

THE GLOBE BEFORE AND AFTER THE ADVENT OF IMAM MAHDI, PART VI¹

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: Earlier articles in this series offered an overview of the sources of both the dominant world religions and Islamic sources on the concept of the 'End of Times' - the world's state of affairs before and after the coming of Imam Mahdi to establish worldwide justice and peace. Using the Qur'an and hadith as sources to visualise the future and increase our knowledge on the advent of Imam Mahdi with the purpose of establishing a positive relationship with him and preparing for his return, the previous parts expanded on the qualities of the people of this time, including their intellectual condition, and scientific and technological advancements, and signs of the moral, cultural, and religious state of affairs before and after his return. This part further delves into the state of affairs after his return, such as establishing universal brotherhood, peace and love.

¹ This paper is based on part twelve of lectures delivered by the author in Muharram 1428/ January 2007 in London. Parts one to ten have been covered in previous issues. Part eleven was delivered on the Day of Ashura about Imam Husayn (a) and remembrance of God and will be published separately.

Brotherhood

One of the achievements at the time of Imam al-Mahdi (aj) is establishment of pure and sincere brotherhood. Of course, this should always exist among believers, but unfortunately this is often not the case. Imam Baqir says:

حتى إذا قام القائم جاءت المزاملة و يأتي الرجل إلى كيس أخيه
فيأخذ حاجته لا يمنعه

When Mahdi comes sincere and strong brotherhood will also arrive and a brother who needs money will put his hand into the pocket of his brother and his brother will not stop him [as if they are the same person].²

In another hadith, a person was with Imam Baqir who asked him:

أَيُّكُمْ إِذَا أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَى أَخِيهِ فَيُدْخِلُ يَدَهُ فِي كَيْسِهِ فَيَأْخُذُ حَاجَتَهُ فَلَا يَدْفَعُهُ

Do you and your brothers have a relationship such that one of you can put his hand into the pocket of his brother and take what he needs, and his brother will not be bothered by it?

The man responded:

مَا أَعْرِفُ ذَلِكَ فِينَا

I do not know of such thing among us.

The Imam replied, "Then nothing!" The man asked, "What does that mean? Are we going to be destroyed?" The Imam replied:

² *Bihar ul-Anwar*, Vol. 52, Page 372

إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ لَمْ يُعْطُوا أَحْلَامَهُمْ بَعْدَ

Truly these people have not yet reached maturity in their understanding.³

But at the time of Imam al-Mahdi, this brotherhood will become complete.

Love and friendship

At the time of Imam al-Mahdi, there will be no enmity or hostility. Instead, there will be love and friendship:

و لو قد قام قائمنا ... لذهبت الشحناء من قلوب العباد و
اصطلحت السباع و البهائم...

When our Qa'im will come, hostility will leave the hearts of people; even wild and domestic animals will not be enemies of one another. A woman will be able to walk from Iraq to Syria carrying jewellery, and no one will harass or attack her.⁴

This seems strange. If there is no hostility between animals, then what would the carnivorous animals eat? According to some scholars, this is a metaphor to indicate the complete safety to such an extent that even animals will feel safe.

Another way it can be understood is that as wild animals understandably need food, and this is provided when other animals are killed; however, it may be that the provision of food will occur without enmity and greed. In other words, they may be provided with food but

³ *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 2, Page 174

⁴ *Tuhaf ul-Uqul*, Page 115

not more than they require, so this would create a sense of safety. Or perhaps there will be a substitute food for them, without them needing to kill other animals. In any case, the conclusion we can draw from the hadith is that there will be utmost safety.

Other hadiths in this regard affirm that the roads will become very safe and there will be no thieves, terrorists, or any attacks on travellers. For example, one hadiths reads as follows:

وتخرج العجوزة الضعيفة من المشرق تريد المغرب لا يؤذيها احد

An elderly woman will be able to move from east to west,
and no one will annoy her.⁵

God has promised this in the Qur'an:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ
الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا
يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا

*God has promised those of you who have faith and do
righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors
in the earth, just as He made those who were before
them successors, and He will surely establish for them
their religion which He has approved for them, and that
He will surely change their state to security after their
fear, while they worship Me, not ascribing any partners
to Me. (24:55)*

⁵ Bihar ul-Anwar, vol. 55, page 355

Spiritual perfection

Generally speaking, human beings find it very difficult to attain spiritual perfection whilst they are afflicted by problems and calamities in their material lives. A person challenged with poverty, injustice, lack of security, enmity, tyrants, and lives in a society that does not facilitate the flourishing of one's talents, then for such a person it would be difficult to progress and uplift spiritually. That is probably why so much emphasis has been placed on the material and worldly aspects of our lives. Of course, there are some outstanding individuals who will – despite their difficulties – maintain their direction and remain steadfast. The Prophet said:

كاد الفقر أن يكون كفرا

Poverty is likely to lead to disbelief.⁶

We have seen real life examples of the poor who easily change their faith, as they are predominantly concerned with feeding themselves and their children.

Imam Mahdi will remove obstacles that preoccupy people, and will thereby give them the opportunity to concentrate on that which is truly important. This is when and why their intellect becomes complete (we referred to this hadith earlier). When these are achieved, people will have a sharp vision and understanding of their responsibilities. It is almost like a heaven; the only difference is that in heaven a person will not have the chance to increase his or her deeds. But in this utopia, one can act, and hence add to their good deeds through worship, fasting,

⁶ *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 2, Page 307

praying, thinking, increasing knowledge, showing love to others, and increasing closeness to God.

Ammar Sabati narrates that he asked Imam Sadiq:

فما تري اذا ان نكون من اصحاب القائم و يظهر الحق، و نحن
اليوم في امامتك و طاعتك افضل اعمالا من اصحاب دوله
الحق و العدل؟

Why should we wish to be one of the companions of the Twelfth Imam at the time of dominance of the truth, whereas we are currently under your guidance and your reign and therefore our actions are considered to be more valuable than the actions of those who live under the reign of governance of the truth and justice?

Imam Sadiq replied:

سبحان الله اما تحبون ان يظهر الله تبارك و تعالي الحق و العدل
في البلاد، و يجمع الله الكلمه، و يولف الله بين قلوب مختلفه، و
لا يعصون الله عز و جل في ارضه، و تقام حدوده في خلقه، و
يرد الله الحق الي اهله، فيظهر حتي لا يستخفي بشيء من الحق
مخافه احد من الخلق؟

Subhan Allah! Do you not wish that God establishes truth and justice in all lands, [and the condition of all the servants of God becomes good, and not just you few believers?] And God then brings unity and makes all people gather around the truth in full agreement with each other, and that He brings reconciliation amongst

hearts that are divided. And that God will not be disobeyed and no sins will take place. And His laws will be implemented. And He will return the right of the rightful whose right has been taken away. And they will be able to declare this without fear to the extent that they would not need to hide anything due to fear of any creation.⁷

In other words, Imam Sadiq is encouraging his companions to think of the bigger picture achieved by Imam al-Mahdi, instead of thinking of their own state of affairs. Imam acknowledges that perhaps for individual believers certain times of history are better than others, where individuals are tested and can shine. But, the overall situation at the time of Imam al-Mahdi will be better for humanity, and believers should be eagerly praying for his advent so that people can achieve more easily higher level of perfection.

Concealing one's faith

Just before the appearance of Imam Mahdi, the true believers will feel the need to exercise taqiyyah, and this will increase once his advent approaches. We should not think that because we are now beginning to establish ourselves as a community we should publicise everything about our faith; we should be well aware of this issue, and should realise that whatever causes misunderstanding or damage to unity should not be highlighted.

Conclusion of the series

We have covered numerous points during this series, including:

⁷ *Al-Kafi*, Vol. 1, Page 333

1. The concept of the end of time, what it means, and how it is referred to in hadiths, i.e. that there are two usages, the end of both of which is the same, but the start of each is different; one begins at the time of *jahiliyyah* and the other begins at the time of *ghaybah*
2. The significance of the end of time
3. The views of different religions, and the fact that they more or less all hold an optimistic view
4. The focus was on a) Islamic teachings from the Qur'an and hadith, and b) the end of time with respect to science, understanding, and communication; culture; morality; and religion.

THE WITNESSING AND RECORDING OF DEEDS

TAWUS RAJA

ABSTRACT: The Qur'an describes the Day of Resurrection as a *mashhad*, which means a place, time or stage of witnessing (11:103, 19:37). It is by essence when the truth and hidden realities are disclosed (10:30, 86:9, 100:10). This is a central quality of that Day, by which the Qur'an has sworn (85:3). Whereas one's book of deeds is his own soul (17:13-14), witnesses are external beings that have encompassed one's deeds. Therefore, witnesses will complement the records of deeds as they both relate to the process of judgement of individuals in the Hereafter.

Testimony

Witnessing (*shahādah*) has two stages that are interrelated: 1. observing a scene; 2. testifying and disclosing what one has observed. A witness in a court should have been present at the scene and observed it directly so that he can attest to it. In other words, the second stage hinges on the first, and the first stage is a prelude to the second. Therefore, the testimonies of witnesses on the Day of Judgement will be according to their degree of knowledge, presence, and comprehension of what they bear witness to.

It should thus be clear that the first and foremost witness is God Himself. He is a witness over all of His creatures and He will bear

witness on the Day of Judgement according to His infinite knowledge (41:53, 3:81, 3:98, 10:29, 10:46, 22:17, 58:6). God suffices as a witness, as stated in many verses in the Qur'an. Yet, the Qur'an names several other witnesses that will testify on the Day of Resurrection. These should be interpreted as the means, manifestations and reflections of God's act of witnessing, because their knowledge, even their whole existence, is only a reflection of God's. Otherwise, "*He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He has knowledge of all things*" (57:3).

Examples from the Qur'an

The following is a list of some of the witnesses on the Day of Judgement according to the Qur'an:

(1) One's self. This is when the disbelievers behold the truth and realise that they have no excuse; they will bear witness against themselves (6:130, 7:37).

(2) One's limbs and organs, such as one's hands, legs, skin and even one's tongue (24:24, 36:65, 41:20-22). The witnessing of one's body against the individual shows that one's reality is not the same as the body. It is also consistent with the Qur'anic principle that "*To Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth*" (48:4, 48:7). One's limbs and organs belong to God and are obedient to His command.¹

(3) Angels (43:86, 50:21, 78:38). There are many verses that talk about 'Our' knowledge and observance of what you do, which include the angels as God's instruments.

¹ Javādī Āmulī, audio lectures on *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Isrā', lecture 41.

(4) Prophets. Each prophet will be a witness to his nation (3:81, 4:41, 16:89). The Qur'an also names two specific prophets as witnesses over their nations: Prophets Jesus (4:159, 5:117) and Muḥammad (2:143, 22:78, 33:45, 48:8, 73:15).

(5) Saints, martyrs, believers, and righteous people from every nation (2:143, 3:140, 4:69, 16:84, 22:78, 28:75, 57:19). Even though the Qur'an does not use the word *shahīd* (witness) to refer to martyrs (which are rather referred to as 'those who are slain in the way of God'), it does consider the martyrs to be alive (2:154, 3:169). For this reason, the martyrs may also have some supervision over the acts of those who remain after them (3:170), and thus may bear witness to what they did on the Day of Judgement. This is confirmed by many narrations that use the term *shahīd* for a martyr. It is also noteworthy that the Greek word 'martus' means both martyr and witness. This is perhaps because one who bears witness to a truth should be willing to give his life for it,² or alternatively because giving one's life for a certain cause is the highest testimony showing one's conviction about its truth. It is along these lines that Qatādah and al-Suddī have interpreted 'witnesses' in verse 39:69 as 'martyrs in the way of God'.³

(6) The earth and the heavens, or more generally, the time and space in which one has committed good or evil deeds (84:1-5, 99:1-5). There are also some verses that talk about witnesses in general, which could be any of the above groups (11:18, 40:51).

² Adams, "Good News for Everyone," commentary on the *Book of Acts*, available at www.easyenglish.info.

³ Tabarī, 24/23. Ālūsī, 12/286.

The testimony of the witnesses will leave no room for the faithless to deny their error: *“The day We shall raise a witness from every nation, then the faithless will not be permitted [to speak], nor will they be asked to propitiate [Allah]”* (16:84). Witnesses are those who have realised God’s ultimate unity (3:18), and that is why their testimony will show that the polytheists followed their ‘idols’ (in the most general sense) in vanity:

We shall draw from every nation a witness and say, ‘Produce your evidence.’ Then they will know that all reality belongs to Allah and what they used to fabricate will forsake them” (28:75).

Based on the above, testimony on the Day of Judgement is the disclosure of some act, belief, or trait through the means and instruments that had some existential presence, observation, and comprehension of that reality in this world. That is why witnesses are beings who have some existential breadth, encompassment, or elevation that allows them to embrace lower levels of being. They also should have cognition and consciousness for witnessing to be applicable to them. This is certainly true about God, His Messenger, and certain believers who have realised a high level of faith:

And say, ‘Go on working; Allah will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful [as well], and you will be returned to the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, and He will inform you concerning what you used to do (9:105).

The record of deeds

According to the Qur'an there are guardian angels assigned to each individual, who record the person's thoughts, acts, and speeches: *"Indeed Our messengers write down what you plot"* (10:21); *"Do they suppose that We do not hear their secret thoughts and their secret talks? Yes indeed! And with them are Our messengers, writing down"* (43:80); *"there is a guard [or 'watcher'] over every soul"* (86:4); *"Indeed, there are over you watchers, noble writers, who know whatever you do"* (82:10-12); *"When the twin recorders record [his deeds], seated on the right hand and on the left: he says no word but that there is a ready observer beside him"* (50:17-18).

Angels are immaterial beings by whom God conducts the affairs of the universe. They are the means by which God carries out His will and decree. They are the channels through which Absolute Existence manifests, shines, and descends to limited and determined entities. It thus follows that the recording of deeds is an existential reality, not a merely conventional or symbolic act of formalism, like a beurocratic procedure.

The soul as a depository

The Qur'an describes this in the following verses:

*We have attached every person's omen to his neck, and
We shall bring it out for him on the Day of Resurrection
as a wide open book that he will encounter. 'Read your
book! Today your soul suffices as your own
reckoner.* (17:13-14).

These verses show that one's 'book' is not separable from him, but is latent in him throughout his life. In other words, one's deeds are not written on a tablet or paper, but they are written in one's *self*. Anything that a person intends, thinks, says, or does has an impact on his soul – existentially – and these impacts are the letters of one's book that are inscribed in his 'record'. Hence, one's record of deeds is one's self, comprising all the existential realisations acquired through one's life.

On the Day of Judgement, as people are detached and disentangled from external connections, their spiritual realisations that were hidden from themselves and others will become evident (10:30, 86:9, 100:10). This will manifest in the form of one's record of deeds being given to him from the right side if the person is felicitous (17:71, 60:19, 84:7), or from behind and left if the person is wretched (69:25, 84:10). Right and left here symbolise auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, respectively, as we can infer by comparing verses 56:8-9, 56:27 and 56:41.

Some examples and illustrations may help us better relate to the idea of preservation of anything that we do in this universe: (1) Our mental and physical acts are fingerprints that we leave in the universe. We might be ignorant of them, but they are there, and one day they will be revealed and we will be held accountable for them. (2) Whatever we do is imprinted in us like the circles that mark the age of a tree. We just have to look inside and we will find the impacts of all our acts within. (3) Think of any intention, act, or speech that you have as a wave or energy created in the world. You might lose track of it and it might change forms, but it will never die out. It is preserved according to the law of conservation of energy. Of course, these are only physical examples to approximate a much more profound, fundamental, and immaterial reality to our limited understandings. Otherwise, the

preservation of deeds is not limited to the realm of matter and nature. In fact, the primary ‘energy’ in the context of religion that determines one’s salvation or damnation is his spiritual disposition and realisation, sometimes referred to as *niyyah* (intention), as the Prophet said, “Acts are only by intentions.”⁴ The same act by two individuals can have two completely opposite religious values due to their intentions, even though their acts are exactly the same outwardly.⁵⁶

Other books in the Qur’an

Another Qur’anic term for the book of deeds is *imām*, as seen in this verse: “Indeed it is We who revive the dead and write what they have sent ahead and their effects [which they left behind], and We have figured everything in a manifest Imam” (36:12). What is meant here is clarified by matching it with the verse: “We have figured everything in a Book” (78:29). Another similar usage is found in this verse: “The day We shall summon every group of people with their *imām*, then whoever is given his book in his right hand – they will read it, and they will not be wronged so much as a single date-thread” (17:71). Matching the first and second parts of the verse shows that *imām* in the first part corresponds to *book* in the second. There are a few explanations for why the book of deeds is called an *imām* (lit. leader): (1) It is a record of everything that one has sent ahead (*amām*) for his eternal life. (2) It will lead the people (as their *imām*: leader) on the Day of Resurrection to their eternal abodes. (3) Everyone’s deeds were recorded beforehand (*amām*) according to God’s eternal knowledge. This is the apparent

⁴ Aḥmad, 1:25. Bukhārī, 1:2, 3:119 and 7:231. Muslim, 6:48. Aḥsā’i, ‘*Awālī al-La’ālī*, 2:11.

⁵ Tasnīm, 13/707-709.

⁶ For more on this, refer to ‘The Core of Action: Sincerity of Intention’ by the same author, published in *Message of Thaḳalayn*, vol. 17, no. 11, pp. 35-46.

meaning of *imām* in these verses, but it does not deny other layers of meaning that may have evidence from the Qur'an and/or hadith.

The Qur'an also talks about collective books of deeds, which belong to groups and societies as a whole: *"Every nation will be summoned to its book: 'Today you will be requited for what you used to do. This is Our book, which speaks truly against you. Indeed We used to record what you used to do'"* (45:28-29). This apparently refers to the social and collective acts, impacts, and realisations of the people. At a more general level, the pious and the vicious will each have a record which would include their rewards and punishments (83:7-9, 83:18-21). Then there is an even more comprehensive book that comprises the acts and record of everyone: *"With Us is a book that speaks the truth, and they will not be wronged"* (23:62).

Overall, we must realise that anything small or big that we do is being recorded: *"Everything they have done is in the books, and everything big and small, is committed to writing"* (54:52-53). Then one day we will be shown our deeds and will be questioned about them. *"The Book will be set up. Then you will see the guilty apprehensive of what is in it. They will say, 'Woe to us! What a book is this! It omits nothing, big or small, without enumerating it.' They will find present whatever they had done, and your Lord does not wrong anyone"* (18:47-49). Other verses that talk about the recording of deeds are 3:181, 9:120-121 and 19:71.

Earth, water, fire and air / With us are unaware / But
with God they're aware.

We, on the other hand, are aware of all, / Except for the
Truth and His message and call.

‘What is this life?’ they’ve complained and said, / ‘With
the creatures you’re alive / But with God you’re dead.’⁷

Wait for the sun of Resurrection to rise / Then you’ll see
the world move and arise.

‘Indeed we hear, see and rejoice, / But since you’re
strangers / You can’t hear our voice.’

You can’t see the spirit as long as you rush / Toward the
body and plunge into slush?

Drop dead objects and incline to the soul / Then you’ll
hear the universe chant and extol.⁸

Summary

A central aspect of the belief in afterlife is responsibility for one’s beliefs and actions in this world. The Qur’an inculcates this sense of responsibility by reminding us that we are being watched by our guardian angels, our organs, and all beings surrounding us, and that all our deeds are being recorded. The fact that a being serves as a witness shows that it is alive, conscious, and present. Our soul is the tablet that bears the trace of our beliefs and actions in a real and existential way.

⁷ Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 2, lines 2378-2379 and 2381.

⁸ Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 3, lines 1009 and 1019-1021.

FROM MEDINA TO SHAM: LADY ZAYNAB'S COMMITMENT TO WILAYAH¹

MUHAMMAD SHABDINI PASHAKI²

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Apart from the theoretical meaning of commitment to wilayah, it is reflected in the actions and behaviours of Muslims and believers who are committed to it. The person truly committed to wilayah can be only known from his actions; otherwise, commitment to wilayah is not achieved through mere claim and knowledge on its importance. The Battle of Karbala was replete with such commitment to wilayah in which Lady Zaynab is the prime example of. This article seeks to elucidate Lady Zaynab's commitment to wilayah from Medina to Karbala, and then Sham (Damascus) by her obedience to - and protection and defence of - Imam Husayn.

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Introduction

The Battle of Karbala were the clear manifestations of commitment to wilayah by Imam Husayn and his companions. Both the high-ranking ones – such as Abal-Fadl al-Abbas – and the lower ones in social rank fully realised commitment to wilayah of Imam Husayn, and hence created matchless and unprecedented scenes.³ In this arena, everyone did their best to defend his Wali (Imam), albeit a little.

Lady Zaynab was an influential person in the Ashura event. She did not give up defending her Wali (Imam) only because God had not made the smaller struggle (*jihad*) compulsory for women. Rather, she defended Imam Husayn in the most critical conditions. That is why she did not stay in Medina to merely watch her Imam's departure for Mecca and Karbala. When her Imam (Wali) started his journey, she decided to accompany him.

It is noteworthy that she did not set out for Karbala empty-handed; rather, she took along all her asset, namely her sons, to tell her Imam (Wali) and all Shi'as that in order to defend him, Zaynab as a person committed to wilayah is ready to use all her assets so that the Imam will not remain alone.

In other words, next to the absolute obedience to God, the Qur'an orders us to unconditionally obey the Prophet and those in authority, that is, the Infallible Imams: "Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you."⁴

³ The nights before military operations in the eight-year Sacred Defence of Iran resemble to Ashura a lot, and their common point is to obey Imam (Wali)'s orders.

⁴ Nisa, 59. أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَ أَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

Lady Zaynab, who was in the presence of seven Infallibles, was matchless in all aspects of wilayah: knowledge of – and unconditional submission to – the Imam, introducing Wilayah to others, sacrifice in the way of Wilayah, etc. She had witnessed how her mother protected her Imam (Wali), telling him, “[O’ Abal-Hasan!] May I become sacrificed for you by protecting you!”⁵

Lady Zahra finally sacrificed her life in support of Imam Ali, being martyred in the way of wilayah. And Lady Zaynab learned commitment to wilayah from her mother and showed it beautifully in Karbala.

In order to introduce wilayah, Lady Zaynab refuted accusations against Ahlul Bayt and reminded the people of the Ahlul Bayt’s forgotten rights. In Kufa, she said, “How do you want to remove the stigma of killing the grandson of the last Prophet—the spring of Prophetic mission—and the chief of youths dwelling in Heaven?”⁶

On the one hand, she tried to protect the lives of the two Walis [Imam Husayn and Imam Sajjad] by any possible means to the extent that she sacrificed her sons’ lives in this way.

On the other hand, in order to prove her commitment to wilayah, she did not withhold any measure to defend her Imam and proved this in the journey from Medina to Sham.

This kind of commitment to wilayah should be institutionalised in the Islamic society because sometimes those who claim to be committed to it have erred; they were committed to Wilayah merely in words, and not in action. They instead left the Imam alone in the society.

⁵ Majlisi, 1364 solar, vo. 19, p.81. روحی لروحک الفداء و نفسی لنفسک الوقاء

⁶ Tabarsi, 1403 A.H., vol. 2, 304. انی ترخصون قتل سلیل خاتم النبوه و معدن الرساله و سید شباب اهل الجنه

The following discussion includes Lady Zaynab's commitment to wilayah of Imam Husayn and Imam Sajjad from Medina to Sham.

1. Accompanying the Imam

When Imam Husayn's caravan was about to leave Medina, among the people who urged him not to embark on this journey was ibn Abbas. He said, "If you have to go to Kufa, at least do not take along your household and wives!" Lady Zaynab said, "O' ibn Abbas! Do you suggest our leader's embarking on this journey alone and leaving us behind? Do we have anybody except him [as our guardian]? Never! We live with him and die with him." Upon hearing this, ibn Abbas wept bitterly.⁷

It is worthy of note that since Lady Zaynab knew that her brother (Wali) will be left without any companion in Karbala, she took along her sons (Muhammad and 'Aun ibn 'Abdullah) to show all people who are committed to Wilayah that one should defend his Imam (Wali) with all his or her asset.⁸

2. Dedicated to Wilayah

Shaikh Mufid quoted Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn as saying, "The night before Ashura, I was in the tent, and my aunt was nursing me. I saw my father entering his tent, and "John," who had been Abu-Dharr's servant, and now was my father's servant and preparing my father's sword. My

⁷ Ha'eri, 1400 A.H., vol.1, p. 247.

⁸ Mamaqani, 1350 solar, vol. 2, p.173.

father recited these lines of poetry, ‘O’ World! Woe unto you! You that kill many of your friends and seekers in the mornings and evenings...”⁹

My father repeated these words twice or three times, and I heard them completely and found out what he meant. I choked back my tears; I knew there was a calamity predestined to happen! My aunt, Lady Zaynab, also heard those words, was moved, rose and went to Imam Husayn barefoot with her skirt dragged on the ground, and told him, “I wish my life came to an end! It is as if today my mother, Lady Fatimah, passed away, my father, Imam Ali, was martyred, and I lost my brother, Imam Hasan! You are the only one remained alive and a shelter for those who have survived!”

Imam Husayn told Lady Zaynab, ‘O’ my sister! Beware that Satan might take away your patience.’¹⁰

Imam Husayn’s worry is evident here. His advice indicates that patience should be Divine and cleansed of any impurity.

3. Defending the Imam against ‘Umar ibn Sa’d

When Imam Husayn fell off his horse, Dhul-Janah, on the Day of Ashura, and the enemy’s army surrounded him, Lady Zaynab could not tolerate this and did not leave her Imam alone in the battlefield. Although she was also responsible for protecting Imam Sajjad’s life, she came out of tents and ran toward her Imam. When she saw him surrounded by enemies, she told their commander, ‘Umar ibn Sa’d, ‘Woe unto you! They are killing Aba-‘Abdillah, and you are only

⁹ يا دهر اف لك من خليل
كم لك بالاشراق والاصيل
من صاحب او طالب قتيل

¹⁰ يا اخته لا يذهبن حلمك الشيطان. Majlisi, 1364 solar, 250.

watching them?! ‘Umar ibn Sa’d did not answer. Then she called out, ‘Is not there a Muslim among you?’”¹¹

Although she knew she could not save her Wali, she could verbally inflame their sentiments, but unfortunately it did not work because of their hard-heartedness and Jahili rancour.

4. Her increasing Kufans’ insights in defence of her Wali

When the Ahlul Bayt’s caravan who was captive arrived in Kufa, the Kufans came to watch them, with a huge crowd gathered in the main square. Lady Zaynab took the opportunity and began to defend the Ahlul Bayt. According to historians, Lady Zaynab spoke eloquently with complete modesty, as if it was Imam Ali speaking. There was pin-drop silence as she spoke: “Praise be to Allah and peace be upon my grandfather, Prophet Muhammad! O’ Kufans! O’ Deceivers! I hope you will never stop shedding tears and groaning. You resemble a woman who unravels her strongly spun thread; you have made your promises a means of deception. Have you ever demonstrated anything except self-praise, deception, and rancour? You appear pathetic and heartsick. You are weak when faced with enemies and break your promises. Know that you have sent bad provisions for your hereafter. You will face God’s wrath and be punished eternally in Hell.”

She continued, “Do you cry? Yes, by God, you deserve this, and you should weep a lot and laugh a little. You have chosen disgrace, and this stigma will be never removed. You have killed Husayn, who was the Prophet’s grandson, the chief of youths in Heaven, the shelter for the righteous, sympathetic to the afflicted, and your guide. What a heinous

¹¹ ويحك يا عمر اقتل ابوعبدالله و انت تنظر اليه فلم يجبها عمر بشيء فنادت و يحكم اما فيكم مسلم؟! Mufid, 212:2.

sin you have committed! May you be permanently excluded from God's mercy and be disappointed!"¹²

According to the historians, her sermon reminded the people of Imam Ali's sermons for Kufans, and they remembered her father's government. The sermon delivered in defence of Wilayah is priceless.

5. Defense of – and obedience to –the Imam in Ibn Ziyad's gathering

When the Ahlul Bayt's caravan reached Kufa, Ibn Ziyad held a public gathering, with the holy head of Imam Husayn in front of him and his household taken there.

Lady Zaynab came in unknown and sat down ignoring Ibn Ziyad, who asked, "Who's this?" They said, "She is Ali's daughter." Ibn Ziyad told her, "Praise be to God, who dishonoured you and foiled your plot?"

Lady Zaynab said, "Verily, the evil-doer is dishonoured, and the sinner is refuted, and we are not either."

Ibn Ziyad said, "How do you view the way God treated your brother and household?"

Lady Zaynab responded, "I did not see it but favourable treatment. They [Husayn and his companions] were a group for whom God had ordained martyrdom, and they rushed to the place of their martyrdom. In the near future, God will gather you and them, and then you will be argued against and will see who is triumphant. May your mother mourn for you, O' Ibn Marjanah!"

¹² Qummi, 1412 A.H., p.358.

Ibn Ziyad got angry and intended to kill Lady Zaynab. A man named ‘Amro ibn Harith said, “O’ Emir! Women should not be rebuked for their words.”

Ibn Ziyad said, “Verily, by killing your rebellious brother and dissidents from your household, God healed my heart.”

Lady Zaynab said, “You have killed my chief, cut my branches, and uprooted me. If this is your healing, so you have been healed.”

Ibn Ziyad said, “She speaks in prose; I swear that your father was also a poet.”

Lady Zaynab replied, “O’ ibn Ziyad! A woman does not have anything to do with prose!”

Then ibn Ziyad turned to Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn and said, “Who’s this?”

He was told, “Ali ibn al-Husayn.”

Ibn Ziyad said, “Wasn’t Ali ibn al-Husayn killed by God?”

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin said, “I have a brother named liked me—Ali ibn al-Husayn—who was killed by the people.”

Ibn Ziyad said, “No, God killed him.”

Imam Sajjad said, “Allah takes the souls at the time of their death.”¹³

Ibn Ziyad said, “How dare you respond to me! Behead him.”

Hearing these evil words, Lady Zaynab said, “Ibn Ziyad! You have killed all of us. If you intend to kill him, you should kill me, too.”

¹³ Zumar, 42. "اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا"

Imam Sajjad told his aunt, "My dear aunt! Let me talk to him."¹⁴

Then the 4th Imam told ibn Ziyad, "Do you threaten to kill me? Don't you know it is our routine to be killed, and martyrdom is our honour."¹⁵

There in the enemy's palace where everything was ready for the enemy, she carried out her mission, defending her two Imams (Walis). She did not fear what might happen in ibn Ziyad's palace, rising up against and dishonouring him.

6. Defending wilayah and Imamate in Yazid's gathering

After the Ahlul Bayt's caravan had been taken to Sham, Yazid held a gathering and invited foreign ambassadors and guests.

There Lady Zaynab stood up and told Yazid,

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds! Allah's peace and blessings be upon Muhammad and his household! God said truthfully, '*Then the fate of those who committed misdeeds was that they denied the signs of Allah and they used to deride them.*'¹⁶

O' Yazid! Do you assume now that you have surrounded us and we have been drifted away like slave-girls, this dishonours us and dignifies you?! Do you think this indicates your greatness and as a result you have become over-proud and your eyes shine with joy? Now that you see this world and our kingdom belonging to you, you

¹⁴ Tabari, 1375 solar, vol.5, p. 457.

¹⁵ Majlisi, 1364 solar, vol.45, p.118.

¹⁶ Rum, 10. الحمد لله الرب العالمين و صلى الله على محمد و اله اجمعين، صدق الله كذلك يقول: "ثم كان عاقبة الذين أساءوا السوء أن كذبوا بآيات الله وكانوا بها يستهزؤون"

should not relax for a moment. Do you forget God's word that, '*Let the faithless not suppose that the respite that We grant them is good for their souls: We give them respite only that they may increase in sin, and there is a humiliating punishment for them.*'"¹⁷

She added, "O' the son of freed slaves! Is it fair that your women and slave-girls are behind curtains [covered and with Hijab] and Prophet Muhammad's daughters are captive?! You have uncovered them and lifted their veils. You have made them—like enemies—migrate from one city to another. Everybody in this city and people from faraway lands saw them and their faces while none of their men were supporting and accompanying them."

She continued, "What should be expected from the son of the one who ate the liver of the righteous and his flesh grew out of martyrs' blood [except this]? And how can the one who is our malicious enemy not be hostile to us? Then without feeling guilty, you say that [your ancestors] should come back to life and celebrate this, telling you: well done Yazid! While you are hitting Abi-'Abdillah's teeth with your whip and stick."

She further said, "Now that through wounding us, you are delighted, and by killing the Prophet's offspring—who are stars of the earth and descendants of Abdul-Muttalib—have made his household desperate, then call your ancestor, why do you not say this?"

¹⁷ Ale-Imran, 178. "وَلَا يَحْسِبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُطَالِفُ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نَطَالِفُ لَهُمْ لِيَزِدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ"

“[O Yazid!] Very soon you will join them, and then you will wish you were lame and dumb so that you did not say such things and you did not take such actions.”

“O God! Uphold our rights, revenge on those who oppressed us, and have wrath on those who killed our men and supporters.”

“[O Yazid!] By God, you have punctured your own skin and cut your own flesh. No doubt, you will be taken to the Prophet [on the Day of Judgement] while you spilled his offspring’s blood and disrespected them. Then God will change our disunity to unity, alleviate our distress, and uphold our rights. *“Do not suppose those who were slain in the way of Allah to be dead; rather they are living and provided for near their Lord.”*¹⁸

Lady Zaynab’s commitment to wilayah since the beginning of Ali ibn al-Husayn’s Imamate

1. Obeying the Imam in the most difficult conditions

Lady Zaynab was wholeheartedly obedient to the Imamate during both Imam Husayn and Imam Sajjad’s Imamate. Even when the enemies set fire to their tents, that is, at the beginning of the 4th Imam’s Imamate, she came to him and said, “O’ the only survivor! They set fire to the tents; what should we do?”

The Imam said, “You must escape.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Ale-Imran, 169, ibn Tawoos, 1348 A. H., p. 191.

Ale-Imran, 169. “وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزُقُونَ”

¹⁹ Majlisi, 111: 45. عليكن بالفرار.

2. Protecting the Imam's life on the day of Ashura

On several occasions, Lady Zaynab supported Imam Sajjad, taking her life in her hands.

A. On the day of Ashura, when Imam Husayn asked for help as an ultimatum, his sick son—Imam Sajjad—went to the battlefield. Lady Zaynab rushed to stop him. Imam Husayn also told him, “Have him return; if he is killed, there will be no descendant of Prophet Muhammad on the earth.”²⁰

B. The night after Ashura, when enemies attacked the Ahlul Bayt's tents, Shimr decided to kill Imam Sajjad, but Lady Zaynab shouted, “As long as I am alive, I will not allow his life to be at risk. If you want to kill him, you must kill me at first.”²¹

C. When Lady Zaynab found Imam Sajjad impatient, seeing martyrs of Karbala, she told him, “O' the descendant of my grandfather, father, and brother! Why do you do so with yourself? By God, this is the covenant that your grandfather and father made with God. God has made a covenant with the people who are unknown to the earth's pharaohs but known to the dwellers of heavens to gather and bury these punctured and bloody bodies. In this plain, a monument will be built on Imam Husayn's grave which will not disappear with the passage of time. No matter how hard disbelievers and misguided people will try to destroy it, it will become more renowned.”²²

²⁰ Majlisi, 1364 solar, vol.45, p.46.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² ibn Qulaweih, 1356 solar, p.295.

3. The devotee of wilayah

After the argument between Imam Sajjad and ibn Ziyad, the cursed ibn Ziyad decided to kill the Imam. When Lady Zainab found out about this, she hugged the Imam and shouted, “O’ Ibn Ziyad! Leave us alone! Have you not shed our blood enough? Have you left anybody from among us alive?” The she added, “If you are going to kill him, you should kill me with him, too.” Upon hearing this, Imam Sajjad shouted, “O’ Ibn Ziyad! If there is kinship between you and these women, have a pious man accompany them.”

Ibn Ziyad looked at them and told his men, “How come there is kinship?! By God, He likes her to be killed with him. Let this young man accompany the women.”²³

Of course, Ibn Ziyad could not understand this support was not merely because of kinship ties, but rather in defence of Wilayah and Imamate. If this were the issue of kinship ties, Lady Zaynab would protect her sons’ live and would not send them to the battlefield.

Conclusion

Commitment to wilayah is not evaluated by words. There may be many people who prove it through giving the most convincing reasons and present it to people very beautifully; thus, obtaining a political and social position.

However, in reality, commitment to wilayah is manifested in action. There may be people who cannot give any reason for their commitment to wilayah, but in practice because they know their Imam (Wali), they

²³ Tabari, 1357 solar, vol.5, p.457.

do not regard their knowledge as important when it is juxtaposed with the Imam's view. Obeying the Imam and following his ideas, they are ready to sacrifice their lives and asset.

In this respect, Lady Zaynab is the role model for all people who are committed to Wilayah. She sacrificed all her asset, that is, her sons, for her Imam (Wali) in Karbala and she was herself hurt a lot in this path. There is no report indicating her dissatisfaction with wilayah and commitment to it. When Ibn Ziyad tried to reprimand her, she said, "I did not see it but favourable treatment."²⁴

Thus, we should follow in her footsteps in commitment to wilayah and be self-sacrificing like her, and praise be to God, such committed people are not few in our Islamic society today.

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²⁴ Karami, 1380 solar, p.304. ما رأيت الا جميلا

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RELIGIOUS AND SCIENTIFIC VIEWS ON MENTAL ILLNESS

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ABSTRACT: Anxiety, depression, mental disorders, and worries are among the predicaments of human society in the present century. In recent decades, the factors contributing to, preventing, and curing these illnesses have been addressed from different angles. The resulting achievements are various cognitive, behavioural, psychological, psychodynamic, and biological theories that, of course, led to valuable outcomes. This paper addresses this issue from two perspectives: the psychological perspective and that of the Qur'an and hadith.

Part 1: Psychologists' perspective

Psychologists and psychoanalysts have classified mental illnesses differently. In some sources, mental illnesses are divided into the following ten categories.

1. The disruption of body's biotic balance, due to fatigue, disease, chronic diseases, hypochondria, stress, and childbirth.

2. The organisational positions: The most important factors behind stress in organisations and institutions are the occupational status, social status, career advancement, and social status achieved suddenly.
3. Family crises: Divorce, the loss of one's spouse, child, parents, etc, and economic and livelihood problems.
4. Environmental factors: Sound and air pollution, rules and regulations governing life, work setting and migration (i.e., changes in cultural environment).
5. Political issues: The thirst for power, which disrupts the politicians' peace of mind, the super-ordinate and subordinate relationship, the psychological warfare and the spreading of rumours, and political and economic crises.
6. The structure of one's personality can be considered a factor behind psychological pressure because one's personality type influences his interactions, actions and reactions. The Qur'anic interpretation in this regard is as follows: "*Say, everyone acts according to his character.*"¹

If one is a pessimist, he considers everything happening against himself. "*They suppose every cry is directed against them,*"² because the pessimist does not have a rational and logical interpretation and conception of the relation among his being, society, and the universe, so he came under psychological pressures and despairs, and is unable to withstand problems: as said in the Qur'an: "*...anxious when an ill befalls him.*"³

¹ al-Isra', 84, قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكْلِهِ

² al-Munafiqin, 4, يُحْسِنُونَ كُلَّ صِيحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ

³ al-Ma'arij, 20, إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَوْئِسًا

While God, the Merciful, said to His servants, “...*do not despair of the mercy of Allah*,”⁴ the upbeat believer not only does not despair in hardships and calamities, but also seemingly unpleasant and difficult events make him firm and steadfast, “...*to fortify those who have faith*.”⁵

7. Doubt and indecision when making important decisions regarding marriage, jobs, education, and so forth. Doubtfulness leading to psychological pressure is the source of many neurological and psychiatric diseases, and has its root in feeling inferior and deficient.

8. The moral vacuum: Examples are guilt, remembering life's bitter memories, jealousy, malice, backbiting, and false accusations. To address these concerns, God told the Prophet in the Quran: “*And be patient over what they say, and keep away from them in a graceful manner*.”⁶

9. The spiritual vacuum: Along with the relatively enhanced comfort and developed communications, human civilisation has also experienced increased stress and anxiety, and the spiritual vacuum is a main factor in this heightened anxiety. In this vast world, man suffers from aimlessness and the lack of a secured support. The examples of the spiritual vacuum include emptiness, purposelessness, superstitions and illusions, and the feeling of being alone, abandoned, helpless and unsupported (i.e., weak faith).

10. The religious beliefs: Despite being a means of relieving anxieties, religious beliefs may also bring about psychological pressure because its outcomes include feeling responsible, fearing death and resurrection, and the likes which may cause anxiety and stress.

⁴ al-Zumar, 53, لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ

⁵ al-Nahl, 102, لِيَشْهَدَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

⁶ al-Muzzamil, 10, وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاجْزِهِمْ جَمِيعًا

Part 2: From the perspective of the Qur'an and hadith

As noted above, some factors behind anxiety are cognitive, others are emotional, and yet some others are human. Here, some factors in Qur'anic verses and hadiths by the Ahlul Bayt which are mainly cognitive are elaborated on. If one is aware of them, he will not become anxious, depressed, and worried.

Among the above factors and those referred to below, cognitive factors are more important, because most factors behind the appearance of mental illnesses are cognitive. Having negative attitudes to oneself, others, God, and the future; absolutism, and negative thinking; regarding feelings and the reality as the same, and other irrational beliefs are cognitive. Likewise, negative feelings, frustration, self-rebuke, and the likes are rooted in cognition. Guilt, loneliness and emptiness also have cognitive aspects. That is why in Islamic sources, changing false beliefs into true ones and rectified thoughts is emphasised. Clearly, the change of a depressed and anxious person's false beliefs leads to modification of his uncomfortable feelings, and appropriate behaviours, and as a result, symptoms of depression are gradually reduced.

To prevent and treat mental disorders, religious leaders have provided necessary training in correct knowledge of – and attitude towards – oneself, God, life, the world and others. As referred to above, cognitive therapies are more effective than psycho-therapy, medications, behaviour therapy, shock therapy, and other methods in treating depression, relieving stress, and preventing their recurrence. That is why it has been emphasised in Islamic sources more than other methods.

Investigating the Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and religious sources, one can find the following factors behind anxiety, depression and other mental

illnesses to be mostly cognitive. Additional factors that contribute are mentioned below:

1. Disbelief

Although disbelief is considered a mental illness in Islam, it is also regarded as a cause of mental illnesses, since it is an obstacle to an accurate understanding of facts and truths. Through disbelief, the primary means of acquiring knowledge, namely the heart, eyes, and ears stop working: *“Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight.”*⁷ This means absolute darkness and misguidance. Elsewhere in the Qur’an, God said, *“and one whom Allah has not granted any light has no light.”*⁸ This absolute darkness leads to anxiety, stress, and worries.

2. Neglecting the remembrance of God

Those who neglect the remembrance of God and turn away from it will have a very hard life in this world besides the punishment in the hereafter:

*But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him blind.*⁹

All doors are closed to such a person, and this is the *“wretched life”* because the one who forgets God has nothing left but this world that is considered as his ideal. Naturally, all his efforts are aimed at this ideal, and this kind of life never gives him peace of mind because he is always

⁷ حَتَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَ عَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةً, al-Baqarah, 4,

⁸ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ, al-Nur, 40,

⁹ مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَ نَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى, Ta Ha, 124,

depressed, anxious, worried, tense, and sad about either losing or not attaining something.

3. Forgetting oneself

As a result of forgetting God, man forgets himself as well: *“They have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them.”*¹⁰ Those who forget themselves will forget their values, talents, and capabilities. And the one who engages in anything except his purification will wander in the darkness and will perish.

4. Attachment to material and worldly issues

Strong attachment to the personal belongings and social benefits such as one’s wealth, offspring, high status, and relatives, all of which are the ornaments of this world, renders people neglectful of God’s remembrance:

*O you who have faith! Do not let your possessions and children distract you from the remembrance of Allah, and whoever does that—it is they who are the losers.*¹¹

Not remembering God equals losing one’s peace of mind:

*Look! The hearts find rest in Allah’s remembrance!*¹²

5. Covet and avarice

One of the first motives behind man’s inclination to such vices and turning away from the remembrance of God and accumulating wealth is Hulla’ (هُلْع), that is, covet. Whenever a covetous man is stressed out or

¹⁰ Tawbah, 67, وَ لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ

¹¹ Munafiqun, 9, يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

¹² al-Ra’d, 28, أَلَا يَذْكُرُ اللَّهُ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

loses something, he whines, and when he is benefited, he exercises parsimony and is also unwilling to allow others to benefit: *"Indeed man has been created covetous: anxious when an ill befalls him and grudging when good comes his way,"*¹³ in other words, feeling insecure, anxious, and worried.

6. Disregard for prayer

As referred to in the second point, remembrance of God brings about peace of mind. On the other hand, prayer is the very remembrance of God, Who said in the Qur'an, *"...and maintain the prayer for My remembrance."*¹⁴ Also, according to the Qur'an, prayer is superior to any act of worship, *"Indeed the prayer prevents indecencies and wrongs, and the remembrance of Allah is surely greater."*¹⁵ Thus, disregard for prayer has no outcome but anxiety, stress, and tension.

7. High aspirations

When ignorance, arrogance, and high aspirations befall man, he will no longer be able to realise realities and truths, and this leads to disregard for the remembrance of God. How beautifully God said in the Quran about the disbelievers:

*Leave them to eat and enjoy and to be diverted by longings. Soon they will know.*¹⁶

¹³ al-Ma'arij, 19-21, إِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعاً وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعاً

¹⁴ Ta Ha, 14, أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

¹⁵ Ankabut, 45, أَنْ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

¹⁶ Hijr, 3, ذُرَّهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا وَيُلْهِيمُ الْأَمَلُ فَسُوفَ يَعْلَمُونَ

In other words, they will experience the negative outcomes of these high aspirations (since aspirations are not bad in themselves, and high aspirations are blameworthy).

8. Attachment to this world

The man fond of this world is always anxious and worried because this world is associated with loses, and the tensions caused by these losses lead to anxiety. Addressing the people enchanted by this world, Imam Ali said:

Why when you attain a little of this world, you become delighted, and a great deal of the hereafter you have lost does not sadden you? Also, when you lose a worthless worldly thing, you become so anxious and worried that your face expressions clearly show your great anxiety, and your little impatience is revealed.¹⁷

In another hadiths, Imam Ali said, “The love for this world is the peak of all seditions and the root of all grief and pains”¹⁸

9. No fear of God

The one who does not fear God and His just punishments through which one's thoughts, actions, and feelings can be controlled; he paves the way for his suffering from rahbah (رهبة), that is, fear along with great anxiety. In other words, the one who does not fear God is afraid of – and anxious about – everything. Imam Sadiq said in this regard:

¹⁷ مَا بَالُكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ بِالْيَسِيرِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا تُدْرِكُونَهُ وَلَا يَحْزَنُكُمْ الْكَثِيرُ مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ تُحْرِمُونَهُ، وَ يُلْقِيَكُمْ الْيَسِيرُ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا بِفُؤْمٍ حَتَّى يَتَيْنِ ذَلِكُ فِي
وُجُوهِكُمْ وَ قَلْبُهُ صَبْرِكُمْ عَمَّا رَوَى مِنْهَا عَنْكُمْ
¹⁸ حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ الْفِتَنِ وَأَضَلُّ الْمَخَنِ

The one who fears the Great God, He will place fear from him in everybody's heart (i.e., everybody fears him), and the one who does not fear God, He will place fear from everything in his heart (i.e., he will fear everything).¹⁹

Imam Ali also said, "The outcome of fear [from God] is security," "Fear [from God] is security," and "[You should] fear [God] so that you become secure."²⁰ Thus, fear [from God] brings about peace in both this world and the hereafter, and no fear from God involves horror and anxiety.

10. Not marrying

One of the divine blessings is having a good spouse who brings peace of mind. As God specified this in two verses: "*And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them,*"²¹ and "*It is He who created you from a single soul, and made from it its mate, that he might find comfort with her.*"²² This comfort comes from the fact that man and woman complement each other and lead to one another's vitality, prosperity, and growth in a way that one is imperfect without the other. Naturally, there is a great attraction between one person and his complement. Thus, it can be concluded that those who refuse to act on this divine traditional practice may face physical or mental problems.

¹⁹ مَنْ خَافَ اللَّهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ أَخَافَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَ مَنْ لَمْ يَخَفِ اللَّهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ أَخَافَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

²⁰ ثَمَرَةُ الْخَوْفِ الْأَمْنُ، الْخَوْفُ أَمَانٌ، خِفْ تَأَمَّنْ

²¹ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا، Rum, 21,

²² هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا، A'raf, 189,

11. The feeling of destruction (i.e., worry about death)

The love for survival and willingness to have an eternal life are innate human traits. Nobody can ever find in himself a desire for annihilation. Thus, man fights against any factor that he may think leads to his destruction. If he cannot fight with it, he at least escapes from it. This is the reason for his escape from death and his great fear of it because he views death as his destruction and thinks death is opposed to his innate desire, since this desire continuously tells him: 'You must exist', although death tells him: 'You must go to the world of non-existence and destruction'. Here the remembrance of death leads to anxiety and worries. Of course, from the divine perspective, death does not mean destruction; rather it is a rebirth, and a bridge to the Heaven for the righteous.

12. Pessimism

Two factors behind anxiety and stress are suspicion and cynicism. The one suspicious of himself, his family, his relatives, society and its development, environment, and even of God and His inclusive grace, cannot have a peaceful and secure life because cynicism has a negative impact on man's spirit, and the resulting preoccupation and obsession in turn pave the way for apprehension and anxiety. As a result, one becomes less vivacious as his life becomes colourless. Thus, Islam forbids this negativism strongly: *"Avoid much suspicion. Indeed some suspicions are sins."*²³

²³ اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ

13. Despair

Despair leads to grief and anxiety, as Imam Ali said: “The one who becomes completely hopeless will succumb to regret, anxiety and worries.”²⁴ The sorrow that originates from despair weakens man’s body and soul. He also said, “Sorrow destroys man’s body.”²⁵

The hopeless person only sees darkness in the life and is blind to its lights. Like bats, he escapes from the sunlight and is finally afflicted by lethal torment resulting from his own darkness. The philosophical despair is transmitted from such people’s actions and writings to their followers, audience, and others. This dangerous virus (i.e., despair), like leprosy, spreads every day and brings along ominous misery, anguish, and pessimism. Therefore, it is strongly forbidden in Islam:

*And do not despair of Allah’s mercy. Indeed no one despairs of Allah’s mercy except the faithless lot.*²⁶ and
*“Do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed Allah will forgive all sins.”*²⁷

14. Ingratitude

The destructive uses of blessings and material and spiritual resources at man’s disposal in order to commit sins and injustice are considered ingratitude, and leads to the loss of security and peace. In other words, correctly using God’s blessings results in their increase, and using them incorrectly leads to one’s being deprived of them. In the Qur’an, this was referred to in a parable in which a tribe enjoyed security and

²⁴ وَإِنْ مَلَكَهَ الْيَأْسُ قَتَلَهُ الْأَسَفُ

²⁵ الْخُزْنُ يَهْدِمُ الْجَسَدَ

²⁶ لَا تَيَاسُوا مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْسُ مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ, Yusuf, 87,

²⁷ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعاً, al-Zumar, 53,

comfort besides other blessings, but God inflicted hunger and insecurity on them due to their ingratitude:

*Allah draws a parable: A town secure and peaceful. Its provision came abundantly from every place. But it was ungrateful toward Allah's blessings. So Allah made it taste hunger and fear because of what they used to do.*²⁸

15. Guilt

Guilt here does not mean the devotional and informed remorse for committing what God has forbidden; rather, it refers to a negative feeling due to sins not committed deliberately. Even though one has committed a sin in a moment of weakness, the person should not allow the guilt to impact his or her soul either transiently or deeply. He or she is to solve the problem through resolving not to commit it again.

When an action is not considered as wrong or sinful according to Islamic or social norms, if guilt takes deep roots in one's mind in such a way that he reproaches or blames himself excessively, and weeps for and sympathises for himself, such guilt is considered as a psychological disease and have many negative effects. Perhaps a salient outcome can be self-punishment as atonement for his sin, for example, when one hurts himself or unconsciously washes his hands for no good reason, which are referred to in psychology as a mental disease. Another salient form of pathological inadequacy and guilt is negative self-image. In other words, the origin of negative attitude to oneself should be found in self-rebuke whether this negative attitude is in the form of self-rebuke

²⁸ al-Nahl, 112, ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ آمِنَةً مُطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ، فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعَمِ اللَّهِ فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ

and sympathy for oneself or inadequacy, guilt, etc. On the whole, guilt is a factor behind anxiety, depression, and worries, and Islam offers strategies to reach a positive outcome from this feeling and to prevent it from emerging as a mental illness.

16. Emptiness and vacuum

Emptiness or nihilism is a widespread and well-known phenomenon in the modern era. Nihilism refers to meaninglessness of life. If psychotherapy is affected by nihilism, it can only diagnose and indicate the symptoms of the mental illness instead of curing it. This way, psychotherapy not only reflects nihilistic thoughts, but also unintentionally and unknowingly presents a false and caricature-like picture of the human soul and mind to the patient. The emptiness is revealed as continuous tedium and boredom. According to Schopenhauer, "Man is doomed for ever to a dispute between the polar opposites of distress and anxiety, on the one hand, and sorrow and tedium, on the other." In fact, nowadays man goes to psychiatrists due to boredom and impatience more so than anxiety and distress, and this is increasing every day.

The modern mechanised life aggravates this crisis. The few people who commit suicide should not be considered as the only victims of this emptiness. Rather, issues such as alcoholism and adolescent misdemeanours are the consequences of this unpleasant feeling. The middle age crises at the age of retirement can be also examined from this perspective.

In short, a factor behind anxiety and concern is nihilism. The one who sees no purpose or meaning for his existence is constantly distressed and worried. However, if following the Islamic teachings, one sees man in a

position where the whole universe is created for his sake, and views death as a rebirth and a bridge to a perfect state, naturally he will not be a nihilist.

17. Inferiority complex

The feeling of inferiority resulting from real, illusory, or social defects leads to distress, anxiety, or other different emotional reactions. The sense of inferiority is a negative manifestation of fatalism and results from one's conscious or unconscious feeling that he cannot do anything. It has its roots in one's childhood and is manifested during the adulthood.

A famous western psychoanalyst, Adler, believes that human activity is essentially based on the feeling of inferiority which is rooted in one's childhood. In other words, the child feels helpless and weak, and relies on the adults. This feeling accompanies the child through his developmental stages. The very sense of inferiority forms his character in various respects. It also makes him seek domination in various aspects so that he can be in control of situations and replace inferiority with domination, but when he fails, this changes to the inferiority complex. Then this leads to a number of psychological and neurological disorders, and changes the person into a mean and evil being who is detrimental to social order.

Thus, the feeling of inferiority can pave the way for people's perfection because humankind's measures are based on this feeling. However, in the case of a person's defeat and failure, this feeling changes into the inferiority complex which, in turn, causes many mental disorders.

18. Suspicion and mistrust

Suspicion and mistrust are two dangerous mental illnesses with adverse consequences for the individuals and society. Suspicion also causes masses to fight each other, makes families lose their serenity, and tarnishes pure hearts, filling them with rancour. It can have destructive impacts nationally and internationally and lead to numerous harms and violent acts. Thus, it is considered as a mortal sin in Islam, and God has forbidden Muslims from committing it in the Holy Quran, *“O you who have faith! Avoid much suspicion. Indeed some suspicions are sins.”*²⁹ The Prophet also regarded it as murder, because suspicion disrupts social order and causes social disturbance. Imam Ali said: “Mistrust and suspicion ruin the affairs and cause evils.”³⁰ In short, people who are suspicious of others do not trust others; even their family members and relatives and are replete with complexes and rancour. Personally, they are also sad, lonely, anxious, and worried. Because they do not trust anybody, they always feel alone, and clearly it is difficult and worrisome to live alone.

19. Envy and rancor

Surely envy and rancour are factors behind anxiety and worries because vengeful and jealous people are constantly suffering as they do not have peace of mind and can eventually destroy their lives. These people not only do not suffer from their pain and adversity, but also become depressed at others' progress and success. Prophet Muhammad said,

²⁹ Hujurat, 12, يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ

³⁰ سُوءُ الظَّنِّ يُفْسِدُ الْأُمُورَ وَ يَنْعَثُ عَلَى الشُّرُورِ

“The jealous person has the least comfort and peace of mind”³¹ and “The one who sows the seeds of rancour will reap its fruits.”³²

In short, the jealous always wish others’ blessings to be taken away. In addition, since in this world not everything happens as the mean and jealous people desire, although their blessings may increase and they may be promoted, they still suffer. That is why jealousy is a factor behind anxiety. Imam Ali said, “The jealous one is always sad, and the mean one is always rebuked.”³³ Also, according to Imam Sadiq, “The jealous one harms himself before harming the one he is envious of.”³⁴

20. Other reasons

After careful consideration, one can find many factors behind anxiety and worries, such as distorting facts, committing sins, exaggerating events, hurrying, being superficial, satisfying sexual desires unlawfully, drinking alcohol, gambling, misunderstanding, doubting, associating with anxious people, thinking that others are ungrateful to him, disobeying the rules, backbiting others, Satanic temptations, and the list goes on. Islam proposes many solutions for them; the most important ones are dealt with in the next chapters. Of course, the remedies suggested for relieving anxiety and worries in this book mainly include their causes, and one should surely visit a psychiatrist. However, Islamic strategies are also greatly effective in relieving anxiety and stress.

³¹ أَقَلُّ النَّاسِ لَهْءً، الْخُسُودُ

³² مَنْ زَرَعَ الْعَدَاوَةَ، حَصَدَ مَا بَدَرَ

³³ الْخُسُودُ مَغْمُومٌ وَ اللَّئِيمُ مَذْمُومٌ

³⁴ الْخَائِدُ مُضِرٌّ بِنَفْسِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَضُرَّ بِالْمَخْسُودِ

A WOMAN OF PARADISE: THE REBELLIOUS QUEEN OF PHARAOH, PART II

FATEMAH MEGHJI

ABSTRACT: Perspectives about the ideal Muslim woman continue to be a kaleidoscope of various readings of different Muslim women throughout history. The four women of paradise, as cited in hadith literature, refer to Lady Maryam (Mary), Lady Asiyah (the wife of Pharaoh), Lady Khadijah (the wife of Prophet Muhammad), and Lady Fatimah (the daughter of the Prophet).¹ Although they are all considered to be historical figures, and there is much to be said about them, only the first two have been mentioned in the Qur'an, and only Lady Maryam is mentioned by name. Lady Maryam and Lady Asiyah are particularly noted in the chapter al-Tahrim as *mathal*, or role models and examples, for all of mankind. In this paper we hope to provide a brief biographical sketch as well as an analysis of the verses related to Lady Asiyah from classical Sunni and Shi'i commentaries of the Qur'an. We also hope to touch on the attention that Lady Asiyah's famous sentence in Surah al-Tahrim has warranted from the gnostics (*urefā*) in exegetical commentaries by the likes of Allamah Tabatabai.

¹In some Sunni hadith literature albeit much rarer, 'Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bakr and the wife of the Prophet (s) is also cited to be amongst the women of heaven. However, the general consensus is that the four are the ones mentioned here. This is what Suyuti also cites in his tafsir al-*Durr al-Manthur*. Shi'i hadith literature also refer to the four mentioned in this article.

Notable Points

Celebrating righteous rebellion

In Part I of this article, we looked at a handful of commentaries of the verses from Surah al-Tahrim, and as such, we have been able to discuss various points from the traditions on Asiyah. Next, we would like to go through some lessons that can be derived from her example, bringing together the points mentioned in the *tafasir* we discussed in part one. After all, her being a source of emulation was the reason that God brought forth her example.

Lady Asiyah is a beautiful example of righteous rebellion. It is her defiance of her tyrannical husband that is her saving grace. This point is rather interesting considering that, in discourse concerning Muslim women, there is often the notion of the ideal Muslim woman being subdued, submissive, and obedient.

However, stories like that of Lady Asiyah make it clear that it is only in submission to God and righteousness that submissiveness is seen as a positive feature. With regard to oppressors like Pharaoh who work actively against God, active and righteous rebellion is celebrated and admired. This is the central feature that makes Lady Asiyah so great; that is, her active resistance against her husband in the path of monotheism. It is only in her submission to the One God that she is celebrated, not in her unquestioning submission to her husband, the tyrannical demagogue we know as Pharaoh. She fights the admirable “good” fight.

Rawand Osman, in her *Female Personalities in the Qur'an and Sunna: Examining the Major Sources of Imami Shi'i Islam*, writes

As Allamah Tabataba'i noted...her words followed her heart, and therefore, it is possible that she sets an example for religio-political jihad. Asiya refused to submit to the highest political and religious power, and she withstood tyranny by being steadfast in her faith and prayer. Her jihad is not necessarily an outward one, yet it is the foundation for active jihad. Imam 'Ali said, "The first kind of jihad that will overpower you is the jihad of your hands, then of your tongues, then of your hearts. He whose heart neither knows right conduct nor disapproves of indecency has a heart that has been turned upside down". While jihad with words or actions may be deemed either inevitable or contingent, jihad with the heart is indispensable, and without it the human becomes misshapen.²

Her actions are reminiscent of the following verse of the Qur'an:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَعْطُكُمْ بِوَاحِدَةٍ أَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مِثْلَ خُفٍّ وَفُرَادَى ثُمَّ
تَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِكُمْ مِنْ جِنَّةٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ لَكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ
عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ

Say, 'I give you just a single advice: that you rise up for Allah's sake, in pairs or singly, and then reflect: there is no madness in your companion; he is just a warner to you before [the befalling of] a severe punishment.' (Qur'an 34:46).

² Rawand Osman, *Female Personalities in the Qur'an and Sunna: Examining the Major Sources of Imami Shi'i Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 63-64.

When we read this verse alongside the tradition we narrated in Part I in which Pharaoh accuses Asiyah of being mad and crazy, Asiyah's rising seems all the more in line with the Qur'anic spirit of rebellion and movement for the sake of God.

A woman's independence in her destiny

Another point that can be taken from Asiyah's story is her spiritual independence and autonomy. Even though she is the wife of Pharaoh, her spiritual reality has nothing to do with him; they are spiritually polar opposites. One of the pivotal messages that the Qur'an emphasizes is that one's destiny and spirituality is in one's own hands. In Part I, we saw that Al-Tabari particularly noted the tradition that mentions this spiritual autonomy, and cited the verses of the Qur'an that allude to God's ultimate justice. Regardless of who your spouse is, your actions are your own and you alone will be answerable for them. This idea is mentioned in several verses of the Qur'an:

ثُمَّ تُؤَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

...then every soul shall be recompensed fully for what it has earned, and they will not be wronged (Qur'an 3:161).

الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

Today every soul shall be requited for what it has earned. There will be no injustice today. Indeed Allah is swift at reckoning (Qur'an, 40:17).

وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

No soul does evil except against itself, and no bearer shall bear another's burden; then to your Lord will be your return, whereat He will inform you concerning that about which you used to differ (Qur'an, 6:164).

The phrase "no bearer shall bear another's burden" is quoted by al-Tabari in his commentary in relation to Asiyah's independence from Pharaoh's actions. The phrase is mentioned on four different occasions in the Qur'an. Two of them include:

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا
وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ مَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

Whoever is guided is guided only for [the good of] his own soul, and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its detriment. No bearer shall bear another's burden. We do not punish [any community] until We have sent [it] an apostle (Qur'an, 17:15).

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَإِنْ تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَىٰ حِمْلِهَا لَا يُحْمَلْ
مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ
بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَمَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّىٰ لِنَفْسِهِ وَإِلَى
اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

No bearer shall bear another's burden, and should someone heavily burdened call [another] to carry it, nothing of it will be carried [by anyone] even if he should be a near relative. You can only warn those who fear their Lord in secret and maintain the prayer.

*Whoever purifies himself, purifies only for his own sake,
and to Allah is the return (Qur'an, 35:18).*

The meaning of these verses is self-evident.³ In chapter al-Tahrim, this message is brought forth very specifically, albeit in a different way, taking into account examples of women who were independent in their destinies. The chapter begins by reprimanding the prophets' wives for their behaviour; just because they are the prophets' wives does not mean they are absolved of their unrighteous conduct. The chapter ends by giving the examples of four women, two of whom were doomed to hell because of their unrighteous behaviour, even though they were the Prophet's wives and women of God:

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَتَ نُوحٍ وَامْرَأَتَ لُوطٍ كَانَتَا
تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيا عَنْهُمَا
مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَقِيلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّاخِلِينَ

*Allah cites an example of the faithless: the wife of Noah
and the wife of Lot. They were under two of our
righteous servants, yet they betrayed them. So they did
not avail them in any way against Allah, and it was said
[to them], 'Enter the Fire, along with those who enter
[it]' (Qur'an, 66:10).*

Finally, it gives the examples of the two women who were righteous: Lady Asiyah—a woman of paradise despite her husband's doom to the hellfire—and Lady Maryam—an unmarried woman who achieved her station through her own actions and worship prior to her son, Prophet

³ The phrase is also mentioned in Q.39:7 and Q. 6:164.

Jesus's, birth. Gender and relationships did not help or hurt these women in their path to God; rather, it was their beliefs, actions, and efforts that defined them and absolved or cursed them.

Rejection of material wealth

Another admirable point about Lady Asiyah is her rejection of material wealth, a point that Allamah Tabatabai expands on. It is easy to accept faith when one is disenfranchised and has nothing to lose. A much more meaningful test is when one has everything to lose by embracing the faith and embraces it nevertheless. Despite losing their family, wealth, and life, they submit to God—this is precisely what Lady Asiyah paid for professing her faith in God. Although she was the Queen of Egypt, she rejected the position of power, wealth, and glory, for she saw something that was better: proximity to Allah. She rejected every possible material pleasure to have something was more worthy in her eyes, which was nothing other than a home in paradise in proximity to her Lord.

Her rejection of material wealth and her request for a home with God are reminiscent of the following two verses of the Qur'an:

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ

Do not extend your glance toward what We have provided certain groups of them as a glitter of the life of this world, so that We may test them thereby. The provision of your Lord is better and more lasting (Qur'an 20:131).

وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَّعِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزَيَّنَّتْهَا وَمَا عِنْدَ
 اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

*Whatever things you have been given are only the wares
 of the life of this world and its glitter, and what is with
 Allah is better and more lasting. Will you not exercise
 your reason? (Qur'an 28:60)*

The first verse mentions the “provision of your Lord”, which evokes the image of the home that Lady Asiyah requested—a home or shelter being one of the most basic types of provisions. The second verse mentions the same idea regarding that which is “with” or “before” (*inda*) God. Indeed, Lady Asiyah applied reason: she knew that what was with her Lord was better and longer lasting than the “glitter of the life of this world”. The phrase *al-hayat al-dunya*, referring to the material world, literally means “the lower life”. She chose the higher life and rejected the lower one. The lower life, the *al-hayat al-dunya* was nothing but material wealth and power.

Asking for a home

What is beautiful is the type of provision Lady Asiyah asks God for in verse 11 of chapter al-Tahrim. *Bayt* in Arabic generally means home. She implores God for a true home, a place of refuge in proximity to Him. In *al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Qur'an*, Hasan Mustafawi says that *bayt* originally means staying somewhere during the night.⁴ This is also the term that God chose to describe the ka'ba. In 3:96, He says, “Indeed the

⁴Hasan Mustafawi, *Al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Qur'an*, Volume 1, 358. Accessed with *Jami al-Tafasir*, NOOR Software.

first house to be set up for mankind is the one at Bakkah⁵, blessed and a guidance for all nations.” The word ‘home’ denotes a place of rest and refuge, and as such, it is reasonable that Asiyah would ask for such a place from the tiring oppression she was suffering from. It also makes sense that ‘bayt’ be the term that God would choose for His house, the kaaba, as the first place designated for worship for mankind. After all, it is beyond no doubt that worship and refuge with God is the best type of rest and refuge. The special relationship that night has with worship makes the word *bayt* even more appropriate in this usage.

That Lady Asiyah asked for a home is extremely thought-provoking as it is clear that in this world she was a spiritual refugee; her only home was that of her husband’s—a place that was not her own, and neither could she be comfortable in it. In the verse, she specifically asks for a house for herself (*li*), and, considering how she had no home of her own in this world, it is not surprising that she ask for a house in heaven where she could truly be free to express her beliefs and be comfortable. After all, what is a home without comfort and autonomy?

In relation to this, Osman makes an interesting point. The only other time *ibne li* (build for me) is mentioned in the Qur’an is from none other than Asiyah’s husband, the Pharaoh himself. She writes:

It is interesting that request that God build her a home in heaven, is similar in form only to Pharaoh’s words, “Pharaoh said, ‘Ha-ma-n, build for me a tower, that haply so I may reach the cords, the cords of the heavens, and look upon Moses’ God; for I think that he is a liar”

⁵ The ancient name of Mecca.

[40: 36–7]. While she asked God for a home near Himself, Pharaoh asked Ha-ma-n for a tower that he may go to the heaven and check if Moses' God really exists. These verses not only show Asiya's faith, but the contrast with the silliness of Pharaoh's words reveals a disparity in their understanding of Moses' message.⁶

Her status as martyr

In addition to the reasons stated above for her lofty status, Lady Asiyah achieved the status of becoming a martyr—a status considered to be of utmost importance and value in Islam. The word *shahid*, meaning both “witness” and “martyr”, could also denote the spiritual visions in which Lady Asiyah witnessed paradise. In gnostic literature, *shuhud* refers to spiritual visions of reality. However, she was also a martyr. Recognizing her as a martyr who gave up her life in the way of God is an interesting way to think of one of the four women of Paradise; Lady Asiyah and Lady Fatimah, according to the popular Shi'i view,⁷ are the two women from among these four whom have become martyrs in the path of God. Regarding those who have been slain in the way of God, the Qur'an says:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ
رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ
بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُونَ

⁶ Osman, 63–64.

⁷ According to the most common view of Twelver-Shi'i's, the Lady Fatimah died as a result to injuries to her rib.

Do not suppose those who were slain in the way of Allah to be dead; no, they are living and provided for near their Lord, exulting in what Allah has given them out of His grace, and rejoicing for those who have not yet joined them from [those left] behind them, that they will have no fear, nor will they grieve (Qur'an 3:169–170).

The verse evokes an image very much in concordance with verse eleven of Surah al-Tahrim, where we are left with no doubt that Lady Asiyah lives provided for by her Lord.

Conclusion

There are numerous lessons we can take from the examples or *mathal* that God has provided us with in the Qur'an. As guidance is the Qur'an's primary goal, we need to focus on these examples for their relevance to our lives and the ways in which they are meaningful lessons in our path to achieving God's pleasure. Although not much has been said about Lady Asiyah in our *tafsir* and hadith literature, we have enough to paint a vague picture of her life and the torture she undertook under the tyrannical reign of Pharaoh. We have more than enough to benefit from her being brought forth as an example, and there is much to admire of her unrelenting piety.

With the limited resources available to us, we can still gain an accurate idea of the status that she reached with God and learn from her life in several ways, some of which we have noted here. She has been used as an example by many in her plight for the freedom of her faith under an arrogant husband, and her righteous rebellion in the service of God serves as an example that we can hopefully emulate. Understanding that

our destiny is in our own hands, that our actions are ours alone, and that having a husband who is a demagogue and tyrant should not be a barrier to our faith is indeed inspiring. It should come as no surprise then that the rebellious Queen of Pharaoh is one of the women of paradise.

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QUR'ANIC METHODS OF RELIGIOUS PROPAGATION FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF ALLAMAH TABATABA'I

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TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Propagation is a prevalent means of communicating thoughts, culture, and any message to other people. Various schools of thought have traditionally conveyed their messages to their addressees through different means. The best source of propagation is the Qur'an. To perfect this subject, Prophetic Sunnah and conduct is used. In Qur'anic propagation, the following principles overshadow other methods of propagation: commitment to morality and values, significance of role models who were pioneers, correspondence between actions and sayings, indirect methods of propagation in practice, and taking situations into account which nowadays requires us to make use of movies, stories, novels and different media as a means of propagation as well as invoking the intellect and inviting people to think, use simplified speech, recognizing the capabilities and competencies of the addressees and treating them wisely, using explicitness and clarification, impartiality and avoiding discrimination, and so forth. Using Allamah Tabataba'i's views, this paper investigates the above-mentioned methods and merits of Qur'anic propagation.

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1. Introduction and statement of the problem

Propagation consists of important and interlocking methods – forming a whole – for mobilizing and directing social and individual forces to influence their personalities, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings to achieve a specific objective – be it political, military, and cultural; legitimate or illegitimate. Propagation is a tool that can be used for various purposes, depending on the propagator's goal. In this sense, propagation has a wide range and anyone can act as one.

In the second sense, which is based on the divine view, propagation refers to conveying the divine message. In this case, not everyone deserves to be propagator; rather, he or she should be familiar with the divine message, and then convey it to others.

Unlike the first sense which employs every method either legitimate or illegitimate, the second sense of propagation only adopts appropriate and legitimate methods, and this involves the propagator's familiarity with proper methods of propagation. This paper deals with some of them from the perspective of Allamah Tabataba'i, who is rightfully a propagator of Islam. In other words, considering Allamah Tabataba'i's views in his Qur'anic commentary *al-Mizan*, this article answers the following question:

What are key Qur'anic methods of call and propagation from Allamah Tabataba'i's point of view?

2. The literal meaning of propagation

Propagation (or doing tabligh) is a frequently used word in the Qur'an. It is derived from the word *balagha*, and the words *balaagha* and *bulugh* mean reaching the goal – be it in terms of time, place, or a specific

issue, as indicated in *Lisan-ul-'Arab* (Ibn Manzhur, 8/420).³ Likewise, there lie meanings of adequacy and sufficiency in *balagha* as Farahidi referred to it in his book *al-'Ayn*: “بلاغ و تبليغ اى الكفايه” meaning “balagha” and “tabligh” mean adequacy and sufficiency.⁴ In his book *Mufradat*, Raghīb considered the root *balagha* to have both meanings.⁵ The essence of this word is being elevated to a higher level, and this refers to the difference between *bulugh* and *wusul*, because it is never said, “وصلت الثمار، وصل الصبي، وصل اشده”. This way, the sound reason for choosing the words derived from *balagha* for all following uses in the Qur'an is revealed: “And when he had attained his maturity,” (Yusuf, 22), “And when the children among you have attained maturity,” (Nur, 59), “And when he attained to working with him,” (Saffat, 102), “and when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years,” (Ahqaf, 15), “and the hearts rose up to the throats,” (Ahzab, 10).⁶

Therefore, propagation means inviting somebody to a religion or ideology and leading him to the way intended by the propagator.

3. Background of propagation

God, the Glorified: the first propagator

Propagation and call to God has been ingrained in the root of divine religions; that is, Unity. As God does not need others to prove His holy essence; He does not need them to prove the requirements of His unity, including inviting people to Himself. At first, He was responsible for

³ بلغ الشيء يبلغ بلوغاً و بلاغاً: وصل و انتهى

⁴ Farahidi, 4/422

⁵ Raghīb, 144

⁶ Mustafawi, 1/333.

calling people to Himself, as occurred in the World of *Dharr* (the world before this material world): *“And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness as to themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! We bear witness,”* (A’raf, 172). In this regard, Allamah Tabataba’i wrote, “If one ponders on verse no. 172 of the chapter A’raf, he realizes that this verse refers in details to a fact that was mentioned briefly in the above verse. It refers to the human origin of mankind before coming to this world. God has differentiated between people and had made every man bear witness as to himself, *“Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes.”*⁷

Propagation: the duty of the prophets

In the second place, God has assigned the prophets to carry out this great and sacred task, saying, *“O Prophet! Truly We have sent you as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and Warner, And as the one who invites to God by His leave, and as a lamp spreading light,”* (Ahzab, 45-46).

The Prophet’s invitation to God is the very act of inviting people to the belief in One God, which necessitates belief in the divine religion. The reason why God has made his calling to the divine religion contingent upon God’s permission is to indicate his prophetic mission⁸

The main responsibility of prophets is to convey the divine message to people. In the story of the Prophet Noah, he told the upper class and chiefs of his tribe who called him a misled person, *“I deliver to you the messages of my Lord and I am a faithful adviser to you,”* (A’raf, 68).

⁷ Tabataba’i, 8/306.

⁸ *ibid*, 16/330.

That is, as I am a prophet sent to you, I have no duty but to propagate the messages of God.

This is repeated about the Prophet Hud, the Prophet Salih (a.s.), the Prophet Shu'aib, albeit a bit differently.

In verse no. 66 of the Qur'anic chapter *al-Mai'dah*, conveying the message of God is considered the main duty of the Prophet, and if he fails to do it, he would not fulfill his prophetic mission: "*O' Messenger! Proclaim [the message] which has been sent to you from your Lord. And if you do, then you have not fulfilled His mission,*" (Ma'idah, 67). According to Allamah Tabataba'i:

Although the Prophet Muhammad has many titles, he was addressed as Messenger, because this verse concerns propagation, and the appropriate title for this occasion is Messenger, since the use of this title itself indicates the reason for the command; that is, the necessity of propagation which was pointed out to the Prophet. This indicates that the Messenger of God has no responsibility but to proclaim and convey the message and the one who accepts this responsibility will definitely implement its strategy which is propagation.⁹

Commenting on this verse, "*For only the delivery of the message is [incumbent] on you,*" (Ra'd, 40), Allamah Tabataba'i wrote: "You [the Holy Prophet] do not have any responsibility except a clear propagation void of any ambiguity and secretiveness, because you are a Messenger of

⁹ ibid, 6/42.

God and such a messenger does not have any responsibility except this.”¹⁰

3.3 Propagation: the duty of all people

After the Prophet of Islam, neither a prophet with a new Shariat (i.e. Arch-prophets) nor a prophet propagating the Shariat of another prophet is sent to people, and it is the duty of the Infallible Imams and during the occultation of the Infallible Imams, the responsibility of religious scholars to propagate the message of Prophet Muhammad. Hence, propagation enjoys a high status, and the real propagators of Islam, in fact, convey the message of Prophet Muhammad, who himself conveys the divine message.

The Qur'an grants such a high status to propagation that it considers guiding one person equal to guiding all people as according to it, killing one person is tantamount to killing all humans:

If anyone slew a person - unless it be for [punishing for] murder or mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people,”
(Ma'idah, 32).

In *al-Mizan*, there are numerous hadiths that define life in this verse as intellectual life, guidance, and rectification which result from propagation, although on the surface, this verse means saving a man from being drowned, burnt, or killed by another person. For example, in his book *al-Kafi*, on his own authority, Kulayni narrated from Fudail ibn Yasaar, who asked Imam al-Sadiq, “What did God mean when He

¹⁰ ibid, 11/ 378

said, ‘if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people?’” The sixth Imam replied, “It means saving a person from being burnt and drowned.” I asked him again, “Does it mean saving a person from error and corruption?” He answered, “This is the best esoteric interpretation of this verse.”¹¹

This prominent position has always attracted the best people to itself, and they have wholeheartedly and sincerely tried to keep divine guidance alive and guide the ready hearts to the Unity of God.

The Qur’an has always invited elite Muslims to hold this privileged position: *“And let there may arise out of you a group of people inviting [people] to all that is good, enjoining the good, and forbidding the evil,”* (Qur’an, 3:104).

The most effective means of inviting people to an action is knowledge, and when action is taken and its effect is observed, it becomes the best teacher that teaches man that knowledge. All this gives impetus to a righteous society with beneficial knowledge and good deeds to protect and preserve its knowledge and civilization as effectively as possible. If members of that society see that somebody violates this knowledge, they will guide him back to knowledge and do not leave the person who has deviated from the right path alone. They do not permit him to fall into the abyss of wickedness, evil and corruption; every member of society confronts that deviated person and forbids him from corruption.¹²

For any believer to fulfill his duty and responsibility properly, he should make use of various methods for propagation.

¹¹ Allamah Tabataba’i, 5/322

¹² Allamah Tabataba’i, 3/372

4. Main methods of propagation from Allamah Tabataba'i's perspective

Allamah Tabataba'i considered the following the main methods of propagation:

4.1 Introducing role models

A method of propagation which can be psychologically influential is to introduce good and bad models. Hence, a propagator can actualize the reality.

According to Allamah Tabataba'i, many methods have been used in the Qur'an to guide people and propagate Islam; one of them is introducing role models. According to him, "The Noble Qur'an itself has used these dialectical techniques; that is, logical reasoning, argumentation, and admonition. It has also invited the Ummah to follow its example; that is, they should prove the theoretical issues through logical reasoning, and in practical philosophy they should argue based on the indisputable or the statements that contain a lesson and warning. In defining its purposes, the Holy Qur'an has validated the Prophetic Sunnah and considered Prophet Muhammad a role model whose example Muslims must follow. Thus, they recorded and preserved his orders and words, and followed his conduct as a student follows his master's scientific conduct."¹³

This method was used in the Qur'an; Prophet Muhammad and Prophet Abraham were explicitly introduced as the best role models: *"Indeed there is in the Messenger of God an excellent example [to follow] for anyone whose hope is in God and the Final Day,"* (Ahzab, 21).

¹³ ibid, 5/444

According to Allamah Tabataba'i, "The word 'example' (اسوه) means 'following somebody', *في رسول الله* means 'as regards the Messenger of God', and example as regards the Messenger of God means 'following him'. The reason for mentioning *لكم في رسول الله* which means 'you must follow the Messenger of God' and which involves continuity, is to indicate that this is a permanent duty and you must always follow and obey him.

This verse means that a requirement of the prophethood of Messenger of God and your belief in him is your following his path in both sayings and actions. You can see that he is enduring so many hardships and fighting many battles in the way of God; you must follow in his footsteps.¹⁴

Likewise, as for Prophet Abraham, God said in the Qur'an, "*There is for you an excellent example [to follow] in Abraham and those with him,*" (Mumtahana, 4). This verse means that you – Muslims – must follow Prophet Abraham in his conduct and characteristics as well as believers (Allamah Tabataba'i, 19/230). Sometimes the Qur'an introduces role models implicitly, for example, "*And [remember Prophet] Ayyub (Jacob), when He cried to his Lord, 'Truly distress has seized me, and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful,'*" (Anbiya, 83).

In the above verse, there is a reference to the way Prophet Ayyub talked to God. After talking of his disease, he only said, "*and You are the Most Merciful the merciful*" and he did not make request to God imperiously. This is a perfect example to follow, and God presents it to people.

¹⁴ Allamah Tabataba'i, 16/289

4.1.1 Variety of role models in the Qur'an

In the Qur'an, we come to know of various role models, each of whom enjoyed special characteristics and made use of numerous methods of training and propagation to guide people.

Sometimes the Qur'an introduces men who are role models like Prophets Idris (Andreas) and Dawood (David):

And mention in the Scripture of Idris. Surely he was a truthful man, a prophet," (Maryam, 56), and sometime it introduces prominent women: "O Maryam! God has chosen you and purified you and chosen you over the women of all nations," (Ale-Imran, 42).

In Arabic, if the word اصطفاء (or 'choosing') becomes transitive with على ('over'), it refers to superiority. This اصطفاء is different from اصطفاء without the word على, which means submission. Thus, choosing her over all women the world refers to her superiority to other women.¹⁵

The Qur'anic role models sometimes emerges from the lowest social class; for example, Prophets Moses, Ayyub, and Hud, and occasionally from the court; for example, Prophet Solomon, the believer of the Pharaoh's nation, and Asiyah – Pharaoh's wife. Likewise, some Qur'anic role models such as the believer of the Pharaoh's nation and People of Cave propagated Islam for a short time, and some others such as Prophets Noah and Luqman were undertaking this mission for decades or even centuries. Some invited people to Islam in comfort (such as Prophet Solomon) and others in extreme hardship; for

¹⁵ Allamah Tabataba'i, 3/188

example, Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) in the jail of the Egyptian king and Prophet Muhammad under pressure of the polytheists.

In the Qur'an, sometimes an individual and sometimes a group is introduced as a role model to human society; an exemplary group such as People of the Cave: *"They were youths who believed in their Lord, and We advanced them in guidance,"* (Kahf, 13). The Men of the Cave were youths who had such a belief in God that He was satisfied with them. If such a belief were not meant, it would not be attributed to them, and God would not say *"who believed in their Lord."* Likewise, in *"We advanced them in guidance,"* after faith, guidance accompanies increase in belief which causes man to be guided to whatever results in satisfaction of God.¹⁶

4.2 Eloquently conveying the message

The close relation between form and content and the effect of proper form of propagation on attracting intellects and hearts are issues that do not require much discussion and argumentation. The matchless eloquence of the Qur'an – the miracle of Prophet Muhammad – indicates this as well. That is why God points this out to the Messenger of God and tells him to talk to people in an influential way: *"And speak to them articulately [so that it] reaches their inner-selves,"* (Nisa, 63). That is, tell them a word that penetrates their hearts so that they understand what you tell, know the evil results of their behaviour and the fact that if it is proved they are hypocrite, a severe punishment due to God's wrath will be sent upon them (Allamah Tabataba'i, 4/440).

¹⁶ Allamah Tabataba'i, 13/250

4.3 Using indirect methods

In addition to making use of direct methods, propagators sometimes use indirect methods for achieving more effects or for other reasons; an example is arousing feelings and emotions.

4.3.1 Arousing emotions

Arousing feelings and emotions is among the effective indirect methods of propagation, and the Holy Qur'an frequently benefits from it to convey its message. For instance, to warn people of unfair division of inheritance, the Qur'an evokes paternal emotions and makes them imagine their orphaned children:

And let those who if they left behind weak offspring would be afraid for them also fear [in their behaviour toward orphans]. So let them fear God, and speak justly," (Nisa, 9).

On the surface, the sentence '*those who if they left behind weak offspring would be afraid for them also fear [in their behaviour toward orphans]*' means the necessity of kindness and affection for the orphaned and weak children who are not under guardianship of anybody to manage their affairs, work for their benefits and against their losses, and keep abjectness away from them. It should be noted that the issue of frightening and threatening in this verse is not limited to those who already have weak children because God said, 'if they left behind', not 'if they left behind their weak offspring'. Thus, this sentence addresses all those in such a situation; that is, those who are of mercy and humanity and are affectionate toward the weak and orphaned offspring; such people are true humans. Consequently, this

sentence can mean: "If people are of humanity, they should fear God as regards orphans, because the orphaned children of other people – like their orphaned children – are weak and deserve compassion, so people should be worried about them" and their situation should be monitored so as not to be oppressed and their rights not violated. Thus, if somebody worries about and fears abjectness, he or she should try to prevent it.

In this verse, people are not ordered to have compassion and the like; rather, they are ordered to fear God and be pious only to warn them that what you do with others' orphans, namely seizing their property and violating their rights, will be done to your offspring after your death. The Qur'an points out that whatever you inflict on orphans will be inflicted on your offspring after your death.¹⁷

4.4 Argumentation

This method of propagation used by in the Qur'an has advanced logical, scientific arguments as regards various issues, and in many occasions it has invited its opponents to put forward arguments. *"And they say: 'None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian.' They are their [vain] desires. Say: 'offer your argument if you are truthful', (e.g. al-Baqara, 111).* The verse dismissed this possibility by fighting them and saying, "You have no strong argument." That is, God ordered the Prophet to demand them a reason by saying, "offer your argument if you are truthful." The sentence, *"Or have they taken for worship [other] gods besides Him? Say, 'Offer your argument. This (the Qur'an) is the Reminder for those with me and the Reminder for those before me",*

¹⁷ Allamah Tabataba'i, 4/201

(Anbiya, 24) is also an example of prohibition through presenting the reason or evidence which is a technical term of debate. It means that one demands reason of the other side of the debate that claims something, and also says that the reason why I demand a reason of you is that I can present an argument against yours.

In this verse, God ordered His Messenger respond to polytheists who adopted a god other than God by saying “*offer your argument*,” because claim cannot be accepted without offering arguments. On the basis of intellect, man cannot accept and trust such a claim, and the reason why I demand an argument is the divine scriptures sent down by God; these scriptures do not accept your claim; rather, they strongly oppose idol-worship. There is the Qur’an which is a Reminder, a divine scripture, and a contemporary book, as well as other divine scriptures such as the Torah and the Bible, which all consider deity and worship specific to God.

Or it means that in the Qur’an which has being revealed to me for the mankind contemporary with me and in the past divine scriptures which were Reminder for the past people, whatever concerns worship is exclusive to God, and all these divine scriptures consider Him only deserving of deity.¹⁸

4.5 Open debate

A propagation method of divine leaders and prophets for confronting their opponents was open and logical debate, examples of which can be found in the words of all prophets. For example, according to Allamah

¹⁸ Allamah Tabataba’i, 14/274

Tabataba'i, Prophet Noah made use of all methods of debate to convince the polytheists:

They said: O Noah! Indeed you have disputed with us and lengthened dispute with us, therefore bring us what you promised us [divine punishment] if you are from among the truthful, (Hud, 32).

This verse concerns the words of polytheistic leaders of Prophet Noah's tribe. After their failure to debate logically and dismissed his argument and the doctrine he invited them to, they uttered these words. In fact, they wanted to consider him unable, as they said: "You cannot do anything, and cannot bring the chastisement you threatened us with." What they mean by 'what you promised us' was the severe punishment which Prophet Noah had warned them of at the beginning of his call to God...

The following verse indicates the long duration of his call to God, "So he remained among them a thousand years save fifty years," (*Ankabut*, 14). Likewise, this verse shows the great variety of his propagation methods, "He said: O my Lord! Surely I have called my people night and day! But my call has only made them flee more. And whenever I have called them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, cover themselves with their garments, and persist and are puffed up with pride. Then surely I called to them aloud. Then surely I spoke to them in public and I spoke to them in private," (*Nuh*, 5-9).

Thus, the arguments of Prophet Noah in the above verses were offered throughout hundreds of years (Allamah Tabataba'i, 10/215).

4.6. Relating to the people

This method is mostly of use when one debates with his opponents. Preserving his correct belief, the propagator accords with the words of his addressees to an extent. With his impartiality and flexibility, he shatters their false beliefs and argues for his true viewpoints in a timely manner.

Sometimes to reveal the truth and achieve the purpose, one must succumb to the opposing side outwardly, and then with a step-by-step approach, prepare him for accepting the truth. If the propagator wants to invite the addressee to the truth without his being prepared and at the very beginning, he may face an adverse reaction. The Qur'an instructs people to speak in accordance with their beliefs. A prime example of this is seen in the debates of Prophet Abraham with the star-worshippers. At first he accompanied them, then expressed his views, and finally conveyed his message. Prophet Abraham introduced himself as the worshipper of the moon, stars, and the sun. However, Allamah Tabataba'i referred to verses 43-47 of the chapter *Maryam* on Prophet Abraham's offering argument to his father:

O my father! Truly the knowledge has come to me which has not come to you, therefore follow me, I will guide you to a right path. O my father! Do not worship Satan, surely Satan is disobedient to the Beneficent God. O' my father! Surely I fear that a punishment from the Beneficent God may afflict you so that you may be a friend of the Satan. He said: Do you dislike my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not desist, I will certainly stone you, and leave me for a time. He said: Peace be on you, I will

*pray to my Lord to forgive you; surely He is ever
Affectionate to me.*

Tabataba'i infers from these verses that Prophet Abraham knew the truth and had faith in the One, Who manages his affairs, does him good, and reveres him excessively is verily God, the Glorified. Therefore, when he said the stars, the moon, and the sun are "*my Lord*," he only wanted to succumb to his enemies so that his words might be comprehensible to them. He outwardly considered himself having the same belief as them and assumed that their superstitious beliefs were true, and then through well-founded statements, he proved their misguided belief. This kind of argumentation can best cause the enemies to be fair, prevent from their revolt and prejudice, and prepare them for hearing the truth.¹⁹

4.7 Question and answer

Another method of propagation is question and answer. In many cases and to prove such important truths as Unity of God, negation of polytheism, and resurrection, the Qur'an uses the question and answer method for propagation. A prime example of this method is when someone brought decomposed bones to Prophet Muhammad and asked him, "*Who can resurrect them?*" In response, he said, "*...He will give them life Who created them for the first time...*" (Yaseen, 79) and "*Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them? Yes! And He is the Creator, the Knower,*" (Yaseen, 81).

Verse no. 81 includes a rhetorical question, and it advances the very argument of verse no. 79; that is, "*...He will give them life Who created*

¹⁹ Allamah Tabataba'i, 7/175

them for the first time...” The only difference is that the statement in the verse no. 81 is more comprehensible than that in verse no. 79 because the latter refers to the creation of man as a proof of God’s ability to resurrect him, but the former offers the creation of the heavens and the earth as a proof of His power since according to the voice of conscience and the word of God: “*Certainly the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of the men,*” (Ghafir, 57).

In fact, these Qur’anic verses mean how one can dare to say that God, Who created the vast heavens and the earth and designed the astonishing system of universe with its bloodcurdling and amazing sub-systems of which the existing human systems are some simple examples, cannot recreate people. No one can dare to say so, because God is an Omnipotent and all-Knowing Creator.²⁰

4.8 Moderation in relationships

An effective way of conveying the divine message is practicing moderation in relationship with others. The Qur’an points out that Islam and belief in Unity are based on human innate disposition; it can lead man to the right path in his life. According to the Qur’an, the basis of Islam is human innate disposition; no one doubts its judgments and everyone considers his or her perfect life to be the very issues that his innate disposition (*fitrah*) decrees and leads him to. This innate disposition decrees that the only thing based on which man’s individual and social are guaranteed is monotheism, and defending and propagating it, as well as protecting it are the legitimate rights of humankind. People are to demand these rights by any possible means.

²⁰ Allamah Tabataba’i, 17/113

Since a person may go to extremes, the Qur'an has shown the way of moderation. It first demanded these rights by the mere call to Islam, and has ordered Muslims to tolerate their being persecuted by pagans; second, Muslims must defend the lives, property and territory of Muslims, and repress the aggressors; and third, they must declare war and initiate battles that are in defense of humanity and monotheism. Islam never declared a war before it invited people to the right path leniently and giving them ultimatum as this is evident in the history of Islam and biography of Prophet Muhammad, whose conduct was so. God said:

*Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best. Indeed your Lord knows best those who stray from His way, and He knows best those who are guided. (Nahl, 125).*²¹

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, God said: "*Adopt [a policy of] excusing [the faults of people], bid what is right, and turn away from the ignorant.*" (A'raf, 199). "اخذ" (derived from the word أخذ, meaning 'Hold to something'). This refers to practicing something and not abandoning it; thus, 'Hold to forgiveness' means [O' Prophet!] always conceal the evils others do to you, give up the right of revenge that social wisdom prescribes, and never abandon this practice. Of course, this applies to the evils done to Prophet Muhammad when his rights were violated, but when others' rights are violated, the intellect does not prescribe overlooking it because forgiveness makes people commit sins, and results in serious violation of people's rights and damaged reputations.

²¹ Allamah Tabataba'i, 2/68

All Qur'anic verses prohibiting Muslims from oppression, corruption, assistance for oppressors, inclination to and humbleness before them, as well as all verses involving Islamic laws and principles prevents Muslims from overlooking the above vices.

Hence, what is meant by “*Hold to forgiveness*” is overlooking the evils done to the Prophet himself as was his conduct; throughout his life, he never got revenge on anyone.

The above discussion is based on others' interpretation on the word ‘عفو’ as referring to forgiveness; however, in some narrations from Imam Sadiq, forgiveness means moderation (Kulayni, 4/53). This comprehensive commentary suits the content of the above verse. Although the first commentary involves repetition through the sentence (“And turn away from the ignorant”), in the second commentary, there is no repetition (because the sentence *خذ العفو* has one meaning and the sentence *واعرض عن المشركين* has another.)²²

4.9 Recognizing the capabilities of the addressees

According to Allamah Tabataba'i, there are various ways leading to God in terms of their perfection and imperfection, sparseness and prevalence, and the extent of their proximity to the source of truth and the right path; for example, the way of Islam, faith, worship, sincerity and humbleness. In contrast, there is paganism, polytheism, denial of God, revolt, and sins which are at various levels of misguidedness. In the Qur'an, God said about both groups, “*And for [each group] are degrees according to what they did, and that He shall pay them back fully their deeds and they shall not be wronged,*” (*Ahqaf*, 19).

²² *ibid*, 8/397

This resembles the divine teachings the intellects have different understandings of because of people's various levels, as the following verse says:

He sends down water from the skies, and the channels flow, each according to its measure: But the torrent bears away to foam that mounts up to the surface. Even so, from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, to make ornaments or utensils therewith, there is a scum likewise. Thus, God [by parables] shows Truth and Falsehood. For the scum disappears like forth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth. Thus, God sets forth parables, (Ra'd, 17).

Commenting on "Invite [all] to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and debate with them in ways that are best and most gracious," (Nahl, 125), Allamah Tabataba'i also referred to the difference of capabilities, saying, "No doubt in this verse, the three conditions of 'wisdom', 'preaching' and 'debate' concern the style of speech; the Messenger of God was ordered to invite people to Islam in one of the above three ways each of which is a particular method for the call to Islam although 'debate' in its particular meaning is not considered a way of propagation."²³

The above verse keeps silent regarding the use of 'wisdom', 'preaching' or 'debate' because recognizing which method to use is the responsibility of the propagator himself; the most effective method is to be used. As the circumstance arises, it is possible that all three ways, two

²³ Allamah Tabataba'i, 12/371

methods, or one of them is resorted to. The reason why this was mentioned is that it is not correct to assume that on the basis of the above verse, the Messenger of God was ordered to use of all three methods in all situations, because the verse does not imply that all three methods should be used for all addresses and in all situations.²⁴

4.10 Maintaining equality and avoiding discrimination

Maintaining equality and avoiding discrimination plays a vital role in conveying the divine message. God said in the Qur'an,

And say: "I believe in the Books which God has sent down; and I was commanded to establish justice among you. God is our Lord and your Lord: for us [are the outcomes of] our deeds, and for you are yours. There is no contention between us and you. God will bring us together, and to Him is [our] return, (Shura, 15).

In the above verse, God said, 'Tell people I believe in all scriptures sent down by God, and guarantee equality in confirmation of and belief in the divine scriptures.' By divine scriptures, it refers to the revealed books of divine religions.

The sentence "and I was commanded to establish justice among you" means that I must have equal attitude to all, I must not prefer the strong to the weak, the rich to the poor, and the renowned to the layperson, and I must not consider the white superior to the black, Arabs to non-Arabs, and Hashimites or Quraishites to others. The call targets on the public, and considers all people equal.

²⁴ ibid

The sentence “I believe in the Books which God has sent down,” also refers to considering all revealed books equal in that all people must believe in God and the divine religion.

Finally, the sentence “and I was commanded to establish justice among you,” involves considering all people equal; all should be invited so as to know about the revealed divine law.²⁵

4.11 Openness and being clear

An effective propagation method is to clarify the message and make it explicit. God said in the Qur'an, *“Therefore reveal openly what you are commanded, and turn away from polytheists,”* (Hijr, 94).

The words فصل صدع، فرق، mean the same. The purpose of the verse was to announce the Prophet's mission. Hence, the verse means: ‘Now that everything has been said and you [the Prophet] are ordered to overlook [their faults], you introduced yourself as the one who warns them of Our chastisement for those who divided [Scripture into arbitrary parts] (Hijr, 90), you should not fear anything. Announce the truth and make your call public.’

Thus, the verse, *“Truly, We suffice you against those who scoff at you,”* (Hijr, 95) gives reason for the verse, *“Therefore reveal openly what you are commanded, and turn away from polytheists,”* (Hijr, 94) as its words informs us implicitly that those who scoff at the Prophet are those who divided [Scripture into arbitrary parts] which were referred to above in the verse no. 90. In a word, this verse means: ‘Now that everything has

²⁵ Allamah Tabataba'i, 18/33

been said, do not hesitate, make your call to the truth public and turn away from polytheists'.²⁶

4.12 Correspondence between words and action

Commenting on the verse, "*O' you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do?*" (*Saff*, 2), Allamah Tabataba'i says, "Although it seems that all believers are rebuked in this verse, it concerns the correspondence between words and action, and breaking the promise. This interpretation is right, because when man's outward appearance does not correspond to his inner state, he will do any deed."²⁷

He also added, "God, the Almighty, is enraged most by one's saying something which he does not act upon, because it is a sign of hypocrisy."

Saying something one does not act upon is different from not acting upon what one said before; sometimes one cannot manage to act upon what he said before or he breaks his promise. But sometimes from the very beginning when one gives a promise, he intends not to fulfill it; the latter is considered hypocrisy, not the former. The former results from lack of endeavour and weak willpower which are in themselves vices and obstacles to man's salvation because God has made man's salvation contingent on his doing good deeds voluntarily and gaining some rewards; the keys to these two are having great determination and effort. If we encounter someone who gives a promise but fails to fulfill it and

²⁶ Allamah Tabataba'i, 12/195

²⁷ Allamah Tabataba'i, 19/248

breaks it, we understand he has weak will-power; such a person is not hoped to reach salvation.²⁸

4.13 Commitment to morality and values

Commitment to morality and values are so important in religious call that in the Qur'an, sometimes self-purification precedes teaching in terms of significance, *"It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered a Messenger from among themselves, to read His Signs (Qur'anic verses) to them, to purify them, and to teach them Scripture and Wisdom,"* (Jum'ah, 2). To Allamah Tabataba'i, the reason why self-purification is mentioned before teaching in this verse is that it discusses the Prophet's training the believers where self-purification is more important than teaching.²⁹

Hence, Islam includes the perfect degree of all praiseworthy characteristics and virtues, and Prophet Muhammad – as its propagator – embodied all of them. He said, *"I was sent as a prophet to perfect noble traits of character,"* (Nuri, 11/188).

5. Conclusion

According to Allamah Tabataba'i, propagation and invitation to values are processes that started when mankind was created by God first. To this end, God himself was the first one to invite mankind to the religious values; He then gave this great responsibility to the divine prophets. After the prophets and in the course of time, the Imams, Friends of God, and religious scholars assumed the responsibility of religious propagation and call.

²⁸ Allamah Tabataba'i, 19/249

²⁹ Allamah Tabataba'i, 19/264

As a divine religion, Islam devoted considerable attention to propagation. Numerous verses – directly and indirectly – deal with propagation, its methods and rules, and its spread and limitations. Allamah Tabataba'i discussed the following either explicitly or implicitly; propagating belief in God, propagation as the main responsibility of the divine prophets, propagation as the responsibility of all people, extensiveness of propagation, methods and rules of propagation, perseverance in propagation, and limitations on effectiveness of propagation. According to him, the Qur'an has made use of various methods for propagation, and these methods are mostly considered direct ways of propagation. Adhering to values and principles are so important that in propagation by the Prophet, self-purification was considered more significant than and preferred to teaching. Nevertheless, under some circumstances, it used such indirect methods as arousing feelings and emotions to achieve positive results.

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COMMUNITY BUILDING IN ISLAM, PART V¹

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: Having a shared identity working towards a joint cause is vital for a healthy community. In doing so, a community must share specific qualities in order to be successful. This series of papers offers a glimpse into the importance of community-building and Prophet Muhammad's efforts to implement it. Character traits such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, unity, moderation, humbleness, enjoining good and forbidding wrong, and maintaining a healthy balance in working for this world to eventually lead to a blissful hereafter were illustrated. Another important quality of a successful community is their implementation of justice, also one of the principles of Shi'i Islam. The previous article expanded on Allah's justice in the Qur'an, early controversy on the meaning of Allah's justice, the Shi'a view of justice, the necessity for establishing social justice, having just leaders, and examples of justice observed by the Ahlul Bayt. This article studies status of rationality, knowledge and experience in an Islamic community.

We have been studying the different qualities necessary for an Islamic Community and have said that an Islamic Community is firstly a

¹ This series is based on a nine-session course conducted by the author on Community Building at the Islamic Centre of England in London in 2009.

community which is balanced and moderate. Then we spoke about the importance of an Islamic Community being truthful, or committed to observing the truth in every aspect; and being committed to justice, whether on a personal, individual, or community level.

The need for rationality in an Islamic Community

As individuals need to make decisions, perform good actions, plan for the future, and establish good relationships within and out of their social circles, likewise every community needs to do the same. These processes of decision-making must be directed by reason. This is of utmost importance both for every individual Muslim and for every Muslim Community.

Arguments presented against rationality

We are aware that there are always individuals, groups, and even societies who blindly follow traditional customs and habits without assessing or evaluating them. The Qur'an speaks of the prophets and messengers of Allah who attempted to instruct others to change their lifestyles for the better; they were nonetheless faced with rebellion, a common argument being that they did not want to do so because it went against their customs, as these practices were that of their parents and ancestors. Their objections were as simple as that. They rejected the new teachings because they went against the way they had been brought up and the way in which they were accustomed to doing things:

Rather, they say, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are in their footsteps [rightly] guided.
(43:23)

Sometimes they used to say to the prophets that what they taught them were totally new and unheard and therefore they did not want to follow them because it was different from what they were used to:

We have not heard of this in the latest religion. This is not but a fabrication. (38:7)

However, contrary to this, sometimes other people would say that these teachings were old-fashioned. They called them ‘the myths of the earliest people.’ This expression has been repeated many times in the Qur’an. For example, the verse 8:31 reads as follows:

And when Our verses are recited to them, they say, "We have heard. If we willed, we could say [something] like this. This is not but myths of the earliest peoples."

They said that the teachings related to earlier generations and so had nothing to do with their present situation.

Thus, some people used various arguments in an attempt to prove the Prophet’s ideas wrong. Either they wanted to follow their usual customs so they did not want to accept new ideas, or they did not want to follow historical ideas from the past. Sometimes they would also claim to want to follow their own particular famous and great personalities. This is why, on the Day of Judgement, some people will be full of regret and will admit to Allah that the reason they went astray was because they followed their own great personalities.

And they will say, "Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our masters and our dignitaries, and they led us astray from the [right] way. (33:67)

Thus are the various arguments an irrational community may use when refusing to accept the truth or to adopt new ways of thinking or behaving, whereas the Qur'an tells us that we must always follow the requirements of reason by believing and acting only on that which can be proved rationally and can be backed up by rational arguments. This concept is hugely important not only for individuals but for the community as a whole.

The Qur'an, Sunnah and Reason

In Islamic jurisprudence, especially in the school of the Ahlul Bayt, in addition to the Qur'an and Sunnah, there is also an emphasis on reason or intellect being one of the sources. Consensus is also mentioned but after careful examination, it can be reduced to the Sunnah, so there are three sources: the Qur'an, Sunnah, and reason.

However, the Sunnah is nothing other than explanation and exemplification of the Qur'an, and therefore is further elaboration of the Qur'an. Thus in the end there are two major sources: a) revelation, given to us in the form of the Qur'an and further expanded and exemplified in the Sunnah, and b) reason.

This does not only apply to jurisprudence (*fiqh*) or Islamic law, but rather it applies to every aspect of Islamic thought. These two sources must be referred to in order to understand Islamic Theology, Islamic Morality and Spirituality, and Islamic Economics. There is nothing other than these two, and everything is based on either one or both of them. There are certain issues that can *only* be understood by reference to revelation, *only* understood through reason, or understood using both methods. For example, the need for resurrection: for people being answerable to Allah for what they have done and then receiving reward

or punishment can be understood by both using reason and by referring to the Qur'an. However, the topics of Allah's existence or truth of religion should be understood through reason. It is not possible to beg the question by arguing for the truth of religion by referring to Scripture. However, there are certain things which can only be understood by referring to revelation, including further details of what is going to happen on the Day of Judgment or about certain practical laws such as how many prayers should be performed every day and how many units are in each prayer. Such issues must be understood by referring to revelation through the Qur'an or as exemplified in Sunnah.

Reason as a divine *hujjah* (proof)

In a hadith from Imam Kazim (a), we read:

Truly, God has two proofs (*hujjah*): the external one, that is, the Prophets, Messengers and Imams, and then the external one, that is, reason (*al-'aql*).

This means that God has two ways of communicating His Will to us, because here '*hujjah*' means something that can help us to understand the Will of God. In the beginning of Ziyarat Al-e Yaseen we address Imam al-Mahdi (atf) by saying:

السلام عليك يا حجة الله و دليل ارادته

Peace be upon you, O *hujjah* of God and the sign of His will.

This is one of the best definitions of '*hujjah*' that I know of. A '*hujjah*' is a sign for understanding the Will of Allah. Whether a '*hujjah*' is someone or something that helps us understand what God wants from us, that is, what is the God's will. Thus, when God provides us with a

hujjah, later on He will ask us if we followed the instructions and directions which were given to us by His Hujjah. We will be answerable to Him. Moreover, if we follow a hujjah, on the Day of Judgement we can say to Allah that we spoke or acted in a certain way due to that hujjah. Thus, a hujjah has a dual function. Allah can question us based on a hujjah and we can also defend ourselves, if we have followed a hujjah from God.

External and internal hujjah

These two types of hujjah are understandable from the following verse:

*And they will say, 'Had we listened or applied reason, we
would not have been among inmates of the Blaze.'*
(67:10)

This verse indicates that the people who have failed to please Allah and secure their way to Heaven would say that if they had listened to the prophets or if they had reasoned by correctly using their rational and mental capacities, they would not be amongst the people of Hell on that day. Thus, the reason that they ended in Hell was because they did not listen to the external hujjah and did not refer to the internal hujjah i.e. their own reason. Therefore, we either have to listen to the prophets and revelation, or we are to think for ourselves and discover the truth.

Prophets are a form of external intellect

Some scholars have suggested to call the prophets 'the external intellect' and to call reason 'the internal prophet.' This means that if we could imagine our reason or intellect being crystallised and embodied as a person that would become like a prophet. On the other hand, if it were possible to internalise the prophets inside us that would be our reason.

Thus, in a sense, every one of us has a prophet inside us who is commissioned by Allah to guide us. This is the best way of solving any question of conflict between reason and revelation and thus indeed we do not believe that there is any such conflict between them, as they are in harmony with one another.

Muslim community should be run according to revelation and intellect

Therefore we have these two proofs which provide us with two ways of coming to understand right and wrong. As a community, we must base our decisions on these two proofs – rather than emotions or fashions or personal opinions – particularly in relation to religious affairs. Unfortunately, in many cases, we find that in our communities some people primarily attempt to utilise our emotions. For example, when they want to plan a function, their greatest concern is to make people emotionally engaged and satisfied, rather than attempting to develop them intellectually. The role of emotions should not be denied, but emotions ought to be used to help engage people in order to then proceed to educate them. Emotions in the end have a short term effect. Sometimes people come to a meeting and are affected emotionally, but after a few minutes or hours, that effect disappears. Furthermore, sometimes unfortunately we bombard people with emotional factors and then in the end they become quite confused and do not know what to believe, what to say, or what to do. They become concerned with baseless matters that have no foundation in reality such as superstitions and some dreams. In our communities, we need to plan everything, including our education system, our publications and our functions in masjids or Islamic centres, in such a way that they serve to promote

rationality in the community and the commitment of the community towards revelation.

The role of the heart

People sometimes ask about the role of the heart and referring to it. For example, in many cases we feel in our heart that something is good or bad, right or wrong. Is there any reference to this in the Qur'an? Can people refer to their heart? The answer is both yes and no, which means that this is not a proof. Allah has made our heart in a way that it is sensitive to truth and falsehood, and to good and evil. There is no doubt about this. However, the heart is very much subject to change and alteration.

A sound heart

If we are in the default situation and have our heart in the format and condition in which Allah gave it to us when we are born, then we can certainly listen to it, because Allah has created the heart in a way that when it is engaged with something good, it has tranquillity and peace. However, when the heart is thinking or engaged in something bad, it becomes disturbed.

It has been narrated that a person called Wabisah went to Prophet Muhammad to ask him about the meaning of '*birr*' or 'good'. The Prophet told him, 'You have come to ask about righteousness.' He said, 'Yes.' The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

'Consult your heart. Righteousness is that about which the soul feels at ease and the heart feels tranquil. And wrongdoing is that which wavers in the soul and causes

uneasiness in the breast, even though people have repeatedly given their legal opinion [in its favour]."

'Good' is that which brings peace and tranquillity to the heart. For example, if we imagine telling the truth or helping people, our heart becomes full of peace and joy. However, if we consider annoying or hurting people, telling lies or betraying people, our heart becomes worried and disturbed. This is why machines can be made to detect if someone is lying because these machines can detect whether your blood pressure is increasing or not, or whether your heart beats more quickly or not.²

Thus, we are advised that when we want to know whether something is right or not, we should examine and ask our heart. Even if other people give us their own opinions, we should still ask our hearts.

An unhealthy and distorted heart

The opposite of a sound heart is that which is degraded or distorted by the performance of sins. If we commit sins and insist on continuously committing them, then gradually our hearts would lose its capacity for understanding right from wrong. The heart becomes indifferent and loses its sensitivity. We commit wrong and do not feel bad about it; likewise, we do good and do not feel good. Indeed, if someone insists on increasingly committing wrong, then the heart becomes quite different

² See e.g. al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, *al-Durr al-Manthur*, vol. 3, p. 11. The text is as follows:

وأخرج أحمد وعبد بن حميد في هذه الآية والبخاري في تاريخه عن وابصة قال: أتيت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وأنا لا أريد أن أدع شيئاً من البر والإثم إلا سألته عنه فقال لي يا وابصة أخبرك عما جئت تسأل عنه أم تسأل قلت: يا رسول الله أخبرني قال: جئت لتسأل عن البر والإثم ثم جمع أصابعه الثلاث فجعل يبتك بها في صدره ويقول: يا وابصة استفت قلبك استفت نفسك البر: ما طمان اليه القلب واطمأنت اليه النفس والإثم: ما حاك في القلب وتردد في الصدر وإن أفتاك الناس وأفتوك

and functions in an incorrect way. In some hadiths, we find an expression for hearts which is very profound and that is “*mankus*” which means upside down.³ When this happens, you may do something good but would feel terrible. For example, we may give charity or go to study and we feel bad. On the other hand, we may do haram, such as backbiting, hurting and ridiculing people, and we enjoy it. This happens because the heart has now become ‘upside down’.

This is why it is both possible and not possible to refer to one’s heart. It all depends on whether one’s heart is preserved in the same condition in which Allah created it, or whether we have unfortunately distorted and damaged it, and have turned it ‘upside down’.

In a hadith in *Kanzil Ummaal* from Prophet Muhammad, which Allamah Tabatabai (r.a.) reports in his *al-Mizan*, in which the Prophet says that when a person commits murder for the first time, their heart becomes ‘upside down’. Prior to this, they understood the ugliness of murder, but when they commit murder for the first time, their hearts become distorted. After this, they would no longer understand the ugliness of murder. They would have a heart which is hard and tough, unable to understand its ugliness and indeed may even also end up enjoying it. There are people who are paid to kill others and can do so with ease, even thinking that they have become capable and professional, and eventually are proud of it. Why? This is because they did not listen to the voice of their heart and to the conscience they have

³ For example, according to a hadith from the Prophet Mohammad, heart of man admits aspiration and fear unless he sheds blood unjustifiably. When he sheds blood unjustly his heart becomes upside down and very dark so that he does not recognize the good. Nor does he condemn the evil. (Tabataba’i, Sayyid Mohammad Husayn, *Al-Mizan*, vol. 10, translated by Sayyid Akhtar Rizvi (Tehran: 2010, WOFIC, cited from *Kanz al-Ummaal*, no. 39951)

been given, and so gradually their hearts became distorted and completely transformed.

The heart is not a hujjah

Therefore, in Islamic literature and particularly in the Qur'an and Hadith, although we find emphasis placed on the role of the heart and on safeguarding it, we do not have any reference which says that the heart is a hujjah. Nowhere does it state that in addition to revelation and reason the heart is a hujjah to which we can refer, because, as we said before, the heart is subject to change. If there is anything within the heart which is guaranteed to constantly function properly, then it is intellect (*'aql*) which in a sense is considered the mental or educational aspect of the heart. Otherwise, the heart by itself and separate from reason has no guaranteed function or role in understanding the truth.

Reason is a hujjah

The faculty of reason can still function properly in a corrupt person; it is possible for them to understand the truth. If a corrupt person really wants to find the truth, they can still use their reason, because reason always remains as a Hujjah, and a hujjah never betrays. A prophet always remains a prophet whether people listen to him or not or whether he is surrounded by good people or bad people. It is the same with reason as reason always remains a hujjah whether a person listens to it or not. However, this is not so with the heart. This is why the Qur'an asks everyone, including the pagans and wrongdoers to *think*. If they think and follow their reason and intellect, even the pagans and their leaders would be able to judge between right and wrong for themselves because, again, a hujjah never betrays, misleads, or misguides. This is true about both prophets and reason. However, the

heart is very much subject to what we do and what we are: our previous deeds and character.

Early debate about the extent of the scope of reason

Very early on in the history of Islam, a debate started amongst Muslims regarding how much weight and significance should be given to reason. There were some people from some schools of Islam who, although possibly having good intentions and maybe because they thought it to be a requirement of being loyal to religion, tried to reduce and limit the scope of reason by insisting that people should only follow the Qur'an and Sunnah and wanted nothing to do with reason. In particular, they were confronted with key philosophical ideas coming from Greek thinkers, so they thought they should somehow safeguard Islam by not allowing these intellectual ideas – in the form of philosophy and logic – to enter the Islamic way of thinking. Thus, philosophy was not introduced. Some of them, such as Ibn Hazm, even opposed logic. They thought that logic was invented by Greek thinkers who were not necessarily believers in God, and so logic was one of their fabrications and not something natural and God-given. When it came to religious issues they thought we should only follow the Qur'an and the hadith, and if something is not mentioned in these sources, we are to remain silent and do not have any responsibility to delve into it; otherwise we may get involved in a heresy (*bid'ah*).

What is bid'ah?

Not only in the past there were people who used to consider philosophy and logic as being heretical, but also there are some today who rush in considering everything new as heretical. Many of us have had discussions with such people in which they keep repeating that one

thing is 'bid'ah' and then another thing is 'bid'ah' and so on. For example, they say that having a Parliament or judiciary system on the side of the government is all 'bid'ah' because at the time of the Prophet there was only the Prophet himself and his agents, with no separation between various parts of State. If we use this argument, even having schools is '*bid'ah*' because there was no such establishment as a school at the time of the Prophet; people used to simply gather in the masjid to learn. And therefore having a university, driving a car, paved streets, pipelines for healthy water are all kinds of 'bid'ah'. This is all based on short sightedness.

'Bid'ah' or heresy does not mean anything that is merely new. As mentioned before, this was the mentality of some during the Prophet's time. They claimed that his teachings were new to them and so they would not accept it. Such people nowadays have adopted the mentality of the pagans of that era and currently present it under the guise of Islam by saying that anything new is '*bid'ah*'. This is exactly the kind of idea that the pagans used against the Prophet. Real heresy is not just something new; rather, it is that which is given religious significance without necessarily being 'religious' as such. For example, someone may use a car to drive to work, which is something relatively new. However, then someone says that driving a car is an Islamic idea and we must drive a car as an Islamic requirement because it is '*wajib*' (compulsory) or '*mustahabb*' (recommended) in a literal sense. This is then something entirely different and we ought to be questioned about the reason for saying this. In the past, people rode horses and camels; and in the future we may drive something else instead of driving a car. So we cannot say that driving a car is Islamic in the sense that it is an Islamic requirement like praying, fasting or going for Hajj. However, we can say that it is

Islamic in the sense that it is compatible with Islamic principles and with Islamic guidelines for our way of life. For example, Islam says that we should save time and that it is fine if we want to have a comfortable and convenient life. Then it is up to us whether we use a horse or donkey, or walk, drive, or use a plane. Islam says we must educate ourselves and our children. Therefore, we want to have schools and universities, and maybe in the future we will have something even better. We have to learn and always try to improve ourselves. We are not saying that the schools we have today are Islamic in the sense that they are like praying and fasting, nor that the way in which we run our schools is exactly and perfectly based on Islam so that if someone does something other than this or different to it, they would be doing something 'haram'. When we say that something is Islamic, it means that it is compatible with Islamic values as it is, but there is always a possibility for improvement and for reducing the deficiencies or shortcomings in it, and this is something which we should learn how to do.

An Islamic community benefits from human experience

In addition to using reason and revelation, an Islamic community also tries to benefit from human experience and that which people have achieved throughout history, not in understanding religious issues but in running their daily lives. To understand how to pray, fast, or perform the Hajj, we do not need to look at the experiences of other people. However to understand how to organise an educational system in a community or how to run an economy or a political system or how to manage a transportation system, it is our Islamic responsibility to discover the best available techniques and skills in the world and benefit from them. We must not say everything is '*bid'ah*' and not want

anything to do with it, and merely understand what happened in early Muslim society. On the contrary, Islam says that we must always continue to learn and add on to other people's experiences to our own. According to our hadiths, a wise and rational person adds other people's understanding to their own understanding. If there is wisdom, we must search for, and benefit from it, even if it is in the hands of non-believers.⁴ Wisdom is something for which a mu'min is earnestly searching, and so wherever they find it, they adopt it and benefit from it.

We must not deprive ourselves of the experiences of other people, whether they are believers or non-believers. We can even learn from our enemies, if they do something good and correct. For example, there may be some people who are our enemies, but they have very good health care or educational systems. We should benefit from their skills and experience, because wisdom comes from Allah, no matter who is presenting it to us. Anything good comes from Allah, no matter who has it at that moment in time. Therefore, we have to benefit from the scientific and experimental findings of humanity. It is neither possible nor wise to start everything from scratch. For example, if we have an Islamic community and we want to open an Islamic school, firstly we should enquire about what other communities are doing in their religious and educational undertakings; for example, regarding the financial aspect of running a school. They have experience and so we should go and learn from them. We may accept what they are doing or

⁴ For example, Imam Ali is quoted as saying:

خُذُوا الْحِكْمَةَ وَلَوْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Take wisdom even from the polytheists!

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 97.

change it but we cannot merely ignore it, thinking we know better or know everything, or that we simply search for the answers in the Qur'an and hadiths. The Qur'an and hadiths themselves advise us to observe people and other communities to take lessons from them. We are even told to study the lives of people who have passed away and learn from them. Whether they have done good or bad, we should at least know about it; if they have done good, we can reproduce it, and if bad, we can learn to avoid it.

The importance of knowledge and knowledgeable people

An Islamic community is balanced, truthful, and just; it refers firstly to revelation and reason and then decides for itself in a rational way while taking into account the scientific achievements of humanity and the experiences of other communities so as to achieve the best possible way of life. However, this does not mean that there is no room for future improvement as there is always a need for improving ourselves, and we are not to disregard the best available to us.

Knowledge and knowledgeable people are of utmost importance and significance to an Islamic community. This is very much related to the need for rationality.

The importance of good role models

Every community has people as their role models which are very much respected. It is quite possible to judge whether a community is in a safe and sound situation or not by looking at people it holds in high esteem.

For example, in the Era of Ignorance, the best robbers and criminals were respected, and the tribes best at killing others and stealing their property were proud of themselves. There is even an Arabic poem in

which at the poet says: "I wish instead of my tribe I belonged to another tribe that would be attacking and killing people, whether riding or on feet."⁵ This was the mentality of people in the Era of Ignorance. Such a society was not safe and sound.

A society in which people are given special privilege or become role models just because they are rich or famous treated in a special way merely because they are rich regardless of their morals suffers serious problems. We read in a hadith that whoever shows respect and humbleness to a rich person merely for their wealth, two-thirds of their faith has gone.⁶ If we show extraordinary respect to the rich and then mistreat the poor, it is a sign that our faith is very weak.

In addition, a society in which actors, actresses, and sports personalities have the best position merely for their profession or fame is not a good society. No one cares about their beliefs or morality. Islam is not against actors, actresses and sportsmen or women, but such people should not be adopted as role models unless they have a good, Islamic way of life and promote this publicly. We can encourage and support them, but not necessarily take them as our role models for their fame or earnings.

The status of knowledgeable people in an Islamic community

In an Islamic community, two groups of people have the best position: the pious and the knowledgeable. In Islam, these two qualities are the

⁵ The Arab poem refers to the saying of Qarit ibn Anif from Bani al-'Anbar and reads as follows:

فليت لي بهم قوما إذا ركبوا ... شنوا الإغارة فرسانا وربانا

⁶ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 11, p. 233. Prophet Muhammad (s) is quoted as saying:

من تواضع لغني ذهب ثلثا دينه

most important. Yes, it is valuable to a society to have a scientist such as a physicist, chemist, biologist, mathematician and so forth, even if they are non-religious. Our communities and societies would develop if we show respect to scientists. The youth and even children would be encouraged to study hard to develop their community. However, if we always bring up rich people, then our youth would wonder why they should bother to study and instead would prefer to just hoard money. People who are involved in developing sciences are very important and influential.

Of course, religious sciences are also very important but not everyone should necessarily study them. Islam very much encourages every type of science. The Prophet said: 'Seek knowledge even as far away as China.'⁷ At that time China was not a place for learning Islam. There was no Islamic seminary or Islamic university there so he meant other types of knowledge. Of course, Islamic knowledge is something necessary for every Muslim up to a certain point, but every Muslim does not need to become an Ayatullah or a Muslim philosopher or theologian. What is most important is that every Muslim must always seek knowledge and should not waste any opportunity for learning and adding to their knowledge.

In a beautiful example about Abu Rayhaan Bayuni, a famous Muslim mathematician and scholar of many other sciences, when he was dying, just before his death he was visited by one of his neighbours who was a jurist, and Abu Rayhaan started asking him something about fiqh (Islamic law), and in particular about inheritance. Then this friend asked why he was asking him such a question when he was going to die

⁷ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 1, pp. 177 & 180.

at any time and so would not benefit from the answer. Abu Rayhaan replied: “Is it better to die while I know or while I do not know?” The Qur’an says: “Are those who know and those who do not know the same? (39:9)”

Piety should accompany knowledge

We must also show additional respect to the pious whose lives are full of good lessons for everyone. Such people must be respected. The Qur’an tells us that God has made us into different nations, different tribes, different colours and different races, so that we are able to know one another and we are able to identify each other using different colours and languages. But “truly the most honoured ones in the Sight of Allah are the pious.” (49:13)

In Islamic community, the two qualities of knowledge and piety are very important. Of course, it is also very important and even more beneficial if knowledge is accompanied by piety, and piety is accompanied by knowledge, though even knowledge by itself is valuable (39:9). However, knowledge would become a special gift if accompanied by piety.

Therefore, in our communities and societies we must encourage people to pursue knowledge and piety by giving special recognition to scientists and to pious people. Such communities and societies would have a very rapid and easy journey towards their ideals.