

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had reached and settled in Madīnah. When he allowed 'Asim ibn 'Adiyy to build his house on that site, he submitted, 'yā rasūlallāh, I do not like to build a house on a cursed site about which these verses of the Qur'an have been revealed. Nevertheless, Thābit ibn Aqram is really in need of a house for he has none. Please allow him to make a house here.' So, going along with his suggestion, he gave this plot of land to Thābit ibn Aqram. But, as fate would have it, since the time Sayyidnā Thābit رضى الله عنه came to live in the house he made there, he either had no child or if he did, the child did not live.

Historians have added that this place was cursed not only for human beings but also for domestic birds and animals that could not survive with their normal way of living. Thus, after that time, this place lies desolate at some distance from the well-known Masjid Qubā'.

After having gone through the details of the event, let us now turn to the text of the cited verses. It was said in the first verse (107): وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا (And [there are] those who have built a mosque) to bring harm upon Muslims.

This verse points out to three motives behind the making of this 'masjid':

1. The first one is: ضَرَارًا (*dirāran*: to cause harm to Muslims). The words 'ضرار': *dirār*' and 'ضرر': *ḍarar*' are both used in the Arabic language to carry the sense of causing harm. As for difference between the two, it has been said that '*ḍarar*' is a harm that brings gain for the person harming but causes loss for the harmed. And '*dirār*' is the inflicting of a loss upon other people while it brings just no gain for the person inflicting it. Since, this was going to be the fate of this '*masjid*' – that its founders gain nothing out of it – therefore, the word '*dirar*' was used here.

2. The second motive reads: تَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (to cause dissention among the believers). It means that, by setting up this '*masjid*', they looked forward to creating a division among the community of Muslims. They hoped to wean out a group that would be offering Ṣalāh in their *masjid* as a sort of separate entity. Then, it may have also resulted in reducing the number of Muslims going for their prayers to the old Masjid Qubā'.

3. The third motive was spelt out as: إِزْصَادًا لِّئِي حَارَبَ اللَّهُ, i.e. to provide a

sanctuary to enemies of Allah and His Messenger and a forum to conspire against Muslims.

This presentation as a whole proves that the '*masjid*' which was declared to be a 'harmful mosque' (Masjid Dīrār) by the Holy Qur'an, and which was demolished and burnt down under the orders of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, was no *masjid* in the real sense. Nor was it intended to be a place where people could pray. The three objectives behind it have been mentioned immediately above. From here we learn the rules that should be followed in our time. Today, may be some Muslims were to make a *masjid* close to and in competition of another Masjid, while their purpose is nothing but the same mutual discord, the same old effort to split up the congregation of the first *masjid*, or any other evil interest of this nature. If so, the maker of such a *masjid* will deserve no reward from Allah. Rather, he would be a sinner because of having created dissention between Muslims – but, despite all this, that place shall be called a *masjid* in terms of Islāmic law, and the etiquette and rules relating to mosques shall apply to it. Demolishing it or putting it on fire shall not be permissible. And the Ṣalāh of those who pray in it will also be valid – though, doing so shall continue to be a sin in itself.

From here we also learn about another rule relevant in contemporary setting. If a Muslim makes a *masjid* in that manner, either to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the maker will, though, not get the reward of making a *masjid*, instead, will incur a sin, yet it will not be what Masjid Dīrār is in the terminology of the Holy Qur'an, that is, it will not be called by that name. When some people notice a *masjid* like that, they would say that it was Masjid Dīrār. This is not correct. However, one could say that it was like Masjid Dirar. Therefore, its building can also be stayed – as done by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه through a court order where he had instructed that another *masjid* should not be made close to the one already there lest the congregation and flourish of the first *masjid* is affected adversely. (Tafsīr Kashshaf)

About this Masjid Dīrār, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been given the order: لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا: 'Do not ever stand there (in prayer) – 108.' The word '*qiyām*' in the text denotes standing for prayer. The sense is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should never go in to offer his

prayers in a mosque by that name.

Ruling:

What it tells us is: If, even today, a new *masjid* is made adjacent to the one already there unnecessarily, just to show off or to take an opposing stance out of obstinacy and enmity, the better choice is not to offer prayers therein – though, Ṣalāh remains valid.

In the same verse (108), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also been told that it is correct for him to pray in the particular *masjid* the foundation of which has been laid on *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) from day one. And then, the people who offer their Ṣalāh in it love to observe full precaution in remaining cleansed and pure (of all physical and spiritual impurities) – for Allah too likes such meticulous observers of self-purity.

The context of the verse shows what is being referred to here is Masjid Qubā' where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to say his prayers at that time. There are some Ḥadīth narratives that also support this view. (As reported by Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn 'Abbās, by 'Āmr ibn Shai-bah from Sahl al-Anṣārī and by Ibn Khuzaimah in his Ṣaḥīḥ from 'Uwaimir ibn Sā'idah – with reference to Maẓhari)

As for the reports which say that it refers to the Prophet's Mosque, they do not contradict it. The reason is that the foundation of the Mosque of the Prophet was laid in accordance with a revealed command by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with his blessed hands. It goes without saying that its foundation rests on *Taqwā*, that is, on purity, piety and fear of Allah. And who else could be more purified than the noble messenger of Allah? Therefore, that too is a *masjid* founded on *taqwā*. (As reported by Tirmidhī on sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه with the chain of narrators ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ – from Qurtubī)

At the end of the verse (108), it was said: فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَّطَهَّرُوا (In it there are people who like to observe purity). In this verse, the *masjid* declared worthier for the prayers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the one the foundation of which was laid on *Taqwā* from day one. Thus, both Masjid Qubā' and the Mosque of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are included in the sense of the verse. Also pointed to in this verse there is yet another merit of this *masjid* – that those who prayed in

this *masjid* were a kind of people who did their best to remain cleansed and pure. The word for purity used in the text is *Tahārah*. The sense of *Tahārah* at this place includes purity from common filth and impurities, as well as purity from sins and bad morals. Those who offered their prayers in Masjid Qubā' and the Prophet's Mosque were generally equipped with all these virtues.

Special Note

From here we also come to know that the merit or superiority of a *masjid* really depends on the fact that it should have been made with absolute sincerity for the sake of Allah. And to put it conversely, there should not be any trace of duplicity, any motive to earn name, fame and recognition, or any other false and corrupting interest involved in its making. Then, we also learn that the quality of those who pray in a *masjid* is significant. If they are good, righteous, knowledgeable about their religion ('Ālim) and are devoted to the worship of Allah ('Ābid), the superiority of the *masjid* increases. Offering prayers in a *masjid* frequented by such God-fearing people is more merit worthy.

In the third (109) and the fourth (110) verses, Masjid Dirār (the harmful mosque) made by the hypocrites has been condemned as it has to be when compared with a *masjid* that is blessed. This has been accomplished through the use of a similitude. The surface of the land on which they were laying the foundation of their '*masjid*' has been likened to a landmass that has been corroded on the inside by flowing water. The topsoil looks solid and smooth. Now, if someone starts building there, it is obvious that the whole thing would collapse instantly. Similarly, the foundation of this Masjid Dirār was inherently unstable. The result was that it collapsed and went right into the fire of Jahannam. The expression 'collapsed into the fire of Jahannam' could be figurative in its sense – in that it smoothed out the way of Jahannam for its makers. Some others have taken it in the real sense – in that the *masjid*, when made to collapse, went into the Jahannam. Allah knows best.

Then, in the last verse (110), it was said that this building would always keep increasing the doubt and hypocrisy in their hearts unless their hearts are shredded into pieces. The sense is that their doubt, hypocrisy, envy and chagrin would go on increasing right to the end of their life.

Verses 111 - 112

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ
 الْجَنَّةَ يُفَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۖ وَعَدًّا
 عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ ۗ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ
 مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بَبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ ۗ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
 الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١١١﴾ ۝ التَّائِبُونَ الْعِبَادُونَ الْحَمِيدُونَ السَّائِحُونَ
 الرُّكَّعُونَ السُّجِدُونَ الْأَمْرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
 وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against (a promise) that Paradise shall be for them. They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed – a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injil and the Qur'an. And who can fulfill his covenant more than Allah? So, rejoice in the deal you have made, and that is the great achievement. [111]

(They are) those who repent, those who worship, those who praise (Allah), those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair and those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah. And give the good news to the believers. [112]

Commentary

Sequence

Previous verses carried a condemnation of those staying behind without a valid excuse and missing the Jihād. The present verses take up the merit of *mujāhidīn*.

The background of revelation

As explained by the majority of commentators, these verses were revealed about the participants of Bai'atul-'Aqabah (the pledge of allegiance to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at al-'Aqabah) which was taken from the Anṣār of Madīnah before Hijrah in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Therefore, despite that the entire Sūrah is Madanī,

these verses have been termed as Makkī.

'Al-'Aqabah' is part of a mountain. Here, it refers to the 'Aqabah that forms a part of the mountain along the Jamratu al-'Aqabah (the stone pillar of 'Aqabah) in Minā. (In our time, due to the increased number of Ḥujjāj [Hajj pilgrims], this part of the mountain has been leveled to form a smooth surface with the only exception of Jamarah [the stone pillar] which still stands there). It is on this 'Aqabah that a pledge of allegiance بَيْعَة (*bai'ah*) was taken from the people of Madīnah thrice. The first pledge came in the eleventh year of the Prophet's advent. Six persons embraced Islām, gave the pledge and returned to Madīnah. When they arrived there, Islām and the Prophet of Islām became the talk of the town. Next year, it was during the Ḥajj season that twelve people assembled at the same place. Out of these, five had taken part in the first pledge while the other seven were new. All of them took the pledge. By that time, the number of Muslims in Madīnah had increased to more than forty. They requested that someone should be sent to teach Qur'an to them. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umair رضى الله عنه. He taught Qur'an to Muslims present there as well as conveyed the message of Islām around, as a result of which major groups of people in Madīnah entered the fold of Islām.

After that, in the thirteenth year of the Prophet's advent, seventy men and women assembled at the same place. This is the third Bai'atu al-'Aqabah – and the last. Generally, when reference is made to Bai'atu al-'Aqabah, it means this very Bai'ah (pledge of allegiance). This pledge made it binding on participants that they would uphold the basic beliefs (*'aqā'id*) and deeds (*a'māl*) of Islām, and would particularly be ready to take part in Jihād against the disbelievers, and protect and support the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he migrates and reaches Madīnah. In this connection, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah رضى الله عنه submitted, '*yā rasūlallāh*, a compact is being made at this time. If there are any conditions regarding your Lord or regarding yourself, let these be mentioned there clearly.' He said, 'As for Allah Ta'ālā, I lay down the condition that all of you shall worship Him – and worship none but Him. As for myself, the condition is that you shall protect me as you protect your own lives, wealth, property and children.' They asked, 'if we fulfill these two conditions, what shall we

get in return?' He said, 'you will get Jannah.' All in delight, they said, 'we are pleased with this deal, so pleased that we shall never request on our own that it be cancelled nor shall we like it to be cancelled.

At this place, since the pledge took the apparent form of a transaction of give and take, this verse (111) was revealed in the terminology of a business deal: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِآنَ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ** (Surely, Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them). After hearing this verse, Sayyidnā Barā' ibn Ma'rūr, Abū al-Haitham and As'ad **رضى الله عنهم اجمعين** were the first ones who placed their hands on the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم**. They were promising in effect that they were readily agreeable to this deal and they would protect the Holy Prophet **ﷺ** as they protected their family and would stand by him to face any challenge, even if it came from the combined forces of the blacks and whites on this Earth.

This is the very first verse of Jihād

Injunctions of Jihād did not exist during the early Makkan period. This is first verse about fighting and killing which was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah itself, though its implementation began after Hijrah. After that, came another verse: **أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ** (Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought against – al-Ḥajj 22:39). When this Bai'atu al-'Aqabah (pledge of 'Aqabah) was concluded in secret from the disbelievers of Makkah, the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** ordered his noble Companions to migrate from Makkah to Madīnah. Groups of them started migrating gradually. The Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** remained behind waiting for the permission from Allah Ta'ālā. When Sayyidnā Abū Bakr **رضى الله عنه** decided to migrate, he held him back so that he could accompany him. (This whole event has been described in Tafsīr Mazharī with relevant references)

We can now move to the second sentence of the verse (111): **يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ** (They fight in the way of Allah, and kill and are killed ... a promise on His part which is true (as made) in the Torah and the Injīl and the Qur'an). This verse tells us that fighting in the way of Allah was a commandment also revealed for past communities in their Scriptures. As for the popular assumption that there is no injunction of Jihād in the Injīl, it is possible that, as part of the changes made by people who came later, the injunctions of Jihād were ex-

punged. Allah knows best.

At the end of the verse (111), it was said: **فَاسْتَبِشِرُوا بِنِعْمَتِكُمْ** (So, rejoice in the deal you have made). The agreement arrived at with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this event of the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah had, on the surface, turned into a sort of buying and selling deal. Therefore, it was expressed through the word: **شراء** (Allah has bought) at the beginning of the verse. In the present sentence, Muslims were told that they had struck a good deal which will bring blessings for them. The reason was that they had tendered their life and wealth that were mortal while that which they received in return was eternal. If we come to think about it, we would realize that wealth was the only thing they spent out. As for life, that is, the essential spirit, that will remain even after death, and remain forever. And if we were to look deeper into the reality of wealth, that too happens to be nothing but the gift of Allah Almighty. When born, human beings visit the world empty-handed. It was He who made them own everything around them and it was He who made His own gift the price of eternal blessings and gave them Paradise. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said, 'this is a strange deal where the commodity and the price have both been given to you!'

The sage, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, 'Behold, what a profitable business is this that Allah has thrown open to every believer!' And he also said, 'It is Allah who has blessed you with wealth and property. Spend a little out of it and buy Paradise.' (Maḏharī)

The last verse (112) which begins with the words: **الَّذِينَ انبَغَوْا** "(They are) those who repent, those who worship..." describes the attributes of the same believers about whom it was said earlier that Allah has bought their lives and their wealth from the believers, against which Paradise shall be for them. Though, the verse was revealed as relating to a particular group of participants in the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah, but the sense of the verse covers all *mujāhidīn* in the way of Allah. As for the list of their attributes which opens with: **الَّذِينَ انبَغَوْا** (those who repent), they are not there as a condition, because the promise of Paradise has been made for Jihād in the way of Allah, in an absolute sense. The purpose behind the delineation of these attributes is to stress that those who deserve Paradise do have such attributes – as was specially the case with the noble Companions who were a party to Bai'atu al-'Aqabah.

The word: **الَّذِينَ انبَغَوْا** (*as-sā'iḥūn*): translated literally as 'those who jour-

ney'), according to the majority of commentators, means those who fast (*ṣā'imūn*). Actually, this word has been derived from: *سياحه* (*siyāḥah*: journey, pilgrimage). Before Islām, *siyāḥah* was taken to be an act of worship in the Christian religion that meant leaving home for the sake of worship. Islām declared it to be monasticism, and prohibited it. It was replaced with fasting as an act of worship. The reason is that *siyāḥah* taught disengagement from worldly life while fasting taught that one should abstain from worldly desires for a limited period of time living at home. It is on the same basis that Jihād too has been equated with *siyāḥah* in some reports. Ibn Mājah, Ḥākim and Baihaqī have authentically reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: *سِيَاحَةُ أُمَّتِي الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* (The *siyāḥah* of my ummah is Jihād in the way of Allah).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that *سَائِحِينَ* (*sā'iḥīn*: those who journey) in the Qur'an means: *صَائِمِينَ* (*ṣā'imīn*: those who fast). Explaining *سَائِحِينَ* (*as-sā'iḥīn*: those who journey), 'Ikrimah said, 'they are students who leave their homes to seek religious knowledge.' (Mazharī)

At this place, seven attributes of believing *mujāhidīn* have been described as those who repent, those who worship, those who praise Allah, those who journey, those who bow in *rukū'*, those who prostrate in *sajdah*, those who bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. After having enumerated these seven attributes, the eighth attribute was put as: *الْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ*: 'those who preserve the limits prescribed by Allah.' Actually, this expression is an embodiment of all attributes mentioned earlier. In other words, the details given in those seven attributes have been eloquently reduced to one small sentence which means that they are committed to the limits set by Allah, that is, they obey, adhere to and protect the injunctions of the Shari'ah of Islām.

At the end of the verse (112), it was said: *وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ* (And give the good news to the believers). It means that the Prophet of Islām should convey to believers who have the attributes mentioned above the good news of blessings nobody could ever imagine, nor could it be explained in words, nor has anyone heard about it from any source. The reference is to the ultimate blessings of Paradise.

Verses 113 - 114

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ

كَانُوا أَوْلَىٰ قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ
 ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ
 وَعَدَّهَا أَيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
 لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾

It is not for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the Mushriks*, even if they are kinsmen, after it became clear to them that they are the people of hell. [113]

And the prayer of Ibrāhīm for the forgiveness of his father was not but due to a promise he had made to him. Later when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he withdrew himself from him. Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft sighing (before Allah), forbearing. [114]

Commentary

The entire Sūrah Al-Taubah consists of injunctions of absolution and withdrawal from *kāfirs* (disbelievers) and *mushriks* (those who associate partners with Allah). The Sūrah opens with the words: *بَرَاءَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ* (Here is a withdrawal [proclaimed] by Allah) and that is why this Sūrah is also known as Sūrah al-Barā'ah. The injunctions appearing earlier relate to withdrawal and severance of relationships with *kāfirs* and *mushriks* in this worldly life. The same injunction of withdrawal and severance of relationships appears in the the present verses, but it relates to the life hereinafter. It makes it impermissible even to pray for the forgiveness of *kāfirs* and *mushriks* after their death – as it appears in a previous verse (84) where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been prohibited from offering funeral prayers for hypocrites.

The background of revelation

The event that was the cause or background of the revelation of this *āyah* has been reported in a narrative appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. According to this report, Abū Ṭālib, the uncle of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, had not, though, embraced Islām, yet he continued to support and protect the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم throughout his life. He did not listen to any member of his clan in this

*. Those who associate partners with Allah.

matter. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too was concerned about him. He wished that his uncle would somehow recite the Kalimah and embrace Islām. He would thus be able to intercede on his behalf and he could have his deliverance from the punishment of Jahannam. When Abū Ṭālib was suffering from his last sickness and death became certain, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was worried. He wished if his uncle were to recite the Kalimah even now, things might work for him. He came close to him in that state of anxiety – but, Abū Jahl and ‘Abdullāh ibn Umayyah (disbelieving diehards) were already there. He said, ‘my uncle, recite the Kalimah: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (*Lā ilāha illallāh*). I shall try to seek forgiveness for you.’ But, Abū Jahl interrupted, ‘would you forsake the faith of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (father of Abū Ṭālib)?’ The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم repeated what he had said several times. But, every time, Abū Jahl would say the same thing he had said before – until the last words spoken by Abū Ṭālib were, ‘I am on the faith of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.’ It was in this very condition that he died. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم swore that he would continue seeking forgiveness for him until he was prohibited from it. Thereupon, this verse of prohibition was revealed where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and all Muslims were prohibited from praying for the forgiveness of *kāfirs* and *mushriks* – even if they were close relatives.

This put some Muslims into doubt. Was it not, they thought, that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام too had prayed for his disbelieving father? To answer it, the second verse (114) was revealed: مَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ In gist, it means: As for the prayer made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for his father, it was conditioned by circumstances. In the beginning, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not know that he would keep on sticking to his disbelief right through the end and would die a disbeliever. In other words, his going to Hell was not certain. That was the time when he had made the promise that he would pray for his forgiveness: سَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ رَبِّي (I shall ask my Lord to forgive you – Maryam 19:47). Later, when it became clear to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام that he was an enemy of Allah, that is, he had remained a disbeliever right through the end, he elected to become indifferent to him and stopped asking pardon for him.

With regard to the mention of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام praying for the forgiveness of his father at different places in the Qur’an, it should

all be taken in that sense, whereby it would mean that Allah may give him the *taufīq* of 'Imān and Islām so that he could be forgiven.

When the disbelievers inflicted a wound on the blessed face of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during the battle of Uḥud, he was seen wiping blood from his face and praying: اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِقَوْمِي إِنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (O Allah, forgive my people. They do not know). The object of this prayer of forgiveness for the disbelievers is no other but that Allah may bless them with the *taufīq* of 'Imān and Islām so that they could become deserving of being forgiven.

Imām al-Qurṭubī said, 'this proves that it is permissible to pray for the forgiveness of a living *kāfir* with the intention that this disbelieving person may have the *taufīq* of 'Imān and become deserving of forgiveness.'

In the last sentence of the verse (114), it was said: إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ (Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft sighing [before Allah], forbearing). The word: اواه (*awwāh*) is used for a host of meanings. Al-Qurṭubī has reported fifteen meanings of this word but they are all close to each other without any real difference between them. Some of these are: one who sighs a lot, or one who supplicates profusely, or one who is full of mercy for the servants of Allah. This (last) meaning is reported from Sayyidna 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه.

Verses 115 - 116

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَاهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ
 مَا يَتَّقُونَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ
 السَّمٰوٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۗ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۗ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن
 وَّلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١١٦﴾

And Allah is not to make a people go astray after He has given them guidance, unless He explains to them what they should avoid. Surely, in respect of everything Allah is (All-) Knowing. [115]

Surely, to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death. And, other than Allah, you have neither a supporter, nor a helper. [116]

Verses 117 - 119

لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ
 فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ
 ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ
 الَّذِينَ خَلَفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ
 وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَنْ لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ
 ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١١٨﴾
 يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

Surely, Allah has relented towards the Prophet and the Muhājirs (Emigrants) and the Anṣār (the Supporters) who followed him in the hour of hardship after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked, then He relented towards them. Surely, to them He is Very Kind, Very Merciful. [117]

And (He relented) towards the three whose matter was deferred until when the earth was straitened for them despite all its vastness, and even their own souls were straitened for them, and they realized that there is no refuge from Allah, except in Him. Then He turned towards them, so that they may repent. Surely, Allah is the Most-Relenting, the Very Merciful. [118]

O those who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful. [119]

Commentary

In the comments on verse 102: *وَأَخْرُوجُوا اعْتَرَفُوا* (And there are those who admitted...), it was said that following the general call of Jihād at Tabūk which required all Muslims to join in, the people of Madīnah had split into five groups. Two of them were of those who elected to stay behind without any valid excuse, a detailed description of which has appeared in previous verses. Here, in the present verses, three kinds of sincere believers have been mentioned. First were those who responded to the call of Jihād instantly. They have been identified in the initial sentence: *إِتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ* (who followed him in the hour of

hardship) of verse 117. The second group was of those who hesitated during the early stage but recovered soon and got ready for Jihād with other participants. They have been described in the sentence: **مِنْ أَعْدٍ مَا** **كَادَ يَرِيحُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ** (after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked) of the same verse (117).

The third group was that of the believers who did not, though, participate in the Jihād because of their laziness at that time, yet, later on, they regretted and sought forgiveness – and ultimately, the Taubah made by them was accepted. However, their group was further divided in two types. Originally, they were ten in number. Seven out of these men demonstrated their genuine remorse and repentance instantly soon after the return of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The manner in which they did so was unusual. They tied themselves up with the pillars of the Prophet's Mosque with the resolve that they would stay tied as long as their Taubah was not accepted. The verse known as the 'Āyah of Taubah granting forgiveness for them was revealed immediately then. Details can be seen under comments on verse 102. The remaining three out of the ten were those who did not act in that manner. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked his Companions to boycott them whereby no one was to greet or talk to them. This thing was terrible. It really disturbed them. They have been mentioned in the second verse (118) through the words: **وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلَفُوا** (And towards the three whose matter was deferred) where comes the acceptance of their Taubah soon after which the order to boycott them was withdrawn.

Before we move on to explain the first verse (117): **لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ** (Surely, Allah has relented towards the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Supporters who followed him in the hour of hardship) in some details, let us answer a question first.

Is it not that Taubah is done because of having committed an act of sin and disobedience? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is protected from that (*ma'sūm*). What, then, would be the sense of accepting his Taubah ('relenting towards the Prophet')? In addition to that, there were the Ṣaḥābah from among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār who had opted for Jihād since the very beginning. They too had not done anything wrong. For what crime had they made their Taubah that was accepted?

The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā made all of them safe from sin. This was expressed as Taubah, or that Allah Ta'ālā made all of them

tawwāb, those who turn to Allah. This indicates that no one is free from the need to make Taubah, not even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his closest Companions – as it appears in another verse: *وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا* (and turn towards Allah in repentance, all of you – 24:31). The reason is that the degrees and ranks of nearness to Allah are endless. Whoever has reached a certain station should realize that there is a higher station ahead and, as compared to that high station, the present one is a shortcoming. The quest must go on. Let one seek forgiveness for any shortcoming he may have at his present station so that he could move on to the next, the higher.

Coming to words: *سَاعَةَ الْعُسْرَةِ* (translated as ‘the hour of hardship’) appearing in verse 117, the Holy Qur’ān has employed this expression to portray the condition of the Muslims on the occasion of this very Jihād because they were poor and straitened on many counts. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says, ‘they had one mount for every ten men. They had to take turns to ride. The wherewithal required for such a trip was very short and ordinary. On the other hand, the heat was intense and scorching. Water in en route was scarce and at distances.

As for the next sentence: *مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَرِيحُ قُلُوبَ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ* (after the hearts of a group of them were about to turn crooked), the *زغ* (*zaigh*: crookedness) of the hearts of some people referred to here does not mean some deviation from faith. In fact, it means to lose heart and wish to avoid action in Jihād because of the hardship of hot weather and the dearth of necessary supplies. Ḥadīth narratives prove that. It was in view of these hardships they faced that their repentance was accepted.

Verse 118 begins with the words: *وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلِّفُوا* (And [He relented] towards the three whose matter was deferred). Here, the word: *خَلِّفُوا* (*khullifū*) literally means ‘those left behind.’ It carries the sense of ‘those the matter of whose repentance was deferred’ – as opted for in the translation of the text. These three gentlemen: Sayyidnā Ka’b ibn Mālīk, Murarah ibn Rabī‘ and Hilāl ibn Umayyah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين were from the Anṣār of Madīnah and had a distinguished record in the service of Islām. Earlier, they had participated in the Bai’atu al-‘Aqabah and in many battles with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, it was only by chance that they slipped in this manner. Then, there were those hypocrites who did not take part in this Jihād because of their hypocrisy, they gave them the kind of advises that dampened their

courage. But, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from this Jihād, all those hypocrites came to him, presented false excuses, took false oaths and tried to please the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who entrusted the inward state of their hearts with Allah and simply accepted their outward declarations on oath. Thus, they went on living their normal lives. Some people gave the same suggestion to these Anṣarī gentlemen – that they should also establish their innocence by offering false excuses. But, their hearts admonished them. They knew that they had already committed a sin, that of remaining behind in Jihād. Now, how could they compound it with another sin, that of lying before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم? Therefore, they came up with a clean breast and confessed to their misconduct. In punishment, Muslims were asked not to greet or talk to them. In the end, the Holy Qur'an laid bare the reality of the whole thing. Those who had fortified their excuses with false oaths were exposed, the details of which appear in several earlier verses from: *يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذْ أَرْجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ* (They will make excuses to you – 94) to: *عَلَيْهِمْ كَاذِبَةٌ الشَّوْءِ* (upon those is the evil cycle – 98). Regarding the truth told and confession made by these three gentlemen, it is enough to say that the fact of their Taubah was revealed in this verse. They faced fifty days of avoidance by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and a boycott of greeting and conversation by the Companions; a heart-rending experience indeed. Finally came the day when, amidst ecstatic scenes of having been so honorably acquitted and of exuberant congratulations for it, they regained the confidence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and that of all Muslims.

Details of the event relating to these three Anṣarī elders from authentic Aḥādīth

In the two authentic collections of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and in most books of Ḥadīth, there appears a lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه in connection with this event. Since, it consists of many elements of guidance, solutions of religious problems and facts worthy of consideration, therefore, it seemed appropriate that a full translation of this Ḥadīth should be reproduced here. Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه, one of the three gentlemen, has described the details of this event as given below:

'Every battle in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم participated, I was with him, except the battle of Tabūk. However, the battle of Badr

came all of a sudden, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had also not asked everyone to participate in it, and was also not angry with those who had not participated in it. In this too, I was not present. And I was also present on the night of the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah where we had made the covenant of supporting and protecting Islām. And this presence of mine at the Bai'atu al-'Aqabah is dearer to me as compared to my (possible) presence at the battle of Badr – though, the battle of Badr is better known among people. As for the background of my absence from the battle of Tabūk, the truth is that I had never been so rich as I was at that time. By God, I never had two mounts before that which I then had.

While marching out from Madīnah for his battles, the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was that he would conceal his intentions by advancing in a direction just the opposite of the direction in which he was to go for Jihād. The intention was to confuse spying hypocrites lest they sound off the enemy. And he used to say, 'in war, (such strategy of) deception (*khudāh*) is permissible.'

Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was ready to carry out his plan for the Jihād (of Tabūk, which was unusual for several reasons). The heat was intense. Muslim forces were short on supplies. The journey was long. Then, they were going to fight against an enemy stronger in strength and overwhelming in numbers. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made the call for Jihād openly and publicly so that Muslims could make all necessary preparations for it in advance.'

According to the report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the numerical strength of those who participated in this Jihād was more than ten thousand. Ḥakim reports from Sayyidnā Mu'adh رضى الله عنه who said, 'when we set out for this Jihād with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, our number was more than thirty thousand.'

'Since no muster roll of those who set out for this Jihād was put on record in writing, therefore, those who did not wish to go out for this Jihād had an opportunity on hand. If they did not go, nobody would be able to find that out, they thought. The time when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم set out for Jihād was a time when dates were ripe and the growers were busy. Such was the condition when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and common Muslims started getting ready for the journey. It was a Thursday when he set out for the journey. He liked to travel

on a Thursday, whether it was for Jihād or for some other purpose.

As for myself, I went out every morning to prepare for Jihād, but came back without having done it. My heart said, 'I am capable of Jihād. I must go.' But, days passed and my intention kept being put off until a tomorrow – until the time the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and common Muslims departed for Jihād. Still then, my heart kept urging me to leave and join up somewhere en route – alas, only if I were to do that! But, unfortunately, this could not be done.

When, after the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, wherever I went in Madīnah, the surroundings put me to grief. At that time, what one saw throughout Madīnah were sights of people who were either sunk in hypocrisy, or were sick and crippled absolutely unable to travel. On the other side, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not think of me anywhere on this whole journey until he reached Tabūk. It was there in a gathering that he said, 'what happened to Ka'b ibn Mālik?'

A man from (the tribe of) Banū Salimah said, '*yā rasūlallāh*, he has been detained by his nice dress and his looking towards his shoulders (in self-admiration). Then, Sayyidnā Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه told this man, 'what you have said is bad' – and then, turning to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he submitted – '*yā rasūlallāh*, by God, we know nothing about him except that which is good.' Thereupon, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم became silent.

When I heard the news, says Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was coming back, I was concerned, almost close to concocting in a hurry some excuse for my absence and presenting things through which I could have escaped facing the displeasure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. May be I could have asked my family and friends also to help me out of this predicament. (Scruples like these kept destabilizing my heart) until I heard that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had arrived. Then, all these confusing thoughts were blotted out of my heart and I realized that I could never escape his displeasure on grounds that are contaminated with a lie. Therefore, I resolved to tell him the truth for I was convinced that truth alone would rescue me (from this situation).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم entered Madīnah. The time was

Duḥā (*Chasht* in Urdu and Persian), that is, middle of morning after sunrise. It was the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he generally used to return from his journeys at this time and his practice was first to go to the Masjid, offer two *raka'āt* and then go to see Sayyidah Fāṭimah. After that, he went to meet his blessed wives.

This time too, as was his wont, he first went to the Masjid, offered two *raka'āt* and sat down in the Masjid. Some more than eighty hypocrites who had not gone to the expedition of Tabūk came to him offering false excuses on equally false oaths. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted what was outwardly expressed through their statements on oath, approved of their allegiance, prayed for their forgiveness and entrusted what was in their hearts with Allah.

It was under this situation that I presented myself before him. When I offered my *salām* to him, he smiled, smiling like someone angry. Then he said, 'come.' So I walked towards him until I sat down before him.' According to some Ḥadīth reports, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned his face away from him. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه said: *Yā rasūlallāh*, why would you turn your face away from me? By God, I have nothing to do with hypocrisy, nor have I ever suffered from any doubt about my religion, nor am I guilty of making any alterations to it. 'Then he said, 'why then, did you not go for Jihād? Is it not that you had already bought a mount for this purpose?

I said, 'Yes, *Yā rasūlallāh*. If I would have been sitting before anyone from common worldly people, other than you, I am confident that I would have invented some excuse and avoided his displeasure – because, I have been gifted with the art of debate. But, I swear by Allah that I have understood perfectly well that, should I tell you a lie – that may even please you temporarily – still, the day would not be far when Allah Ta'ālā would tell you the whole truth and thus make you displeased with me. And if I were to tell you the truth – which may at this moment make you displeased with me – I hope, Allah Ta'ālā will forgive me. The truth of the matter is that I had no excuse for remaining absent from the Jihād for I had never been stronger, both financially and physically, as I was at that time.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'this man has told the truth.' Then, he said, 'all right, go – until Allah Ta'ālā gives His decree in your case.' I rose to leave when some men from the tribe of Banī

Salimah tailed me and started saying, 'As far as we know, you never committed a sin before this. Why did you act so dumb? You could have at the least come up with some excuse as was done by others who were left behind. Had you done that, the prayer made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would have been sufficient to bring forgiveness for your sins. By God, these people kept admonishing me repeatedly, so much so that a thought crossed my mind urging me to go back and say that I was wrong about what I had said earlier and that I had the right excuse with me.

But, it occurred to me that I should not add another sin to the one I have done before. I have already committed a sin when I remained behind in the Jihād. How could I venture into another sin, that of lying? Then, I asked those people if there was anyone like me who had confessed to his misconduct. They told me that there were two others who had done what I did and they too were given the same reply as was given to me (that they should wait for the decree of Allah). I asked them as to who those two were. They told me that one of them was Murarah ibn Rabi' al-Umariy while the other, Hilāl ibn Umayyah al-Wāqifiy.'

According to a report carried by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, the reason why the first of the two (that is, Murarah) was left behind is that he had a date farm where the fruit was ripening. He said to himself, 'you have taken part in many battles before this. If you do not go for Jihād this year, how would that become a crime?' Later, when he was alerted to his sinful thought, he promised to Allah that he has given this date farm in the way of Allah as a *ṣadaqah* from him.

As for the other gentleman, Sayyidnā Hilāl ibn 'Umayyah رضى الله عنه, his family has been living scattered since long. At that time, they had assembled all together. He thought of not going to Jihād that year and spending some time with his family. He too, when reminded of his sin, promised that he would stay away from his family from that time onwards.

Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه says, 'these people mentioned two blessed souls who were from among the *mujāhidīn* of the battle of Badr. I said, 'that is it. What these two did is worth following for me.' Saying this, I went home.

On the other side, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم prohibited his Companions from greeting or talking to the three of us. As for us, we loved all Muslims as usual, but they were the ones who had turned away from us.'

It appears in a report of Ibn Abī Shaibah that 'now we were in a condition that we would go to people, but they would not talk to us, nor greet us, nor respond to our greetings.'

Musnad 'Abd al-Razzāq reports the statement of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه as follows: 'what a time that was when the small world around us had changed totally. It seemed as if the people who used to be there are not there any more, nor our fruit farms, nor our homes, none of these were what they used to be. Everything looked strange. I became seriously concerned about myself. If I die in this state of mine, I thought, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not say the Ṣalāh of Janāzah (funeral prayer) for me. Or, if the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were to breath his last during this period, I shall be running around just like this all my life, condemned and disgraced before everyone. For this reason, as far as I was concerned, the whole Earth started appearing indifferent and desolate. So, we lived like that for fifty nights. At that time, the two companions of mine (Murārah and Hilāl) lost heart, sat home and wept. But, I was younger. I went out, walked around and made my Ṣalāh in the Masjid with other Muslims and roamed in the bazaars but nobody would talk to me nor respond to my *salām* greetings. I used to attend the customary sitting of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after the Ṣalāh was over. When I said my *salām* to him, I tried to figure out whether or not the blessed lips of the Holy Prophet moved to respond to my *salām*. Then I tried to offer my Ṣalāh just about close to him from where I would steal a glance towards him and discover that he looks at me when I get busy with my Ṣalāh, and when I look towards him, he turns his face away.

When this (considered) indifference of these people dragged longer, I went to my cousin Abū Qatādah who was the dearest of my friends. I jumped a wall to enter his farm and said my *salām* to him. By God, he too did not respond to my *salām*. I asked, 'O Abū Qatādah, do you not know that I love Allah Ta'ālā and His *rasūl*?' Even then, Abū Qatādah observed silence. He did not respond. When I repeated my question again and again, then – probably, the third or the fourth time – he

only said, 'Allah and His *rasūl* know best.' I broke into tears and came out of the farm jumping over the compound wall as I had done earlier. During those days, once I was walking through a bazaar of Madīnah when, all of a sudden, I noticed a farmer from Syria who had come to Madīnah to sell grains. I saw him asking people if anyone there could tell him the address of Ka'b ibn Mālik? When they saw me right there, they pointed out to me. The man came to me and gave me a letter from the king of Ghassān that was written on a silk handkerchief. It said:

'After salutations, I have come to know that your Prophet has betrayed you and that he has made you stay away from him. (I assure you) God has not chosen to put you in a place of disgrace and destruction. If you like to come to us, come. We shall help you.'

When I read this letter, I said to myself, 'here comes another test and trial for me when, of all the people, the partisans of disbelief (*kufr*) have now been tempted to expect such things from me (that I go and join them)!' Taking this letter in my hands, I stepped forward. There was a bread-baking shop with a heated oven. I threw the letter down into it.

Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه says, 'when forty out of the fifty nights had passed, I was given a surprise by Khuzaymah ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه, a message bearer of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who came towards me and said, 'the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has ordered that you should stay apart from your wife as well.' I said, 'should I divorce her? Or, do what?' He told me, 'no, just do not go near her.' The same order was communicated to my two companions also. I told my wife, 'go to the home of your parents and stay there till Allah Ta'ālā opens a way for us.'

After having heard this order, Khawlah bint 'Aṣim, the wife of Hilāl ibn Umayyah came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the plea that Hilāl ibn Umayyah was old and weak and that he had no servant to look after him. It also appears in a report of Ibn Abī Shaybah that she also said, 'he is weak-sighted as well. Would you not like to allow me to continue serving him?' He said, 'serving him is no problem, however, he should not seek to be near you.' She said, 'as for that, He is in to a state wherein he has no such desire – and, by God, he keeps weeping day and night.'

Ka'b ibn Mālīk says, 'some of my relatives and friends suggested to me too that I should also ask the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to allow me to keep my wife with me – similar to the permission he has given to Hilāl. I said, 'I will not do that. Who knows what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would say in reply? In addition to that, I am young (that is, living with one's wife was against precaution).' In this condition, I passed ten more nights until the count of fifty nights became complete.' The narrative of Musnad 'Abd al-Razzāq says, 'At that stage, the Divine decree about our Taubah (repentance) was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at the hour when one third of the night had passed. The Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Umm Salamah who was there at that time said, 'If you wish, Ka'b ibn Mālīk can be informed about it right now.' He said, 'That will bring a crowd of people here right now. It would become impossible to sleep for the rest of the night.'

Ka'b ibn Mālīk says, 'when the fiftieth night passed, I made my Fajr Ṣalāh and went to the roof. While I sat there my condition was a mirror of what Allah Ta'ālā has said in the Qur'ān – that the Earth was straitened for me despite all its vastness, and my own soul was straitened for me. (118) All of a sudden came the voice of a caller calling from the heights of the hill of Sal' loudly announcing: 'O Ka'b ibn Mālīk, 'Be happy with the good news'.

In a report from Muḥammad ibn 'Amr, it is said that the caller was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه who went up the hill of Sal' to announce that Allah Ta'ālā had accepted the Taubah of Ka'b and offered congratulations for his success. And narration of 'Uqbah رضى الله عنه says that two men ran to give this good news to Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه. When one ran ahead of the other, the one who had remained behind turned, climbed the hill of Sal', and announced the good news from there. It is said that the blessed souls who ran in that manner were Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين .

Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه says, 'Hearing this voice, I fell down prostrating in Sajdah. So happy was I that I broke into tears. I had learnt that my good days have come back. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had told the Ṣaḥābah after the Ṣalāh of Fajr that our Taubah was accepted. Everyone ran out to congratulate the three of us. Some of them rode on horses to reach me. But, the voice of the person calling

from the hill was quicker than the horse.

When I came out to present myself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, I saw that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sitting there. There was a cordon of his Ṣaḥābah around him. When Ṭalḥah ibn ‘Ubaidullāh saw me, he was the first to rise and rush towards me. Shaking my hands, he congratulated me for the acceptance of my Taubah. I cannot forget the good Ṭalḥah did to me on that day. When I said my *salām* to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his blessed face was radiant with delight. He said, ‘O Ka’b, I congratulate you for this day of bliss for you, the best day of your life since you were born.’ I said, ‘*Yā rasūlallāh*, is this order from you or is it from Allah Ta‘ālā?’ ‘No,’ he said, ‘this order is from Allah Ta‘ālā. You had told the truth. Allah Ta‘ālā made your truthfulness come out in the open.’

When I sat down before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, I said to him, ‘*Yā rasūlallāh*, I wish to walk out of all my wealth and property and give it as *ṣadaqah* in the way of Allah. This will be a part of my Taubah.’ ‘No,’ he said, ‘hold some of it for your needs. This is better.’ I said, ‘all right, can I give half of it as *ṣadaqah*?’ He rejected that too. Then, I asked his permission to give one-third of it. This he accepted. I said, ‘*Yā rasūlallāh*, I have been delivered from my predicament by Allah because I told the truth, therefore, I pledge before you that, as long as I live, I shall not say anything but the truth.’ Then, says Sayyidnā Ka’b رضى الله عنه, ‘since the time I had given this pledge to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, *al-ḥamdulillāh*, no word of lie was uttered by me up to this day – and I hope Allah Ta‘ālā shall protect me from it for the rest of my life.’ Sayyidnā Ka’b رضى الله عنه also says, ‘By God, after the blessing of Islām, I cannot think of having received a blessing greater than this. I mean that I told the truth before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that I did not lie – because, had I lied, I would have been ruined like those who took false oaths. About them the Qur’ān said: سَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ (They will swear by Allah before you, so that you may ignore their misdeeds – 95) up to فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ (Allah will not be pleased with the sinning people – 96).

It has been said that the continuation of the boycott of these three gentlemen was, perhaps, based on the wisdom that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had spent exactly fifty days during the expedition of Tabūk. (The entire narration of this Ḥadīth and the related event has been taken from Tafsīr Mazharī)

Points of Guidance from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk

The clarity and detail with which Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه has described his story contains many elements of guidance for Muslims. Therefore, this Ḥadīth has been presented here in full. These are as follows:

1. This Ḥadīth tells us that it was the customary practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in his usual battle plans that he would march out of Madīnah in a (feigned) direction that was opposite to the direction he was to go actually. The objective was to keep enemies of Islām in the dark about where to and against whom he was going to carry out his Jihād. This is what he defined as: *أَلْحَبُ حُدْعَةٌ* (*al-ḥarbu khuda'ah*) that is, 'in war, deception is permissible.' Some people fall in doubt about the drift of this statement. They think that deceiving the adversary by lying in war or Jihād is permissible. This is not correct. In fact, it means the kind of deception whereby one acts in a manner that succeeds in deceiving enemies. For instance, marching out for Jihād from the opposite direction does not mean deceiving by lying blandly – something not permissible even in war. Similarly, it should also be understood that this practical deception, which has been declared permissible, has no bearing on abiding by a pledge or treaty. Breaking of a pledge or treaty, whether in peace or war, is not permissible under any situation.

2. For his journeys, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم liked a Thursday, whether it was for Jihād or for some other purpose.

3. Telling a lie to please some elder or spiritual guide or teacher or father is neither permissible nor does it end well. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he was informed of the truth through revelation, therefore, the ultimate outcome of lying was evil – as clarified through the event relating to Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنه and to others who remained behind. After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, no saint or savant or pious elder or spiritual guide can claim to be a recipient of revelation. Then, getting to know things through inspiration (*ilhām*) and illumination (*kashf*) is not necessary either. But, experience shows that lying has an aura of evil about it, something that brings bad consequences in its wake. Causes converge naturally, so much so that this respected elder ultimately becomes displeased with the liar.

4. From this event we learn that the Amīr (the executive head) of

Muslims also has the right to order them to stop greeting and talking to someone as a punishment for some sinful misconduct of his – as it happened with these three gentlemen in the event concerned.

5. This event is a mirror of the love his Companions had for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The depth and extent of this love compelled them to continue staying in his company even during the days when he was displeased with them and they were subjected to a social boycott by the Companions who would neither greet, nor acknowledge greetings nor talk to them. A careful reader through the narration of the event would hardly miss their affection and concern for him particularly when they would look at their master with the corners of their eyes and try to assess the warmth of his attention and the emotional level of the bond between them. They were really tuned to him under all circumstances.

6. As for the attitude of Sayyidnā Abū Qatādah رضى الله عنه, cousin and friend of Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, who did not respond to the latter's *salām* nor talked to him, it is fairly obvious that he did not do so because of some enmity, hostility or malice. In fact, this was done for the sole reason that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had ordered him to do so and that he was duty-bound to follow it. This tells us that the law given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not only enforced on the physical exterior of people but was also implemented inwardly as well. The law ruled over their hearts. They would not do anything against it under any condition, present or absent – even if they had to act against the dearest of their friends and relatives.

7. The episode relating to the king of the Ghassān who wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه who threw it down into a heated oven shows how staunch as believers the Ṣaḥābah were. Here is one of them, terribly nervous about the displeasure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the boycott by fellow Muslims, yet the tempting offer made by a King fails to move his heart in that direction.

8. That Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar and other noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين ran to congratulate Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه as soon as they heard about the acceptance of his Taubah is significant. Let us keep in mind that they had avoided the social graces of greeting and talking before this happened. This shows that the love for Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه was very much present in their

hearts even during the days of the boycott – though, they had to surrender it in favor of carrying out the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When the 'Āyah of Taubah (the verse of repentance) was revealed, their deep mutual affection became manifest.

9. From the conduct of the noble Ṣaḥābah who went to disclose the good news to and congratulate Sayyidnā Ka'b رضى الله عنه, we learn that congratulating friends on a happy occasion has its basis in Sunnah.

10. When repenting from a sin, taking out a *ṣadaqah* from one's assets helps to do away with the effects of sin, but it is not good to give away the whole of it in charity. Giving more than one third of what one owns in *ṣadaqah* was not liked by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Advice to Muslims: Observe Taqwā and be with those true in word and deed

This brings us to the last verse: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ (O those who believe, fear Allah, and be in the company of the truthful – 119). The event of having remained behind as related to some otherwise sincere people, and the ultimate acceptance of their repentance, was all a result of their Taqwā, the fear of Allah and the sense of being responsible before him. Therefore, in this verse, the large masses of Muslims have been instructed to observe Taqwā (as a constant feature of their personal lives). Then, by saying: كُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ (be in the company of the truthful), it was hinted that the only way to achieve Taqwā was to frequent the company of those who are good in their deeds and true in their words, and to approximate one's own conduct to theirs. Perhaps, this may also be pointing out to the slip made by these people that was caused by the company they kept with hypocrites and their suggestions and advises they listened to. One should stay away from the company of those who are disobedient to Allah, and take to the company of the truthful. The Qur'ān has not said 'the learned' ('*ulamā*') or 'the righteous' (*ṣalāḥā*) at this place. Rather, by electing to use the word: الصَّادِقِينَ (*aṣ-ṣādiqīn*: the truthful), it has also told us about the real identity of the 'learned' and the 'righteous'. Such a truthful person has to be the one whose exterior and the interior are the same and who is also true in intention, and true in word, and true in deed as well.

Verses 120 - 121

مَا كَانَ لِأَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ أَنْ يَتَخَلَّفُوا

عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَرْغَبُوا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ
لَا يُصِيبُهُمْ ظَمَأٌ وَلَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا
يَطْئُونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِنْ عَدُوِّ نَيْلًا إِلَّا
كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ
﴿١٢٠﴾ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً وَلَا يَقْطَعُونَ
وَادِيًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

It was not for the people of Madīnah and for those around them of the Bedouins to stay behind abandoning the Messenger of Allah, nor to prefer their own lives to his life. That is because whatever thirst or fatigue or hunger strikes them in the way of Allah, and whenever they step into a place which infuriates the infidels, and whenever they make a gain from an enemy, a virtuous deed is credited to their account. Surely, Allah does not destroy the reward of the virtuous. [120] And whatever they spend, be it less or more, and whenever they cross a valley, is all written down for them, so that Allah may give them the best reward for what they used to do. [121]

Commentary

The two verses cited above admonish those who missed to join the expedition of Tabūk for no valid reason. They have also been told that they did what was not proper. Then the verses describe the merits of people who take part in Jihād and tell us about the great rewards they get for everything they do there. Included here is the causing of hurt or loss to the enemy and the using of a strategy that infuriates the adversary. All these are good deeds, and worthy of *thawāb* (reward from Allah).

Verse 122

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَآفَّةً ۗ فَلَوْ لَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ

مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا
إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

And it is not for the believers to go forth all together. So, why should it not be that a group from every section of them goes forth, so that they may acquire perfect understanding of the Faith, and so that they may warn their people when they return to them, that they may be cautious. [122]

Commentary

It will be realized that the expedition of Tabūk has continued appearing as an important subject in Sūrah Al-Taubah. For this battle, a general call of Jihād was given asking all Muslims to participate in it. It was not permissible to contravene the order without a valid excuse. Those who did that were mostly hypocrites who have been mentioned in several verses appearing earlier. Then, some sincere Muslims had also remained behind due to their incidental laziness. Their repentance was accepted by Allah Ta'ālā. Obviously, from all these events it can be gathered that the going forth of all Muslims in every Jihād is *farḍ* (obligatory) and staying behind is *ḥarām* (unlawful) – although, this is not the religious law. In fact, Jihād during normal conditions is *Farḍ al-Kifayah*, a collective obligation. It means that, should a number of Muslims sufficient for Jihād keeps engaged in Jihād, rest of the Muslims stand absolved of the obligation. However, if the number participating in Jihād turns out to be insufficient to the limits of being overpowered, it becomes obligatory on Muslims living nearby that they should come out to strengthen them and fight with them in the Jihād. If they too are not sufficient, the obligation falls on those near the later, and if they too are not sufficient, it falls on Muslims adjoining the later. This could reach the limit when, under such emergent conditions, Jihād becomes *Farḍ 'Ain* (absolute individual obligation) on Muslims of the whole world, and it will be *ḥarām* (unlawful) to avoid participating in *jihād*. Similarly, it could also become equally obligatory (*farḍ*) if the Amir of Muslims, seeing the need, gives a general call and invites Muslims to join the mission of Jihād. At that time too, participation in Jihād becomes obligatory (*farḍ*) and staying behind becomes *ḥarām* (unlawful) – as it happened in the expedition of Tabūk

due to the general call of Jihād given for it. The verse cited above clarifies that this order to join the Jihād of Tabūk was a specific order due to the general call for it. Under normal conditions, Jihād is not an individual obligation (Farḍ al-‘Ain) that would require all Muslims to go forth in Jihād as a matter of obligation – because, like Jihād, there are other collective concerns and important undertakings of Islām and Muslims that are Farḍ al-Kifāyah, also like Jihād. To fulfill these responsibilities too, different groups of Muslims have to follow the principle of division of work. Therefore, all Muslims should not go forth in every Jihād. The submission here may also help you understand the reality of Farḍ al-Kifāyah. The, areas of work that are not individual, but collective in nature, and the responsibility of carrying these out falls on all Muslims, are areas that the Shari‘ah of Islām has declared to be Farḍ al-Kifāyah. The purpose is that everything keeps being taken care of in its respective area and that all collective duties continue to be fulfilled. Duties such as washing, shrouding, offering Ṣalāh of Janāzah and burying deceased Muslims, the making and maintaining of mosques, Jihād and the guarding of Islāmic frontiers are all separate duties that are subject to the same rule of Farḍ al-Kifāyah. In other words, the responsibility of fulfilling these obligations though falls on the Muslims of the whole world as a matter of principle but, should some of them were to do that satisfactorily enough, other Muslims also stand absolved of the obligation. An important area of work that falls within the imperatives of this Farḍ al-Kifāyah is the religious education. That it is an obligation has been particularly mentioned in this verse by saying that this obligation should not be left out unattended even during the period of engagement in as important a duty as Jihād. The way in which it could be accomplished is that a smaller section from out of every large section sets forth for Jihād while the rest of people keep engaged in the pursuit of religious education. Then, those so educated should orient Muslims going on Jihād as well as teach and train others in their religion.

The obligation of acquiring religious knowledge, and its etiquette

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said, ‘this verse is the root and foundation of religious knowledge (the *‘ilm* of *dīn*) for its seeker.’ If looked at carefully, also given here is a brief curriculum (*niṣāb*) of religious education, as well as the duties of the person (*‘ālim*) who has qualified as one who

has this knowledge. Therefore, this subject is being taken up in some details.

The merits (*faḍā'il*) of acquiring religious knowledge

Muslim scholars have written regular books on the merits of religious knowledge, great rewards (*thawāb*) it brings and aspects related with it. Some brief reports relevant to the occasion are being cited here. Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه who narrated that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saying, 'whoever travels on a path for seeking knowledge (*'ilm of dīn*), Allah Ta'ālā will – in reward (*thawāb*) for his effort – turn the orientation of his path towards Paradise.'

A series of Ḥadīth narratives appearing in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī report that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

1. 'The angels of Allah spread out their wings for (welcoming) the seeker of knowledge;'
2. 'Allah's creatures in the heavens and the earth and fishes in the waters of the world pray for such seekers;'
3. 'The superiority of the 'Ālim over the person who devotes to voluntary acts of worship (*nafl 'ibadāt*) abundantly is like the superiority of the full moon over the rest of the stars;'
4. 'Ulama' are the inheritors of the blessed prophets;'
5. 'The blessed prophets leave no gold and silver as inheritance, but they do leave the legacy of knowledge. So, whoever inherits this legacy of knowledge has inherited great wealth.'

Dārimī reports a Ḥadīth in his Musnad which says: 'Someone asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: There were two men in Banī Isrā'īl. One was an 'Alim who would offer his prayers and then get busy teaching people their religion. The other fasted during the day and stood for prayers during the night. Of the two, who is superior? He said, "That 'Ālim (man of religious knowledge) is superior to the 'Ābid (man of religious worship) as I am superior to a very common person from among you." (Reported by Imām Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in his book, Jami'u Bayān al-'Ilm, from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه with relevant chain of narrators.) (Qurṭubī)

And the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'a *faqīh* (expert Muslim

jurist), when confronting Shaytān, is stronger than a thousand worshippers.’ (Tirmidhī from Ibn ‘Abbās – as in Maẓharī). Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also said, ‘when a person dies, his deeds come to an end – except three, the *thawāb* (reward) of which keeps reaching that person even after death. One: *ṣadaqah jāriyah* (act of charity the benefits of which continue) such as *masjid*, building for religious education or institutions of public welfare. Two: Knowledge through which people continue to benefit even later on. (For example, a student of religion became an ‘Ālim who set in motion a chain of learning and teaching the knowledge of religion for future generations; or someone wrote a book from which people kept benefiting even after the author was gone). Three: Children who are good (in character and up-bringing) and who keep praying for parents and do things the reward (*thawāb*) of which continues to reach them.’ (Qurtūbī)

Details of Individual and Collective Obligation in the Learning of Religion

Backed by sound authority, Ibn ‘Adiyy and al-Baihaqī report from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: **طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ** (Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim). (Maẓharī). It is all too obvious that the sense of ‘ilm (knowledge) – as in this Ḥadīth, as well as in those quoted a little earlier – is nothing but the ‘ilm of *dīn* (the knowledge of religion). Granted that worldly arts and sciences may be necessary for one as a part of the material management of life on this earth, but their merits are not the same as mentioned in the Āḥadīth appearing above. Then, the ‘ilm of *dīn* (knowledge of religion) is not some solitary area of knowledge. It is a comprehensive system composed of many sciences. Then, it is also obvious that every Muslim man and woman does not have the capacity to acquire full mastery over all these sciences. Therefore, when the Ḥadīth speaks of ‘knowledge being obligatory on every Muslim,’ it means the particular part of the knowledge of religion without which one can neither fulfill his or her obligations, nor stay away from the *ḥarām* (unlawful things) – being principles that are inseparably necessary for ‘Imān and Islām. As for the rest of the sciences, we should keep in mind that there are many more details of explanations, elements of wisdom and issues culled from the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth alone, not to mention the great range of injunctions and laws deduced from these sources. These are things beyond the capacity and control of every

Muslim, nor has this been made an individual obligation (Fard al-‘Ain) for each one of them. However, this is Fard al-Kifāyah (collective obligation), and as such, it becomes the responsibility of the Islāmīc world as a whole. The presence of one ‘Ālim, a genuine expert in all these sciences and religious laws in every city makes the rest of Muslims absolved of this obligation. If a city or township has not even one ‘Ālim, it becomes obligatory on the people of the city or township that they should arrange to make someone from among themselves an ‘Ālim. If that is also not possible, they should invite one from outside, keep him in their city so that they can know, understand and act according to the *fatwā* of this scholar, specially when the need is acute and the problems are delicate. Therefore, given below are details of Fard al-‘Ain and Fard al-Kifāyah as they relate to the ‘ilm of *dīn* (knowledge of religion):

Fard al-‘Ain: Individual Obligation

It is obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman, to acquire the knowledge of:

1. Islām’s correct and authentic ‘Aqā’id (beliefs).
2. Rules of Ṭahārah (purity) and Najāsah (impurity).
3. Ṣalāh (prayers), Ṣawm (fasting) and all ‘Ibadāt made *farḍ* (obligatory) or *wājib* (necessary) by the Shari‘ah.
4. Things declared to be *ḥarām* (unlawful) or *makrūh* (reprehensible or repugnant).
5. The rulings and injunctions of Zakāh (prescribed alms) on the part of one who owns property or wealth above the fixed *niṣāb* or threshold.
6. The rulings and injunctions of Ḥajj on the part of one who has the capability of performing Ḥajj, for it is an individual obligation on him or her.
7. The rulings and injunctions of sale and lease (*bai‘* and *ijārah*) on the part of one who has to buy and sell or run a business or industry or work on wages or salary, for it is his individual obligation to do that.
8. The rulings and injunctions of *nikāh* (marriage) when getting married – and of *ṭalāq* (divorce) as well.

In brief, there are things the Shari‘ah of Islām has made obligatory

or necessary on everyone. Acquiring the knowledge of the rules relating to these is also obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman.

Knowing about Spiritual Purification is also an Individual Obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain)

Everyone knows that the knowledge of the imperatives relating to one's outward acts like Ṣalāh and Ṣawm is Farḍ al-'Ain. However, Qāḍī Thanāullah Panīpatī, the author of Tafsīr Mazhari has written under his commentary on this verse that it is also *farḍ al-'ain* to acquire the knowledge of the imperatives and prohibition pertaining to one's inner acts and qualities. This kind of knowledge is usually called the science of *Taṣawwuf*. Since these imperatives fall under the category of *farḍ al-'ain*, their knowledge too is *farḍ al-'ain*.

But, the field of knowledge called Taṣawwuf in our time has, become a potpourri of many fields of knowledge and insights, illuminations and sense experiences. What is meant by Farḍ al-'Ain at this place is nothing but that part of it which deals with the obligatory injunctions pertaining to one's inner acts and qualities. For instance, there is the matter of true, correct and authentic 'Aqā'id (beliefs). These relate to man's inward state. Or, take the case of spiritual virtues like *ṣabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), *tawakkul* (trust), *qanā'ah* (satisfaction with the available) and similar others. These are obligatory (*farḍ*) in a particular degree. Or take the case of spiritual vices like pride and arrogance, malice and rancor, miserliness and greed for the material and similar others. These are *ḥarām* (forbidden) on the authority of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. So, it is also obligatory (*farḍ*) on every Muslim, man and woman, that he and she must find out the reality behind these and learn the methods of acquiring virtues and avoiding what has been forbidden. (Irrespective of the claims made in the field of Taṣawwuf or in its counter-Islāmic versions of mysticism and its many derivations) the sole basis of Taṣawwuf is no more than what is Farḍ 'Ain (under Islāmic Law).

Farḍ al-Kifāyah

To comprehend why the 'Ilm of *Dīn* (the full knowledge of religion) has been made Farḍ al-Kifāyah, it will be useful to glance through what it entails. For your convenience, the integrated whole appears in three parts as follows:

1. To understand the meanings and rulings of the entire Qur'ān,

2. To understand all Āḥadīth and to master the ability to sift and recognize the trustworthy from the untrustworthy,

3. To acquire a complete knowledge of all injunctions and rulings deduced from the Qur'ān, and Sunnah and a full awareness of the views of the Ṣaḥābah, the Ṭābi'īn and the Mujtahid Imāms, expressed by them orally or practically.

Knowing all this is a monumental task which is not easy even after one devotes. Therefore, the Shari'ah of Islām has declared this field of knowledge to be Farḍ al-Kifāyah, that is, if some people acquire all this knowledge to the extent of its need in community life, rest of Muslims shall stand absolved.

The curriculum of the 'Ilm of Dīn

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has used one single word to tell us about the essence of the knowledge or science of religion, and its curriculum as well. If the text had chosen to say something like: **يَتَعَلَّمُوا الدِّينَ** (that is, so that they acquire the knowledge of religion), it would have obviously suited the occasion. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has bypassed the word: **تعلم** (*ta'allum*: learning) and elected to go by the word: **تَفَقَّه** (*tafaqquh*: understanding). This gives a clear indication that a simple reading of the 'ilm of dīn is not enough. This is something many disbelievers, Jews and Christians also do. Then, Shayṭān is supposed to have it all, more than anyone. The fact of the matter is that the 'ilm of dīn means 'to create an understanding of religion.' This is the exact translation of the word: **تَفَقَّه** (*tafaqquh*) in the verse. A derivation from: **فَه** (*fiqh*), which essentially means understanding and comprehension. At this point, it is worth noticing that the Holy Qur'ān has not even said: **يَتَفَقَّهُوا الدِّينَ** (*liyafqahud-dīn*: so that they understand the religion) by employing the verb from the simple (bare, denuded) form. Instead, the Qur'ān has said: **يَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ** (*liyatafaqqahū fi 'd-dīn*: so that they may acquire a perfect understanding of the Faith). Being from 'bāb al tafa'ul (باب تفعل), it has the added sense of exertion and striving in its pursuit. Thus, the drive of the meaning is that they should, while trying to create a perfect understanding of religion, acquire the maximum possible expertise through continuous striving, hard work and endurance. Then, it is also evident that the kind of understanding of religion we are talking about does not materialize by finding out the problems and solutions concerning purity, impurity, prayers, fasting,

Zakāh and Ḥajj. In fact, the understanding of religion means that one understands that he or she will have to account for every word, deed, movement and rest in the Hereafter, and that how should he or she live in this world (in view of that). The perfect understanding of religion is really the name of this concern. Therefore, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah defines *fiqh* (understanding) by saying, 'that one understands everything the doing of which is necessary for him or her, and also understands everything abstaining from which is necessary for him or her.' As for the current definition of 'Ilmu 'l-Fiqh as a religious science that deals with its subsidiary problems and rulings, it is a later day terminology. The reality of Fiqh as it appears in Qur'ān and Sunnah is no more than what the great Imām has stated: 'a person who has read through all books of religion but did not acquire this understanding is not an 'Ālim in the terminology of Qur'ān and Sunnah.' So, the gist of the investigation made here tells us that, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, the sense of acquiring the knowledge of religion is to acquire its understanding, regardless of sources employed in such acquisition. These may be books or the company of teachers. They all form part of the curriculum.

The essential duty of an 'Ālim after he acquires the knowledge of Dīn

This too the Holy Qur'ān has put in one single sentence: **يُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ** : "so that they may warn their people (against the disobedience of Allah)." At this place as well, it is worth attention that the sentence has identified 'the warning of a people' as a duty of the 'Ālim. The Arabic word: **انذار** (*indhār*) is usually translated into English as warning in the sense of putting the fear of something into someone, though it still does not convey the ultimate sense in full. The truth of the matter is that such warning or putting the fear of what must be avoided can take many forms. For instance, one may warn against an enemy, thief, robber or some beast or poisonous creeper. Then, there is the kind of warning a father would give, out of his affection and concern for his children, against things that hurt, like the fire, poisonous insects and unhealthy food. This is based on love, and on the desire to protect which has a special tone and temper, totally different from the former. *Indhār* is the name of warning given in that manner and with that motive. Therefore, prophets and messengers of Allah have been given the title of **نذير** (*nadhīr*: warner) and this duty of warning people assigned to

the 'Alim is really nothing but a part of the legacy left by prophets which, according to the binding authority of Ḥadīth, the 'Alim inherits.

At this point, we may also wish to consider that the blessed prophets are known by two appellations: Bashīr and Nadhīr. You already know the meaning of *nadhīr* (warner) from the preceding discussion. Bashīr means one who gives *bashārah*, that is, good news or glad tidings. It is a part of the mission of blessed prophets that they give glad tidings to those who act righteously. Though, at this place too, what has been mentioned is *indhār* or warning explicitly, yet, other textual imperatives show that it is also the duty of an 'Alim that he should give good news of rewards too for those who do good deeds. Now that the mention of *indhār* (warning) has been considered sufficient at this place has its reason. Actually, it indicates that man is charged with two things. One: that he elects to do what is beneficial for him in this world and in the world to come. Two: that he avoids doing things likely to bring harm to him. People of learning and people of wisdom both agree that the later of the two has the higher priority. In the terminology of Muslim jurists, this is known as 'bringing benefit' and 'repelling harm' and the latter has been given precedence to the former. In addition to that, when harm is repelled, it serves the purpose of bringing benefit in its own way, because if someone abandons what is beneficial and necessary for him, it brings harm. Given this situation, whoever makes the effort to stay safe from the harmful effects of bad deeds will also make the effort to stay away from leaving off what one must do necessarily.

From here we also learn the main reason why religious sermons and acts of *da'wah* generally remain ineffective in our time. We have seen a glimpse of the cardinal etiquette of *indhār* or warning, as given above. Contemporary sermons and acts of *da'wah* seem to miss the manners, something that would exude care, concern, attachment, mercy and the earnest wish to give out what is really good for the listeners, not only in words but through the style of address and the empathy of tone and diction as well. It would be wonderful if the addressee comes to believe that the things the speaker is saying do not aim at disgracing him or settling scores against him, in fact, this person is telling me what he thinks is good and beneficial for me just out of love. If the *tablīgh* we do today or the *da'wah* we carry to correct people who

violate commandments of the Sharī'ah were to adopt this pattern of behavior, it is absolutely certain that it will bring forth at least one immediate response: the addressees will not be apprehensive, irritated, dogmatic or obstinate about our submission. They would not worry about confronting us. Everyone would, rather, become attuned to himself and start sorting out his own doings and thinking about what was going to happen to him. And if this effort continues, the time is to come, sooner or later, when such a person will be even willing to accept what had been presented before him. The second outcome of this attitude is that it will not, at least, generate mutual hatred and altercation, something which holds contemporary Muslims in its grips.

In the end, by saying: *لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ* (that they may be cautious), it was also indicated that the duty of an 'Alim was not simply limited to putting the fear of Allah's punishment in the hearts of people. Instead, he also has to watch and assess the extent and measure of the effect generated by his *tabligh* and *da'wah*. May be it did not work the first time. If so, let him do it again and again, until he sees its result: "يَحْذَرُونَ" with his own eyes, which means that his people have become cautious and have started staying away from sins. Allah knows best.

Verses 123 - 127

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ
وَلِيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً ۗ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾
وَإِذَا مَا أَنْزَلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَقُولُ آيُكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَذِهِ
إِيمَانًا ۗ فَمَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ
﴿١٢٤﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَى
رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ أَوْ لَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُونَ
فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوبُونَ وَلَا هُمْ يَذَكَّرُونَ
﴿١٢٦﴾ وَإِذَا مَا أَنْزَلَتْ سُورَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ هَلْ
يَرَاكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انصَرَفُوا ۗ صَرَفَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ
لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

O those who believe, fight those disbelievers who are near you, and let them find severity in you. And be sure that Allah is with the God-fearing. [123]

And when a Sūrah is sent down, some of them say, "Who among you has been increased in faith by it?" As for those who believe, they have been increased in faith by it, and they are quite happy. [124]

But those who have malady in their hearts are increased by it in impurity in addition to their own impurity, and they die infidels. [125]

Do they not see that they are put to trial every year once or twice, still they do not repent, nor do they take lesson? [126]

And when a Sūrah is sent down, they look at each other (as if saying): "Is there someone watching you?" Then they slip off. Allah has turned their hearts, because they are a people who do not understand. [127]

Commentary

Previous verses carried inducement to Jihād. The first verse from the present ones (123) which opens with the words: *يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا* (O those who believe, fight those disbelievers who are near you) gives details, for disbelievers are spread out all over the world and any confrontation with them has to have some sort of functional sequence. The verse says that Jihād should first be waged against those of the disbelievers who were near. 'Being near' could be taken in terms of the place, that is, the disbelievers who live closer to home base should be fought against first. And it could also be understood in terms of relationship, that is, those who are near in kinship, parentage and other social bonds should be given precedence. This is because Islāmic Jihād is essentially carried out in their interest and for their well being, therefore, when it comes to care and concern, kinsfolk have precedence – similar to the command given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم *وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ* (And warn your near relatives against the punishment of Allah – 26:214). He carried out the command by assembling people from his family and conveyed to them the Word of Allah as revealed to him. The circle then became larger. Keeping the same principle of near and far, confronted first, as compared to others, were disbelievers who lived in the vicinity of Madīnah, such as Banū Qurayzah, Banū Nadīr and the people of Khaibar. After that came the fight against the rest

within the Arabian Peninsula. And after things were settled there, came the last command to fight the disbelievers of Byzantium that resulted in the expedition of Tabūk.

In the second sentence of verse 123: **وَلِيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً** (and let them find severity in you), the word: **غلظة** (*ghilḏah*) means severity or toughness. The sense is that the disbelievers must be confronted in a manner that would not allow them to take their adversary to be weak.

The sentence: **كَرَّادْتُمُومًا** (they have been increased in faith by it) in verse 124 tells us that the reciting the verses of the Qur'an, pondering over them, and acting in accordance with their dictates makes one advance in faith. One feels changes for the better, the higher. When 'Īmān increases, so does its light and sweetness. Once in this blissful state, one starts seeing obedience to Allah and His Rasūl as easy. 'Ibādah becomes inviting. One can feel the very taste of it. Sins pose no problems, for one starts hating sins by his own nature. They tempt no more. In fact, they irritate and vex.

Sayyidnā 'Alī **رضى الله عنه** has said, 'when 'Īmān enters the heart, it is like a radiant dot. As 'Īmān increases, its radiance increases, until the whole heart becomes blissfully radiant. Similarly, disbelief and hypocrisy start appearing on the heart first as a black dot. Then, with every increase in sin and disbelief, the dot keeps increasing in size until the whole heart turns black.' (Mazhari). For this reason, the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** used to tell each other, 'let us sit together for a while and remind each other of things relating to our *dīn* and '*ākhirah* so that it increases our 'Īmān.'

In verse 126: **يُفْتَنُونَ فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ** (they are put to trial every year once or twice), hypocrites have been warned about their incorrigible hypocrisy and constant breach of trust which brought all sorts of troubles for them every year once or twice. They saw the defeat of their disbelieving accomplices, the *kuffār* of Makkah. Then, they had to face the disgrace brought upon them when their hypocrisy was exposed. So, there was no dearth of warning signals for them. Incidentally, the count of 'once' or 'twice' here does not signify the numbers one and two as such. In fact, the purpose is to stress that this chain of action and reaction keeps moving all the time yet they take no lesson from what happens to them.

Verses 128 - 129

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ
 عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ
 حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ
 الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١٢٩﴾

Surely, there has come to you a Messenger from amongst you, hard on whom is your suffering, for the good of you he craves and for believers he is kind, merciful. [128]

So, if they turn away, say, "Enough for me is Allah. There is no god but He. In Him I have placed my trust, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne." [129]

Commentary

These are the last verses of Sūrah Al-Taubah where it has been declared that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is very kind and merciful for the entire creation of Allah, particularly so for Muslims. Then, in the last verse, he has been told that he should observe patience and trust Allah even if there are people who do not come to believe despite all his efforts.

That this theme appears at the end of Sūrah Al-Taubah happens to be very appropriate. It will be recalled that this Sūrah has been full of references to the declaration of withdrawal from the disbelievers, the ultimate severance of relationship with them and then fighting in Jihād against them. This is, however, the last resort of the Call to Allah subject to the condition that the initial steps of Da'wah (call) and Tablig (communication of the Message) leave no hope of correction and betterment. But, the basic function of the prophets is to invite people to the way of Allah with love, affection, sympathy and an earnest desire for their well-being; if they have to face aversion from the people or have to suffer some hardships, they are supposed to leave it to Allah and place their trust in Him, for He is the Lord of the Great Throne. By saying the Rabb or Lord of the Great 'Arsh, the purpose is to lay stress on the fact that He encompasses the entire creation.

The last two verses, according to Sayyidnā 'Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b رضي الله

عنه, are the last verses of the Qur'ān. After these no other verse was revealed and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم left the mortal world. This is also the statement of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه . (Qurtubī)

Great merits of these two verses appear in Ḥadīth. Sayyidnā Abū-d-Dardā' رضى الله عنه says, 'One who recites these verses three times, morning and evening, shall find that Allah Ta'ālā makes things easy for him (Qurtubī)' Allah knows best.

The Commentary

On

Sūrah Al-Taubah

Ends here.

Sūrah Yūnus

(Jonah)

Sūrah Yūnus is Makkī and it has 109 Verses and 11 Sections

Verses 1 - 4

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the All Merciful

الرَّا تِلْكَ آيَاتِ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١﴾ أَكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا أَنْ
 أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ أَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنَّ
 لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ط قَالَ الْكٰفِرُونَ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ
 ﴿٢﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِى سِتَّةِ
 أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ ط مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ
 بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ ط ذٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاَعْبُدُوهُ ط أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾ إِلَيْهِ
 مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ حَقًّا، إِنَّهُ يَبْدُوَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ
 لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّٰلِحٰتِ بِالْقِسْطِ وَالَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا
 يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٤﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. These are verses of the Wise Book. [1] Is it surprising for people that We have revealed to a man from among them (saying): “Warn the people and give happy news to those who believe that they will have a perfect place with their Lord.”? The disbelievers said, “Surely, he is an open sorcerer.” [2]

Surely, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He took a straight position on the Throne. He manages all matters. There is no intercessor except after His permission. That is Allah, your Lord. So, worship Him. Would you still pay no heed? [3]

Towards Him is the return of you all – a real promise from Allah. Surely, He originates the creation, then He will bring it again so that He may reward those who believe and do good deeds, with justice. As for those who disbelieve, for them there is a drink of boiling water and a painful punishment because they used to disbelieve. [4]

Commentary

Sūrah Yūnus is among the Makki Sūrahs. Three of its verses revealed after the Hijrah to Madīnah have been called Madani.

In this Sūrah too, the proof of the basic objectives of Qur'an, and Islam, such as the Oneness of Allah, the mission of His Messenger and the inevitability of the Hereafter, has been provided. Since it has been presented in the background of the universe of our experience and observation, it becomes easy to comprehend. Along with it, some lesson-oriented historical accounts and stories have been introduced to warn people who do not pay heed to the open signs of Allah Ta'ālā. As a corollary, the text refutes *shirk* whereby heedless people start ascribing partners to the pristine divinity of Allah – and also answers some related doubts. This is a gist of the subjects taken up in the Sūrah. A careful look at these will help us understand the interconnection between the previous Sūrah, Al-Taubah, and the present one. Sūrah Al-Taubah was making a strong statement when it opted for breaking through the powerful cordon of *kufr* and *shirk* to achieve the same objectives through material means by waging Jihād against deniers and disbelievers. And since the present Sūrah was revealed in Makkah before the injunctions of Jihād came, these objectives have been explained and proved only by arguments and evidences very much in accordance with the law of the Makkan period.

The Sūrah opens with the letters: Alif, Lām, Rā (آل). Known as 'isolated letters.' Many Sūrahs of the Qur'an begin with these. Debates on investigations made into the meaning of letter combinations like آل

(*Alif, Lām, Mīm*), *هـ* (*Hā, Mīm*) and *عسق* (*‘Ain, Sīn, Qāf*) by commentators are lengthy. But, we also have the authentic verdict of the Ṣaḥābah, the Ṭabī‘īn and the righteous elders of the community (*salaf*) about these ‘isolated letters.’ According to them, these are secret symbols or signs. In all likelihood, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was confided with their meaning but he elected to disclose to his community only those areas of knowledge and insight which their minds could bear by and which, if remained unknown, would impede the normal living of his people. Nothing that Muslims must do is dependent upon knowing the secrets of such ‘isolated letters,’ nor do they have to miss anything by not knowing them. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ too did not tell his community about their meaning as being unnecessary for them. Therefore, we too should not go about digging into it – because, it is certain that had the knowing of their meaning been expedient for us, our master, who was mercy personified for the whole world ﷺ, would have never hesitated in telling us about it.

In the first verse: *بَلَدًا ابْتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ* (These are verses of the Wise Book), the word: *بَلَدًا* (*tilka*: these) points out to the ‘*āyat*’ of this Sūrah which follow. ‘The Book’ refers to the Qur’ān. To describe its attribute, the Qur’ān has used the word: *حَكِيمِ* (*ḥakīm*) at this place. It means the Book of Wisdom.

The second verse refers to a doubt expressed by the Mushriks, and provides its answer. In a nutshell, these people had, out of their ignorance, somehow decided that a Messenger or Prophet who comes from Allah Ta‘ālā should not be a human being (*al-bashar*), instead, he should be an angel. The Qur’ān has refuted this absurd idea of theirs on several occasions from different angles. In one such verse, it was said: *قُلْ لَوْ كَانِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ يَسْمَعُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَسُولًا* (Say, “Had there been angels walking in peace on the Earth, We would have certainly sent to them from the heavens an angel–messenger!” – 17:95). In sum, the mission of a messenger cannot be accomplished unless there is a mutual homogeneity between this messenger and those to whom he is sent. Angels are homogenous to angels and human beings to human beings. If the purpose is to send a messenger for human beings, only a human being has to be made a messenger.

The same subject has been taken up in this verse in a different manner. The text sees no reason why would people wonder that a hu-

man being was made a messenger? Why was a human being entrusted with the mission of warning the disobedient ones against the punishment of Allah? Why was the task of heralding the good news of His rewards to the obedient ones assigned again to a human being? This kind of wondering deserves a counter-wonder, for sending a human messenger to the human race is perfect commonsense.

Good news to believers has been given in this verse by saying: **أَن لَّهُمْ** **قَدَمٌ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ** (that they will have a perfect place with their Lord). The initial meaning of the word: **قدم** (*qadam*) used here is 'step' as in English. Since 'qadam' is the medium of a person's effort, and advancement in its wake, therefore, a higher rank is called a 'qadam' in a figurative sense. Then, by attributing 'qadam' (high rank, place of honor) to **صدق** '*sidq*' (perfect as being true, certain, abiding, everlasting), it was emphasized that the high rank they were to get was real, certain, established, abiding and everlasting. This was not something like the ranks and offices of the mortal world. To begin with, it is never certain that one would get these at all. If, as a result of some extra effort, one does get one of these, their continuity cannot be certain. In fact, what is certain is that these will vanish in time. Sometimes, this could happen within one's lifetime. But, when comes the time to die, one goes empty-handed. All ranks, offices, blessings remain behind. So, the word: **صدق** (*sidq*) includes the sense of certainty, and also that of being perfect and everlasting in it. Therefore, the sentence means: O Prophet, give believers the good news that they will have a perfect place with their Lord, an asset that is certain and lasting.

Some commentators have said: Through the introduction of the word *sidq* at this place, an indication has been given that these high ranks can be achieved only through truth and absolute sincerity. Mere verbal claims of having faith and a formal recital of the *Kalimah* of 'Īmān is not enough, until one embraces the faith, truly and duly, verbally and emotionally and intellectually. It will invariably result in adherence to good deeds and avoidance of the evil ones.

In the third verse, the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) has been proved through the undeniable reality that there is no associate or partner to Allah Ta'ālā when it comes to the creation of the heavens and the earth and then to the management and operation of this entire universal system. When this reality stands established, how could someone

else be made an associate or partner in His pristine Divinity or in worship for Him and in obedience to Him? In fact, doing so is the highest conceivable injustice.

It was said in this verse that Allah Ta'ālā has created the heavens and the earth in six days. But, the day as we know it denotes the time from sunrise to sunset – and it is obvious that the sun did not exist before the creation of the heavens, earth and stars. How then could sunrise and sunset be calculated? Therefore, intended here is the measure of time utilized in between sunrise and sunset.

Making this huge world composed of the heavens, the Earth, the planets and the universe as a whole, ready and functional (a virtual turn-key job, so to say), can only be attributed to the Being who is the purest of the pure and exercises power that is absolute. When He intends to create, He needs no raw materials in advance or any staff to assist. Such is the station and degree of His perfect power that He, as and when He intends to create what He wills, creates instantly, without any raw materials or personnel or technical support. The time duration of these six days has only been chosen in consideration of His particular wisdom. Otherwise, it was also within His power that He could have created the heavens and the Earth and what it contained in a single instant.

After that it was said: *فَمَّا اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ* (then He took a straight position on the Throne). That which stands proved from the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth is that the 'Arsh (Throne) of the *Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful Allah) is some created object which encompasses the entire heavens and the Earth and the whole universe thereof. Thus, seen conversely, all that there is fits into the room inside it. Knowing anymore about its reality is beyond any human effort. No doubt, scientific knowledge in our time is at its zenith. Man is getting ready to reach planets comparatively nearer with mixed measures of success. However, scientists still confess that the distant planets are so far away from us that information about these through available instrumentation cannot be relied upon as a mirror of reality. Then, there are stars in the firmament even light from where has not yet reached our Earth – even though, as we know, the speed of light is 1, 86, 000 miles per second. When this is the graph of human limitations in scaling planets and stars, how could human efforts to find out what we know as the heav-

ens farther and higher from stars and planets be taken as credible (or even reasonable). And finally, what is believed to be the 'Arsh of the *Raḥmān* - encompassing all there is, even above what is termed as the seventh heaven - is a reality seeking access to which through technical ingenuity needs no comment.

So, up to this point, the third verse has told us that Allah Ta'ālā created the heavens and the earth and the whole system of the universe in six days, and 'after that He took a position on the Throne'. (The last sentence is a word arrangement in English for the words of the text: نَزَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ [thumma 's-tawā 'ala 'l-'arsh] which should be understood in the light of the comments appearing below).

This is certain, and evident enough that Allah, the high and the true, is above and beyond the human concepts of body and mass and of all attributes and characteristics they may have. Neither does His existence relate to any direction or form, nor is His stay in a place like the staying of the things of the world where they belong. Now then, how are we to explain the nature, mode or manner of His staying, establishing or positioning on the 'Arsh or Throne? This can be explained only by saying that these are from what is called '*mutashābihāt*' (statements of hidden meaning) in the terminology of Qur'an, a phenomena that cannot be comprehended by human reason. Therefore, about it, says the Qur'an: وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ (no one knows its interpretation except Allah. And those [who are] well-grounded in knowledge say: "We believe therein; - 3: 7) – and just do not bother to go digging out its reality. Therefore, there is a standard approach in all such matters where the attribution of Allah Ta'ālā has been made to a place or form, or where words, such as hand, face and shank, have appeared in the Qur'an for Allah Ta'ālā. The '*Aqīdah*' (belief) of the majority of the '*Ulamā*' of the Muslim *Ummah* is that one believes these words to be true in their place, and believes what Allah Ta'ālā means by them is correct, and believes that the concern to know about its nature and reality should be set aside as being beyond one's ability to comprehend it.

As for the later day '*Ulamā*' who have suggested some meanings to these things, they have done it only in a degree of probability, even in their own sight. They simply suggest – perhaps, it may mean this. They never say that the meanings they have given are certain. As ob-

vious, probabilities disclose no reality. Therefore, the only simple and straight creed (*maslak*) is that of the *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions), the *Tābi'īn* (Successors to Companions) and the *Salaf* (the righteous and worthy forebears and elders of the Faith). They were satisfied to live with the approach of entrusting the reality of such matters with Divine Knowledge.

This brings us to the next statement: *مُدَبِّرِ الْأَمْرِ* (He manages all matters). It means that, positioned on the Throne, He Himself manages all universes by virtue of His power. Then, comes the succeeding sentence: *مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ* translated as: 'There is no intercessor except after His permission.' It tells us that such is the majesty of Allah Ta'ālā that even a Prophet and Messenger cannot intercede on behalf of anyone, on their own, before Him – unless Allah Ta'ālā Himself grants them the permission to intercede, without which even they could not do that.

The fourth verse describes the '*Aqīdah* of '*Ākhirah* (Belief in the Hereafter): *إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا* (Towards Him is the return of you all). The announcement is asserted by saying: *وَعَدَ اللَّهُ حَقًّا* (a real [and true] promise from Allah). That it must be as promised has been explained through the simple logic of: *إِنَّهُ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ* (Surely, He originates the creation, then He will bring it again). The sentence is telling us that there is nothing surprising about it and that there is no sense in worrying about as to how this entire universe would start pulsating with life after it has been eliminated. The reason is that the Sacred Power who has the mastery to create something the first time, without any pre-existing matter and without any prototype of form and shape, should hardly find any difficulty in creating once again everything He had made then unmade.

Verses 5 - 6

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ
لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ ۗ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا
بِالْحَقِّ ۗ يَفْصِلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥﴾ إِنَّ فِي اخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ
وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ

يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦﴾

He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light, and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of the years, and the calculation (of time). Allah has not created all this but for something right. He elaborates the signs for a people who understand. [5]

Surely, in the alternation of night and day and in what Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, there are signs for a people who are God-fearing. [6]

Commentary

These two verses mention some signs openly visible in the universe of our experience. They are evidences of the perfect power and eloquent wisdom of the most exalted Allah. They prove that the Lord Almighty is fully capable of bringing about the end of this universe, reducing it to particles, then reassembling the particles and bringing everything back to life, all anew, making everyone account for one's deeds and get punishment or reward as enforced. And when He does that, it will be nothing but reasonable and wise. Thus, these two verses are an extension of what was said briefly in verse 3. Mentioned there was the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, the positioning on the Throne and the management of matters. The later proved that He did not, after having created the universe, abandon it to survive on its own, instead, He manages, directs and controls everything, all the time, every moment.

The opening statement of verse 5: هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا (He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light) is a part of this very system and its management. Both words: ضياء (diyā) and نور (nūr) mean glow and light, therefore, many master lexicographers have taken these as synonyms. 'Allamah al-Zamakhshari, al-Ṭibī, beside some others, said: Though the sense of light is common to both words, but nūr is general. Whether strong or weak, dim or clear, every light is referred to as nūr, while ضوء (daw' and diyā) refer to light that is strong and clear. One needs both kinds of light. For the usual business of life, the sharp and clear light of the day is required, while the comparatively dim light of the night is preferred for ordinary chores. If the day had nothing but the pale light of the moon, business will be affect-

ed adversely, and if the sun were to keep shining also during the night, sleep and chores that must be taken care of at that time alone would be disturbed. Therefore, nature made arrangements to provide both kinds of light by giving sunlight the degree of *ḍaw'* and *ḍiyā'* and let it manifest itself at the time when people are busy in business, vocation or other avenues of livelihood. And the moonlight was made to be gentle, pale and pleasing and the night was appointed to be the time of its manifestation.

The Holy Qur'ān has differentiated the lights of the sun and the moon variously at several places. In Sūrah Nūḥ, it was said: *وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا* (And made the moon a light therein and made the sun, a lamp – 71:16). Again, in Sūrah al-Furqān, it was said: *وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا* (and placed in it [the sky] a lamp, and a shining moon – 25:61). '*Sirāj*' means lamp and since the light from a lamp is its own and not borrowed from somewhere else, therefore, some commentators have said that *ḍiyā'* (ضياء) is the intrinsic light of something while نور (*nūr*) is extrinsic light derived from something else. This semantic approach appears to be influenced by Greek thought, otherwise it has no lexical basis and the Qur'ān too has not given any categorical verdict about it.

Zajjāj takes *ḍiyā'* to be the plural of *ḍaw'*. Perhaps, this may be indicative of the Sun being a compendium of the seven colours of light which show up in the post-rain rainbow. (Al-Manār)

Another manifestation of Divine power related to the system of the sun and the moon appears in the second sentence of verse 5: *وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ ۖ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَّتِ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ* 'and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of years and the calculation (of time).' The word قدر (*qaddara*) is a derivation from *taqdīr* (تقدير) which means to maintain something at the level of a particular quantity and measure in terms of time or place or attributes. To keep the timings of the night and the day at a particular measure, the Holy Qur'ān has said: *وَاللَّهُ بِقَدْرِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ* (And Allah determines [the measure of] the night and the day – 73:20). That spatial and travel distances have been kept at a particular measure finds mention elsewhere. In Sūrah Sabā, it was said about the habitations lying in between Syria and Sabā': *وَقَدَرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ* (and We determined between them the [distance of] journey – 34:18). And about quantitative measures in general, it was said: *وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا* (and created everything then determined a measure for it, determining pre-

cisely – Sūrah al-Furqān, 25:2).

The word: منازل (*manāzil*) in the verse under study is the plural form of منزل (*manzil*) which essentially means the place one arrives at on a journey, its stage or destination. Allah Ta'ālā has appointed specific limits for the movement of the Sun and the Moon, each of which is called *manzil* or stage. Since the Moon completes its orbit of the Earth every month, the count of its stages comes to thirty or twenty-nine. However, since the Moon is not visible at least for a day, therefore, its stages are usually known as twenty- eight. The orbit of the Sun is complete in a year and it has 360 or 365 stages. During the Arab Jāhiliyah, and by astronomers and mathematicians as well, particular names were given to these stages as borrowed from stars located in their proximity. Being above such technical nomenclatures, the Holy Qur'ān has simply referred to the distances the Sun and the Moon cover in specified number of days.

In the verse under discussion, the words: قَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلٌ (and determined for it stages) have been used with a pronoun in the singular form – although, being referred to here are the stages of both the Sun and the Moon. Therefore, some commentators say that, no doubt, what has been mentioned here is in the singular form, but in terms of the reference to each single one, it includes both. Examples of this usage abound in the Qur'ān, and Arabic idiom.

Some other commentators have said, 'though, Allah Ta'ālā has determined stages for the Sun and the Moon both but, at this place, the purpose is to describe the stages of the Moon only. Therefore, the pronoun in قَدَرَهُ (*qaddarahu*: determined for it) refers back to the Moon. The reason for this specification is that one cannot find out the stages of the Sun without the help of relevant instruments and calculations. Sunrise and sunset follow the same pattern every day throughout the year. A simple observation cannot tell anybody in what stage the Sun is on a given day. This is contrary to the case of the Moon. Its states are different every day. By the end of the month, it is just not visible. By observing such changes, even uneducated people can figure out the dates. For example, let us say the date today is March 8. Now, by just looking at the Sun, nobody can tell whether it is the 8th or the 21st. The case of the Moon is different. One can find out the date even by looking at it.

In the cited verse, the purpose is to tell people that man's own interest is also tied to these great signs of Allah Ta'ālā since the count of years, months and its dates can be kept through them. No doubt, this calculation can be made from the Sun and the Moon both. Years and months, both Solar and Lunar, are universally known. Then, the Qur'an has also mentioned in Sūrah al-'Isrā' (Bani Isrā'il):

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَاتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً
لِتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ .

And We made the night and the day two signs. Then made the sign of the night disappear, and put the sign of the day with the light to see, so that you may seek bounty from your Lord, and that you may come to know the number of years, and the count (of time) – (17:12).

Here, 'the sign of the night' means the Moon and 'the sign of the day,' the Sun. It is only after having mentioned both that it was said that you can find out the number of years and the dates of the months from these. And in Sūrah Al-Rahmān it was said: *الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ* which tells us that we can calculate the date, the month and the year through the Sun and the Moon both.

But, the calculation of month and date through the Moon is based on observation and experience. On the contrary, when done through the Sun, the calculations are so complex that no one other than regular mathematicians would understand them. Therefore, after having mentioned both the Sun and the Moon in this verse, when the Qur'an talks about having determined their stages, it elects to say: *قَدَرَهُ* (*qaddarahu*: determined for it) using the pronoun in its singular form, whereby mentioned there were the stages of the Moon only.

Since great attention is paid in the injunctions of Islam, practically in all situations, to ensure that abiding by them is easy for everyone – educated or uneducated, urbanized or rustic – therefore, reliance has usually been placed on lunar year, month and dates in its laws. Thus, it is the lunar calendar that operates in all matters of Islamic obligations and duties, such as, Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Zakāh, 'Iddah etc.

This does not mean that using the Solar Calendar is impermissible. In fact, one can choose to use the Lunar Calendar in the case of Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakāh and 'Iddah in accordance with the Shari'ah, but

use the Solar Calendar in commercial and vocational activities. However, this is subject to the condition that the Lunar Calendar must continue to be in use among Muslims on a collective basis, so that the occasions and timings of religious obligations such as Ramaḍān and Ḥajj are in common knowledge at all times. This is to avoid the terrible situation in which Muslims just know no other months but January, February etc. Muslim jurists, may the mercy of Allah be on them, have placed the responsibility of keeping the Lunar Calendar alive and functional on Muslims as *Fard al-Kifāyah* (collective obligation).

And there is no doubt about it that the Calendar used in the Tradition of the blessed prophets and in the Sunnah of the Last among them, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and in the practice of his rightly-guided *Khulafā'* was no other but this very Lunar Calendar. Using it, following in their footsteps, is certainly an effective cause of blessings and rewards for modern day Muslims as well.

In short, the verse points out to the perfect power and wisdom of Allah who created two inexhaustible treasure troves of light so harmoniously synchronized with the rest of the creation. And then, He determined ideal measures of their movement which help us find the time frame we are in, the year, the month, the day and its hours right up to every second. Neither does their movement vary, nor do they go ahead or remain behind, nor do these God-made marvels of what we call machines need any workshop appointments for repairs, nor greasing, nor replacement of worn-out parts. Someone in eternity had asked them to move and be good. This they are doing even today.

For added warning, it was said at the end of the verse (5): مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ: (الله خلق ذلك) (Allah has not created all this but for something right. He elaborates the signs for a people who understand). It means that Allah did not create all these things in vain. There is great wisdom behind it, and certainly numerous are the benefits they bring for human beings. These are elaborated signs. They are loud and clear. They are telling the truth to people who are blessed with reason and insight.

Similarly, it was said in the second verse (6) that there are signs in the coming of the night after the day and the day after the night, and in everything Allah has created in the heavens and the earth. These are open proofs (of the Oneness of Allah and the inevitability of the

Hereafter) for those who fear Allah.

That they are proofs of the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) is not difficult to see. He has the power to make things happen. He makes things as no one can. He creates everything without the help of materials, personnel and prototype, and has the mastery to operate them under a system that never breaks or must be replaced.

And they are proofs of the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) because Allah is a great creator. He created, in His infinite wisdom, objects of such proportion and efficiency for the benefit of human beings. Then, He made them follow a remarkably stable system. Now, it is not possible that He would have created human beings, who are the served ones in this universe, just for nothing, or just to eat and drink, or in some other nonchalant manner without assigning any duties to them. When it stands settled that some restrictions must apply to the served one of this universe, it also becomes necessary that those who observe or do not observe these restrictions should face an accounting of what they have done, sometime, somewhere. Naturally, those who do observe these shall be rewarded and those who do not shall be punished. Then, it is also obvious that things do not work like this in the present world of our experience. Here, reward and punishment do not follow that pattern. It is quite likely that a criminal here may be living better as compared to someone God-fearing, righteous and innocent. Therefore, it is necessary to have a day for the accounting of deeds, rewards and punishments. This is what Qiyāmah (The Last Day) and 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) are.

Verses 7 - 10

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا
بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غٰفِلُونَ ﴿٧﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ مِنَ النَّارِ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ فِي جَنَّاتِ
النَّعِيمِ ﴿٩﴾ دَعَوُهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحٰنَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلٰمٌ
وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

As for those who do not believe in meeting Us and are-

happy with the life of this world and are quite satisfied with it, and those who are heedless to Our signs, [7] they are the ones whose abode is the Fire because of what they used to earn for themselves. [8]

As for those who believed and did good deeds, their Lord will guide them by virtue of their belief, rivers flowing beneath them in the Gardens of Bliss. [9]

Their prayer therein will be, "Pure are You, O Allah" and their greeting therein will be "Salām." And the end of their call will be, "praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds." [10]

Commentary

In the previous verses, by mentioning the heavens and the earth and the Moon and the Sun, prominent manifestations of Allah's perfect power and wisdom, the belief in the Oneness of Allah and the Hereafter was proved eloquently. The first three of the present verses tell us that, despite such open signs and evidences spread out in this universe, human beings split up in two groups. One of the two groups was of those who paid just no heed to these Divine signs, failed to recognize their creator and master and failed to recognize even themselves. It never occurred to them that they were no animal like other animals. They never discovered that their Almighty Lord had blessed them with intelligence, reason and commonsense in a degree much higher than that of the animals. Their Lord had put the entire resources of Divine creation at their doorsteps. Everything was as if commissioned to serve them. This should have made them realize that there has to be something their Lord would want them to do, some duty or obligation or charge. If that had to be the case, they would have to account for whatever they had been asked to do. And for this it would be necessary that there should be a day fixed for ultimate reckoning and recompense – known as the day of Qiyāmah or al-Ḥashr (Doomsday, Resurrection) in the terminology of the Qur'ān. But, such people did nothing like that, instead, preferred to live their lives at the level of common animals. In the first two verses, after giving the signs and marks of these people, the text mentions the punishment they would receive in the Hereafter. The first thing the text tells is that such people did not think that they would meet their Lord. They have forgotten all about the inevitability of their life in the Hereafter and have be-

come pleased and content with their worldly life alone.

Then, they are sitting there, so satisfied and so content, as if they just do not have to go anywhere else from here. This, to them, was the end of the line and this was where they have to live forever. It never occurs to them that everyone has to bid farewell to this world. This is so open a truth that no one can go about doubting it. And when going away from here is certain, then, some preparation has to be made for the place one is going to.

And then, they are continuously heedless to Allah's verses and signs. Had they pondered over the marvel of the heavens and the earth and what was created in between them and, for that matter, over what was in their own person, they would have understood the reality behind everything and they would have thus come out of their fatal negligence.

The punishment of people whose signs have been given above is the fire of Jahannam that waits for them in the Hereafter – and this punishment is nothing but the outcome of their own deeds.

How regrettable that the signs of disbelievers and deniers pinpointed by the Qur'ān are no different as far as our own present condition as Muslims is concerned. By looking at our way of life and the pattern of our activities and thoughts, no one can come to the conclusion that we have some other concern bothering us except the concerns of this world under our noses. Yet, despite all that, we sit comfortably believing that we are Muslims, as staunch and true as they come. The hard reality is that the kind of staunch and true Muslims our worthy forbears were has become unimaginable for us. They were the ones a look at whose faces would remind one of God and transmit unmistakably that they feared someone above them and their hearts throbbed with the concern of being accountable to Him. Not to say more about these wonderful people, even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, despite being protected from sins (*ma'ṣūm*), lived his blessed life in that state. It appears in *Shamā'il al-Tirmidhī* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم looked sad and concerned fairly often.

Mentioned in the third verse (9) are those fortunate people who pondered over the signs of the most exalted Allah. Thereby, they recognized Him, believed in Him and, by acting in accordance with the

dictates of their faith, became duty-bound to say and do what was good and right (*al-a'māl aṣ-ṣāliḥah*: good deeds).

The good return and reward made due by the Holy Qur'ān for these wonderful people has been mentioned in a particular manner. It was said: *أُولَئِكَ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ* (their Lord will guide them by virtue of their belief), that is, 'take them to their destination, the Jannah [Paradise], where rivers shall be flowing in the Gardens of Bliss.'

The well known meaning of the word: *هداية* (*hidāyah*) used here is to tell or show the way. Then, on occasions, it is also used in the sense of taking someone all the way to the desired destination. At this place, this is the meaning intended. As for the desired destination, it means Jannah that stands clarified by the words appearing later.

It will be recalled that the punishment of the first group was the outcome of their own misdeeds. Here, similar to that, it was said about the reward of the second group (of believers), that they have been blessed with this reward by virtue of their belief. And since, belief has been bracketed with good deeds earlier, therefore, 'Imān or belief mentioned at this place will mean belief that is supported by good deeds (*al-a'māl aṣ-ṣāliḥah*). The return for belief and good deeds is Jannah, the place of unimaginable and unparalleled bliss.

Some particular states in which the people of Jannah shall find themselves after their arrival there have been spelt out in the fourth verse (10). First of all: *دَعْوُهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ* : (their prayer therein will be, "Pure are you, O Allah"). Here, the word: *دَعْوَى* (*da'wā*) should not be taken in its well known sense of claim, something a plaintiff does against the responding party. Instead of that, *da'wā* has been used here in the sense of *du'ā'* (prayer, supplication). It means that the *du'ā'* of the people of Jannah, after they have reached Jannah, will be in the form that they will be saying: *سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ* (Pure are You, O Allah), that is, they will be glorifying the exalted majesty of Allah (known as *Tasbīḥ* in the religious terminology of Islām).

This raises a question for *du'ā'*, as commonly recognized, is the act of asking for something or the seeking of what one would like to have. The words: *سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ* (*subḥānaka 'l-lāhumma*: Pure are You, O Allah) have no element of asking or seeking in them. Then, what was the basis of calling it '*du'ā'*'?

The answer is that the expression used here is there to communicate something relevant to the great occasion. Is it not that the people of Jannah will have the most comprehensive bliss which will include everything they could wish for almost automatically as they would have wished? So, there will be no asking or seeking. As a replacement of the popular mode of *du‘ā*, what they would be able to say would be nothing more than the *tasbīḥ* of Allah in total submission. That too would not be something like an obligatory act of worship they used to do in their mortal lives (whether or not they enjoyed doing so). In fact, they would savor the taste of saying these words of glorification and say *subḥānaka ‘l-lāhumma* on their own, gratefully delighted. In addition, reports a Qudṣī Ḥadīth that Allah Ta‘ālā said, ‘a servant of Mine who remains busy glorifying Me all the time, so much so that he finds no time even to ask what was to be asked, then, I shall give him the best of what is asked by all those who ask, that is, take care of what he needs to be done without his having to ask for it.’ If so, the expression: *subḥānaka ‘l-lāhumma* that has been translated as ‘Pure are You, O Allah’ could also be called a *du‘ā* (prayer).

It is in terms of this sense that a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to make the following *du‘ā* when in pain or anxiety:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ الْحَلِيمُ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا
اللَّهُ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَرَبُّ الْأَرْضِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ .

There is no god but Allah, the Great, the Forbearing; there is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Great Throne; there is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Heavens and the Lord of the Earth and the Lord of the Generous Throne.

Imām al-Ṭabarī said: The worthy forbears of the Muslim Community (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥūn*) used to call it the prayer of pain (the *du‘ā* of *karb*). Whenever in intense pain, anxiety or distress, they would recite these words and pray to Allah for relief. (Tafsīr Qurtubī)

There is yet another Ḥadīth report carried by Imām Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir and others that the people of Jannah, when they wish to have something, will say *subḥānaka ‘l-lāhumma*. Hearing this, the angels will instantly present what they wished before them – as if, the words: *subḥānaka ‘l-lāhumma* will serve as a password or access code