running of the affairs of society are the prerogative of the Noble Prophet ﷺ.

3. If Prophethood were really at odds with government then why would the Noble Prophet ﷺ take steps towards the creation of a government? Why would he waste his time and energy in this regard? If it were asked that does this "misappropriation" of effort not show irresponsibility, it would be answered that the Noble Prophet ﷺ started this work for the propagation of religion and in order to fulfil his apostleship. This answer shows the interrelationship of religion and politics from one point of view. Of course it does not answer the question as to why he himself took the establishment of religion into his own hands, while he could easily have placed the responsibility in the hands of some other reliable friend like Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib عليه السلام.

In any case, we can really only understand and criticize what ʿAbd al-Razzāq wrote over 70 years ago—something existing in its various forms in the Muslim world today—when we examine the context and culture in which this thought took shape, viz. the West. In order to understand the philosophy and culture of the West, we must have a look–though cursory–at the history of Christian thought that forms the cultural matrix of the Western world.

47

GOVERNANCE OF A JURIST AND JURISPRUDENCE

Question: What is the relationship between governance of a jurist (wilāyat al-faqīh) and authority in jurisprudence (marjaʿiyat)?

Brief Answer

Wilāyat is a part of marjaʿiyat in the culture of the Shīʿas. The great *marājiʿ* not only guided people with respect to the divine Law, but they also led people in the particular problems of society—even judging between people in particular matters and domestic disputes. But if we separate the two matters and associate the former with *marjaʿiyyat* then a number of questions arise:

1. Is it permissible to separate *marjaʿiyyat* and *wilāyat*?

2. If we suppose that it is permissible, then is it possible to have multiple *marāʿji* and leaders?

3. If it be possible to separate the *marjiʿ* and the leader, is it possible to follow other than the leader in rules relating to society and the individual?

The answers to the aforementioned questions are as follows: The reason that the jurisprudent is an authority in matters of the law is because of his specialization in jurisprudence and his power to derive the rules of Allāh ﷻ from their sources. While the reason that a leader is what he is, is because aside from the above mentioned qualities, he has the ability to manage society according to the principles and values of Islām. It is because of this that it becomes possible for a person to be chosen as a leader due not so much to his aptitude in jurisprudence as much as to his better management skills.

In lieu of this reality, the separation of the offices of the *marjiʿ* and the leader becomes a reasonable, and in some instances, a necessary expedient.

In principle, leadership is confined to a single person, whereas the *marjaʿiyyat* is applicable to numerous individuals. But the possibility for the reverse situation also holds; just as does the possibility that the two offices should be combined in a single individual. Since following the orders of the leader is obligatory upon all people—including other jurisprudents—and it is forbidden to disobey his orders, hence it is not possible for people to follow other than the leader in matters related to the social order and the running of society.

What was said above regarding the authority of the jurisprudent was in reference to the individual order and to matters of a personal nature; it is in these matters that people can follow other than the leader.

Detailed Answer

The Noble Prophet ﷺ of Islām had three mandates:

1. To propagate Allāh's ﷻ message; teaching the laws of religion and guiding the people;

2. To judge between people when they differed;

3. To lead and manage society.

All of these qualities and functions exist for the jurisprudents in the time of the occultation of the Imām. They too have three functions:

1. Acting as judges and resolving disputes that arise between people;

2. Giving edicts in law and expounding the general rules of the Divine law for the people. This can be considered a type of guidance of the people;

3. Leadership.

Wilāyat is a part of marjaʿiyat in the culture of the Shīʿas. The great *marājiʿ* not only guided people with respect to the divine Law, but they also led people in the particular problems of society—even judging

between people in particular matters and domestic disputes. But if we separate the two matters and associate the former with *marja'iyyat* then a number of questions arise:

1. Is it permissible to separate *marja'iyyat* and *wilāyat*? In other words is it possible that one individual is the one people refer to in the general matters of the law while another person is the leader of the Islāmic nation?

2. If we suppose that it is permissible, then is it possible to have multiple *marāji'* and leaders? Is there a difference between them in this regard?

3. If it be possible to separate the *marji'* and the leader, is it possible to follow other than the leader in rules relating to society and the individual?

Before we answer the aforementioned questions it is necessary for us to give a brief explanation of the "edict" that the leader issues.

When the jurisprudent refers to the religious sources in order to obtain the general rule of Allāh ﷻ regarding a certain problem and uses the special techniques that exist for obtaining the rules of the Law, it is called giving an edict or *"fatwa".* When the leader pays attention to the general rules of Allāh ﷻ, the various systems in Islām, and the conditions of the time, and according to these delineates a person's or a specific group's responsibility with regards to a certain matter, this is called giving an order or a *"ḥukm".* In doing this, he not only pays attention to the general rules of Islām and the lofty aspirations of the religion, but also to the specific conditions that exist in that time. As long as those conditions exist, the order issued by him or his representative is binding. Of course from the point of view of the Law, the rules of Allāh ﷻ and the edicts of the jurisprudent who has all the necessary qualifications are also binding, just like the rulings of the leader, but with this difference that the jurisprudent's rulings are binding on him and his followers only, while everyone must follow the orders of the leader.

With this in mind we will now answer the first question, in other words the separation of the *marja'iyyat* and the leader. According to the logic of the "leadership of the jurisprudent" and its proofs, the jurisprudent takes

upon himself the management of society and in accordance with the values of Islām, he takes on the responsibility of leadership. But *marjaʿiyyat* means simply to issue an edict and is a completely different matter. In order to understand *marjaʿiyyat* it is necessary to explain *taqlīd* first.

In the Persian language, taqlīd means to follow someone without a proof. Taqlīd in the parlance of jurisprudence means that someone follows a specialist in a specific matter that is in line with his specialty. The first meaning is considered bad in the eyes of all sane people, but the second is totally sound and accepted by them. The most important proof as to the permissibility of taqlīd lies in the fact that the person who is not a specialist in a particular field must refer to the specialist of that field. All of the proofs that are contained in the traditions and verses of the Qurʾān regarding taqlīd point to this very fact. Like for example the verse that says, "We did not send [any apostles] before you except as men to whom We revealed—ask the People of the Reminder if you do not know."[1]

With this explanation it becomes clear that the reason that the jurisprudent is an authority in matters of the law is because of his specialization in jurisprudence and his power to derive the rules of Allāh ﷻ from their sources while the reason that a leader is what he is, is because aside from the aforementioned qualities, he has the ability to manage society according to the principles and values of Islām.

It is because of this that it becomes possible for a person to be chosen as a leader due not so much to his aptitude in jurisprudence as much as to his better management skills.

In lieu of this reality, the separation of the offices of the *marjiʿ* and the leader becomes a reasonable, and in some instances, necessary expedient.

With regards to the second question (i.e. whether the leadership and the *marjaʿiyyat* is confined to one person or is open to more than one

[1] *Sūrat al-Naḥl*, (16), verse 43:
﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلاَّ رِجَالاً نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

person) and assuming that a separation of the two is possible, we must remember that when someone refers to the *marjiʿ* he does so because the *marjiʿ* is a specialist in the field of law and the one who refers, is not. This being the case, it is possible that there be numerous specialists in society. Moreover, this is something that is to be sought after so that everyone can refer to them with ease and obtain their rulings.

But the leadership of society, because it is tied up with the order of society and because the multiplicity of centres of decision making would cause a disturbance–since it is necessary for everyone to follow the leader in his rulings–dictate that the leader be one. This is especially true because according to Islām there is only one nation of Islām. Of course it is possible that specific conditions dictate that specific areas have their own leaders, but all of these leaders should cooperate with one another. But it is not necessary that various jurisprudents issue one edict in order that society not be disturbed. Rather, every jurisprudent issues his edict according to his judgment and the general rules of deriving the laws from their sources.

In principle, leadership is confined to a single person, whereas the *marjaʿiyyat* is applicable to numerous individuals. But the possibility for the reverse situation also holds true.

As to the third question (i.e. the possibility of following someone other that the leader in all matters) we must not lose sight of the fact that when the leader issues an order or a ruling he looks at all aspects of the situation from the perspective of the various systems and realms within Islām, and after such an appraisal and due to his position it is his opinion which has the final say.

If it were permissible for people to follow other than the leader in all matters, while the orders of the leader remain binding upon them, then in certain cases this would lead to a serious problem. In other words, it is possible that in a specific matter of social order the leader could issue an edict and say that if my ruling was other than this I would have said so, while on the other hand the *marjiʿ* of the people could issue a ruling other than his. In this situation how can we expect the people to follow the edict of the ruler?

It is with regards to this problem that it seems necessary that people do not follow other than the leader in social and state matters, since to disobey his order is forbidden according to all the jurisprudents. Therefore what was said above regarding the authority of the jurisprudent and *marji'* was in reference to the individual order and to matters of a personal nature; it is in these matters that people can follow other than the leader.

48

LEGAL IMITATION OF A JURIST (MUJTAHID)

Question: What do the terms "marjaʿiyyah" and "taqlīd" mean?

Brief Answer

Marjaʿiyyah is a legal term that means "the issuance of a legal ruling *(fatwā)*." Conceptually, it is coupled with the term taqlīd (legal imitation) which denotes "the referral of one who holds no specialty in jurisprudence to a specialized jurist to seek his opinion in legal matters." Keeping in mind that a non-specialist must always refer to a specialist in issues requiring expertise, such legal imitation is indeed logical.

Detailed Answer

Marjaʿiyyah literally means "to be a source of reference *(rujūʿ)*." In Islāmic jurisprudential jargon, it is a legal term that means "the issuance of a legal ruling (fatwā)," since one who issues a legal ruling serves as a source of reference for lay people in legal matters. It is coupled with the term taqlīd (legal imitation), in such a way that if one person is a *marjaʿ* (one who issues legal rulings), others are considered *muqallidīn* (those who imitate his legal rulings). For this reason, in order to explain the term marjaʿiyyah, we must begin by explaining the term taqlīd.

In Islāmic jurisprudence, taqlīd is "the referral of one who holds no specialty in jurisprudence to a specialized jurist to seek his opinion in legal matters." Referring to experts in such a way is a logical course of action. In fact, the strongest argument supporting the legality of taqlīd is the conventional wisdom that non-specialists must always refer to specialists in matters concerning their field of specialty. Any textual evidence that can be cited from the Qurʾān (such as the verse that says:

"Ask the experts if you do not know"[1]) or from the aḥādīth simply reinforce this logical principle.

A qualified jurisprudent *(faqīh)* therefore is considered a *marji'* because of his expertise in deriving legal rulings from the sources of Islāmic law.

[1] *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16), Verse 47:

﴿ أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ عَلَىٰ تَخَوُّفٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴾

49

THE HUKM AND THE FATWA

Question: What do the terms "Ḥukm" and "Fatwā" signify? What is the difference between the two?

Brief Answer

A fatwā is a universally applicable religious law concerning a particular issue that is derived from the four sources of Islāmic law (the Qurʾān, the sunnah, *ijmāʿ* (consensus), and *ʿaql* (the intellect)) using the methodology of *ijtihād* (juristic interpretation).

A ḥukm on the other hand, is a law issued by a qualified mujtahid (jurist) who is the head of an Islāmic government. Such a leader, by keeping in mind the general principles of divine law, the Islāmic systems[1], and prevailing conditions, issues a ḥukm (legal ruling) for all people, a specific contingency, or an individual.

From the divine perspective, obedience of both a fatwā and a ḥukm is obligatory. The only difference in this regard is that a fatwā is only legally binding on the mujtahid who issues it and his muqallid (one who imitates his rulings), while the ḥukm is binding on all groups or individuals enumerated in the ḥukm.

[1] For every aspect of human life, Islām has put forth a set of universal institutions. Taken together, these institutions, in all their aspects, form a structure or "system," which works towards the objectives that are based on Islāmic principles. Thus, the "Islāmic economic system" is the set of universal institutions applying to the aspects of economics.

Detailed Answer

When a mujtahid derives a legal ruling concerning a given issue by referring to the sources of Islāmic law (the Qur'ān, the sunnah, ijmāʿ (consensus), and ʿaql (the intellect)) using the methodology of ijtihād (juristic interpretation), the ruling which he ascertains is called a fatwā. Thus, a fatwā is a universally applicable religious law concerning a particular issue.[2]

However, when the mujtahid takes into account the general principles of divine law, the specific system in place in his country, and prevailing conditions, and issues a legal ruling for all people, a specific contingency, or an individual, such a ruling is called a ḥukm. In this way, a ḥukm, while taking into account general Islāmic principles, values, and goals, also looks to the specific conditions of a people. Therefore, such a ruling remains in place as long as those conditions prevail.

From the divine perspective, obedience of both a fatwā and a ḥukm is obligatory.[3] The only difference in this regard is that a fatwā is only legally binding on the mujtahid who issues it and his muqallid (one who imitates his rulings), while the ḥukm is binding on all groups or individuals enumerated in the ḥukm.

[2] Imām Khumaynī referred to these methods as the "traditional jurisprudence."

[3] Islāmic laws are, thus, divided into two categories: "divine laws," which refer to practical religious laws or *"fatwā,"* and "authoritative laws," which pertain to the orders or *"aḥkām"* issued by the leader.

50

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF RELIGION

Question: Please explain what religious pluralism is and the difference between it and the interpretations of religion.

Brief Answer

1. Pluralism is multiplicity. It has different meanings in the philosophy of religion, ethics, law, political science, etc. The common factor that is true for all of these is to acknowledge multiplicity and plurality as opposed to unity or exclusivism. Religious pluralism means that felicity is not exclusively reserved for a particular religion or religious sect.

2. Pluralism can conceivably be applied between various religions or between different sects of one religion.

3. From the point of view of Islām, religious pluralism is incorrect because we have clear proofs that Islām is the true religion and that the other religions cannot be on par with it. Also, the fact that the Noble Qur'ān has not been tampered with and that Islām is the final and conclusive religion effectively amounts to the abrogation of the religions predating Islām.

4. The various interpretations of religion or "religious hermeneutics" is another branch of religious research. The followers of this school believe in the validity and effectiveness of all the presuppositions of every interpreter of religion when he attempts to understand a sacred text. In the various modern interpretations of religion there are numerous perspectives, the most important of which are held by Friedrich

Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

5. Even though the discussion of religious hermeneutics is a modern discussion in the philosophy of religion and was taken from the West, the fact remains that in depth discussions on the interpretation of sacred texts has a long history in the Islāmic sciences, especially in the field of *Uṣūl*.

6. In the aforementioned schools and areas of research, not enough importance has been placed on the principles by which we can truthfully judge the validity of the different interpretations of religion. In reality, this leads to a form of relativism in understanding.

7. Religious hermeneutics and religious pluralism are properly two separate categories, but hermeneutics can be seen to be one of the instances of religious pluralism and hence the bridge which links the two topics. In other words, we can explain the multiplicity of religions because it is possible that we can understand one thing in many different ways

8. The objection that can be levied against this view is that one cannot judge every interpretation to be correct. It cannot be denied that the understanding of human beings follows the rules of speech and conversation. While attempting to understand a text there are principles that are to be used such as: paying attention to the meaning of the speaker or writer, the system of words he is using, the language that he speaks, his attitude while speaking, his seriousness or his joviality, and the fact that he has definitely intended certain meanings from his text.

Detailed Answer

Pluralism is multiplicity. It has different meanings in the philosophy of religion, ethics, law, political science, etc. The common factor that holds true for all of these is to acknowledge multiplicity or plurality in contrast to unity or exclusivism. Religious pluralism means that felicity is not exclusively reserved for a particular religion or religious sect. Truth and felicity not being limited to a specific religion in its turn means that all

religions have a certain amount of truth to them. As a result, following the laws of any of them can be a means for man to reach felicity and to gain salvation. The Acceptance of this viewpoint means that the battle of truth and falsehood that exists between religions ceases to exist. The enmity and war that we find between religions gives way to peace and solidarity.

A brief history of religious pluralism

Religious Pluralism was first born in the Christian world and in the last ten years was presented and propagated by John Hick (1992).

Religious pluralism can be considered between various religions in the sense that we consider them all to be true, or at least to all contain some element of truth. Or within any particular religion, various sects can be considered to be valid. For example, the Shīʿite and Sunni sects are two sects within the fold of Islām—each claiming to be the pure Islām. But from the point of view of religious pluralism, both of these groups can be valid, or it can be said that both sects contain some truth to them. In other words religious pluralism can be divided into inter-religious and intra-religious pluralism.

The intellectual foundations of religious pluralism can be delineated as follows:

1. The differentiation between the kernel and the shell of religion—giving prominence to the kernel of religion, to the detriment of the shell. In this regards, the teachings, especially the mannerisms and the exoteric rituals, are usually considered to be the shell of religion.

2. This interpretation lays great emphasis on "revelatory" and religious experiences and, in principle, sums up religion as religious experience. Religious experience is naturally always different when it is being formally related or interpreted. This is because on the level of forms, various factors such as culture and intellectual perspectives come into play. In the end, the multiplicity of religions becomes a reflection of some common type of religious experience as it is seen through the mirror of various cultures.

3. This interpretation is a humanistic one. It holds that religions should stick to down to earth realities that are common instead of laying stress on matters of sublime doctrine; they should keep the latter for themselves.

4. All religions have one message and with a little analysis, the differences between them disappear. In reality, the differences between religions arise from the differences of interpretations and languages, and are not real.

5. This phenomenon is based on the difference between the "truth in itself" and the "truth as it appears to us." In reality, there is an objective truth, but we do not have a perfect understanding of it. Yet the "truth as it appears to us" is a manifestation of this objective reality. The coming into contact of this [non-delimited] divine reality with [limited] man has meant that it has taken on different forms depending upon the differing conditions of man through the ages and in various cultures. Aside from this, Allāh ﷻ has, in order to create an effective relationship, made his message to conform to the inner workings of every culture and era. It should not be forgotten that many serious objections could be levied against the aforementioned view, even though some of them (like the first) can be interpreted in such a way as to make it correct. For a more in depth and fuller explanation of the above, we suggest referring to the relevant books.

6. This explanation is a hermeneutical one. It is based on the belief that the presuppositions of every interpreter have a pivotal effect on his attempts to understand a sacred text. According to this viewpoint, the writer and the speaker are just like the interpreter–after the writer finishes the composition of a text he gives up his status as writer. This view says that the text in itself does not have any meaning; rather it is the interpreter that gives meaning to the text by means of his presuppositions and his knowledge. To put it differently, the meaning that resides in any text is much like wax from which the mind of the interpreter forms different shapes according to his predisposition and mental acumen. So, the texts are not pregnant with meanings, rather they are, so to speak, hungry for meaning. It is the interpreters and the listeners that give meaning to texts.

The sixth viewpoint is the common denominator between religious pluralism and the hermeneutics of religious texts. It has some valid objections that we will now refer to.

The system of man's understanding follows the laws of discourse and conversation. All sane people of the world follow those principles when conversing with one another. The following are principles of conversation: paying attention to the meaning of the speaker or writer, the system of words he is using, the language that he is speaking, his attitude while speaking, his seriousness or his joviality, and the fact that he has definitely intended certain meanings from his text. They are all principles that rational people use when speaking. Even people who hold to the "interpretation" hypothesis outlined above cannot deny using these principles themselves. Of course when a text gives news of something, one must, according to the clues and the meanings of the words, strive to understand it. Also, because religious texts have abrogated laws, general and particular statements, unconditional and conditional sentences, etc. we must carefully examine the beginnings and the ends of each and every text before coming to a conclusion. Therefore, in attempting to understand a text, certain presuppositions exist, like knowing the language of the speaker and the context, but there are also some presuppositions that prevent the listener from understanding it and one must stay away from those if one wants to understand the text.

A review of religious pluralism

Aside from all the objections that can be raised against religious pluralism, one must not forget that according to us Muslims there are various sound proofs for the validity and truthfulness of Islām. With these proofs one cannot claim that all religions are equal. Some of these proofs are as follows: the reasonable nature of the teachings of Islām, the fact that Islāmic texts are backed up by references, the un-tampered nature of the Noble Book of Muslims, the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān, the comprehensiveness of the laws and their positive and practical nature.

Aside from these proofs a point that must not be lost sight of is the fact that Islām conclusively follows all previous religions. This is tantamount to the abrogation of the preceding religions.

The various interpretations of religion

The various interpretations of religion or "religious hermeneutics" is another branch of religious research. The followers of this school believe in the validity and effectiveness of all the presuppositions of every interpreter of religion when he attempts to understand a sacred text. In the various modern interpretations of religion there are numerous perspectives, the most important of which will be briefly outlined below:

1. The view of Friedrich Schleiermacher: Hermeneutics is a method for interpreting religious texts and helps avoiding misunderstandings that may arise from the time separating the interpreter and the text itself.

2. The view of Wilhelm Dilthey: Hermeneutics is a theory used in the human sciences in contrast to the natural sciences. He believes that history interferes in the interpretation of an interpreter.

3. The view of Martin Heidegger: Hermeneutics makes clear the essence and nature of understanding and its conditions. He changed hermeneutics from a method to a philosophy (or the knowledge of being). Based on a theory relating to existence, he took hermeneutics to be the exposition of the quiddity and essence of understanding and its conditions.

4. The view of Hans-Georg Gadamer: Hermeneutics is the [study of the] confluence of different levels and perspectives. He presented the ontology of Heidegger as an epistemology and thereby established an "ontology of understanding." The hermeneutics of Gadamer is for the most part an exposition of the process of the realization of understanding and has no concern with the correctness or incorrectness of understanding.

According to him, the mind of the interpreter is filled with beliefs and information that define his perspective. This perspective always moves along with the interpreter and changes or reaches an equilibrium as he continues to refer to the world and the things in it. The act of

interpretation is the confluence of various perspectives and horizons of knowledge within the interpreter; it is the connection of these "horizons" and perspectives with one another. The job of hermeneutics is to unite these perspectives and horizons and to create a dialogue between the interpreter and the text. What causes differences between various interpretations is the emphasis that is put upon certain presuppositions and horizons of thought over others. According to Gadamer, there is no one absolute viewpoint that could comprehend and embrace all possible perspectives. Rather every act of interpretation is a specific perspective in itself. Therefore an unbiased and objective interpretation is not possible and an all-inclusive, definitive interpretation just does not exist. In reality, according to Gadamer, it is not important to discover the "real" intentions of the writer, because in the end, we cannot know the text to be a true representation of the mind of the writer.

A review of Gadamer

We will now briefly allude to some objections that can be raised against Gadamer, seeing as his views have had more of an effect and have been used in theological and philosophical discussions quite often in recent years, and are therefore more important.

1. Why should we not pay attention to the intent of the writer? Should not the interpreter strive to differentiate between the predispositions of his own understanding and that of the writer?

2. Gadamer's perspective leads to a sort of relativism, blurring or removing the distinction between correct and incorrect understanding. This is a kind of relativism that resembles that of Kant.

3. We can question the universality of Gadamer's view and we can go on to hold that it is possible to avoid the effects of certain presuppositions and prejudgments.

4. If every understanding needs certain presuppositions, then in their turn those presuppositions are not exceptions to this rule; and this leads logically to an infinite or circular regress of presuppositions.

Some points worth mentioning regarding the different interpretations of religion

Until now we have explained hermeneutics and the different interpretations of religion, and we have also touched upon the different views regarding it. We have especially covered the viewpoints of Gadamer, mainly due to the fact that they had a far-reaching effect on his contemporaries. In order to complete the discussion we will remind our readers of certain important points:

First, although the subject of different interpretations of religion has largely been taken from modern philosophical hermeneutics, it should be noted that the discussion on the interpretation and understanding of religion has a long history in the Islāmic sciences. This is especially the case in the fields of *usul*, Qur'ānic commentary, and theoretical mysticism. Hence, the different kinds of intellectual, textual, symbolic, and mystical commentaries of the Qur'ān, the commentary of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān, the commentary by one's own opinion, semantics, and the method of obtaining the apparent meaning of the words of a text, all serve to show the presence of this perspective in traditional Islāmic scholarship.

Secondly, since the religious texts played an important part in shaping the culture of Muslims and in the formation of the different Islāmic sciences, it is possible to say that investigations into the method of interpreting religious texts play a pivotal role in theological discussions. It is largely due to this that the arguments surrounding the different interpretations of religion have provoked much debate in this area. Most of the views that have been put forward by Arab and non-Arab intellectuals in recent years have been for the most part borrowed from the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer. These intellectuals have tried to use the hermeneutic philosophy and methodology in the interpretation of the Noble Qur'ān and the traditions, and in trying to understand religion in general. Some of their views in this regard can be summed up as follows:

1. Religion and the religious texts are quiet and do not speak to us.

2. The presuppositions of interpreters have an effect in their interpretations of the texts.

3. No interpreter can grasp the essence of any religion.

4. There is no one pure perspective. Rather we all use interpretations that are mixtures of truth and falsehood.

The third point is this: In the view of many of the thinkers mentioned above, no importance should be given to principles by which we can judge the various interpretations of religion. No effort is exerted towards separating the incorrect readings from the correct ones. In other words, according to this stance, all the different understandings are equal. On the contrary and in line with the religious principles and viewpoints that are still prevalent in the traditional world, any interpreter must strive to separate the predispositions of his thought from that of the author of the text. He must strive to correct his line of thought and achieve a concordance with the intentions of the writer by using certain principles. If he does not do this, his views will lead not only to the relativity of the understanding of religion but also to the relativity of the methodology of understanding.

According to the views of Islāmic scholars, the different understandings of religious statements are an unavoidable phenomena but this difference of understanding is a matter that is regulated by certain principles and laws, many of which have been clearly enunciated by the religious tradition itself.

The fourth and final point: According to what we have just said, the thought of the followers of religious hermeneutic philosophy and the different interpretations of religion revolves around the interpreter and sees him to be central. While on the other hand, the view of Islāmic scholars revolves around the author and they attempt to find his original intentions (in the case of religion, the author is either Allāh or one whom He sends). In this approach, the interpreter looks through the text—the Qur'ān or the traditions—to the intentions of the author, allowing it to be called a "text centred" approach. It aims at revealing the intentions of

the author or speaker as correctly as possible and uses all the means that can possibly assist him in this regard.

Also published by Islāmic Education
Board of the World Federation

1. *Islāmic Laws - English Version of Tawḍḥīul Masā'il* by Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā al-Ḥājj as-Sayyid 'Ali al-Ḥusaynī as-Sīstānī; translated by the late Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

2. *A Restatement of the History of Islām and Muslims* by the late Sayyid Ali Asghar Razwy

3. *al-Amālī - Dictations of Shaykh al-Mufīd* by Shaykh Muḥammad ibne Muḥammad al-Nu'man; translated by the late Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

4. *Nahjul Balāgha Revisited* by the late Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

5. *The Role of Ahlul Bayt in the Preservation of Islām* by 'Allāmah Sayyid Murtaḍā 'Askarī; translated by the late Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

6. *Fiqh and Fuqahā* by the late Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

7. *Pearls of Wisdom* by the late Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

8. *The Collection and Preservation of Qur'ān* by Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā al-Ḥājj as-Sayyid Abūl Qāsim al-Khū'ī; translated by the late Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer

9. *Anecdotes for Reflection - Part I* by Sayyid Ali Sadaaqat; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

10. *The Islāmic Moral System: Commentary of Sūrah Ḥujurāt* by Āyatullāh Ja'far Subḥānī; translated by Saleem Bhimji *Published in co-operation with the Islāmic Humanitarian Service [www.al-haqq.com]*

11. *Tafsir of the Noble Qur'ān: Sūratul Jinn* by Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā al-Ḥājj ash-Shaykh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī; translated by Saleem Bhimji *Published in co-operation with the Islāmic Humanitarian Service [www.al-haqq.com]*

12. *40 Ḥadith: Month of Ramaḍān* by Shaykh Mirmanafi; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

13. *40 Ḥadith: Tablīgh* by Shaykh Mirmanafi; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

14. *40 Ḥadith: 'Azādārī* by Shaykh Ray Shahri; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

15. *40 Ḥadith: Qur'ān* by Sayyid Majid Adili; translated by Arifa Hudda and Saleem Bhimji

16. *Islām and Religious Pluralism* by Āyatullāh Murtadhā Muṭahharī; translated by Sayyid Sulayman Ali Ḥasan *Published in co-operation with the Islāmic Publishing House [www.iph.ca]*

17. *Guiding the Youth of the New Generation* by Āyatullāh Murtadhā Muṭahharī; translated by Saleem Bhimji

18. *40 Ḥadith: Prophet ʻIsā*; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

19. *Anecdotes for Reflection - Part II* by Sayyid Ali Sadaaqat; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

20. *Jesus on Ethics* - compiled by the Islāmic Education Board of the World Federation; translated by Dr. Muḥammad Legenhausen

21. *Manifestations of the All Merciful* by Abu Muḥammad Zainul Abideen

22. *A Short Treatise on the Divine Invitation* by Muḥammad Khalfan

23. *Essence of Worship: Ṣalāt [40 Ḥadith]* by Shaykh Ray Shahrī; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

24. *Lofty Status of Parents [40 Ḥadith]* by Shaykh Ray Shahrī; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

25. *The Spiritual Journey – Ḥajj [40 Ḥadith]* by Maḥmud Mahdīpūr; translated by Saleem Bhimji

26. *Completion of Islām – Ghadeer [40 Ḥadith]* by Maḥmud Sharifī; translated by Saleem Bhimji

27. *180 Questions – Volume 1* by Āyatullāh al-ʻUẓma al-Ḥājj ash-Shaykh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

28. *Anecdotes for Reflection - Part III* by Sayyid Ali Sadaaqat; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

29. *Jesus on Ethics [Second Edition]* - compiled by the Islāmic Education Board of the World Federation; translated by Dr. Muḥammad Legenhausen

30. *Islām and Religious Pluralism [Second Edition]* by Āyatullāh Murtadhā Muṭahharī; translated by Sayyid Sulayman Ali Ḥasan

31. *Introduction to the Science of Tafsir of the Qur'ān* by Āyatullāh Jaʻfar Subḥānī; translated by Saleem Bhimji

32. *Faith and Reason* by The Porch of Wisdom Research Institute; translated by a Group of Muslim Scholars

33. *180 Questions – Volume 2* by Āyatullāh al-ʻUẓma al-Ḥājj ash-Shaykh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī; translated by Shahnawaz Mahdavi

34. *The Savior of Humanity: Imām al-Mahdi in the Eyes of the Ahlul Bayt [40 Ḥadith]* by Abdul Rahim Mugahi; translated by Saleem Bhimji

35. *From Marriage to Parenthood: The Heavenly Path*; compiled by Abbas and Shaheen Merali

For more information or to order these or any other titles, please see our website at ieb.world-federation.org or contact the distributor nearest to you:

Europe:
The Islāmic Education Board of the World Federation of KSIMC
Dar al Tableegh
Jackets Lane, Harefield
Middlesex, UB9 6PZ
Tel: 44 1923 823 606
Fax: 44 1923 823 132
www.world-federation.org/ieb
ieb.world-federation.org · ieb@world-federation.org

Canada:
Islāmic Humanitarian Service
81 Hollinger Crescent
Kitchener, Ontario
Canada, N2K 2Y8
Tel: 519 576 7111
Fax: 519 576 8378
ihs786@muslimyouth.ca · www.al-haqq.com

United States of America:
Darul Tabligh North America
786 Summa Avenue
Westbury, NY
USA, 11590
Tel: 516 334 2479
Fax: 516 334 2624
www.darultabligh.org · info@darultabligh.org

Africa and the Middle East:
Tabligh Sub Committtee
K.S.I. Jama'at – Dar es Salaam
P.O. Box 233
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Tel: 255 22 211 5119
Fax: 255 22 211 3107
tabligh@raha.com · www.dartabligh.org