

Chapter Three

As soon as we sat down, the alim asked us if we had read the book he gave us. I felt embarrassed because I had not finished it. Moreover, I felt shy when Sarah answered that she had read it and had written some notes for explanation. She handed him the notebook. He looked pleased and said, "This is a good sign. I will have a look again later."

He turned towards me, and seeing that I had not answered, he began his lecture, saying, "We previously said the best religion is the one which is in harmony with human instinct. We also discussed belief in the unseen and the unity of the universe."

"Religion is a matter of choice. Man is free to choose his own religion. It is a doctrine firmly implanted in the deep inner recesses of the mind. If not, then it will be mere rituals and habits. Thus religion is an individual choice that cannot be made through compulsion. One cannot be compelled to practice his religion correctly.

As for belief, there is no use in compulsion. Man can choose the best religion and can be convinced through discussion. Choosing the right religion with a profound knowledge of truth and perfect awareness is a matter concerning the individual himself. Hence, religion is a choice based on thought and reasoning. The Holy Qur'an calls for thinking and reasoning, as in these verses:

Say: Consider what is it that is in heavens and earth; and signs and warners do not avail a people who would not believe. (Yunus, 10: 101)

Do they not then look up to heaven above them, how We have made it and adorned it and it has no gaps! (Qaf, 50: 16)

"Throughout the Qur'an, the verses encourage man to think wisely and give the mind freedom of choice after presenting facts and evidence. In order to make one believe you, you must have sound evidence as a proof. Islam comprises all these aspects in the Qur'an. It is safe to say that Islam is the only religion that has such a quality.

Every religion has been in need of a miracle to prove its authenticity. The miracle of Islam is embodied in

the Qur'an's miraculous eloquence. The best, most literate men failed to produce anything equal to it. The Qur'an challenged them to produce its like, as in this verse:

Say, if men and jinn should combine together, to bring the like of the Qur'an, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others. (Chapter Al-Isra', 17: 88)

"Then, when they failed, the Qur'an challenged them to produce a few chapters themselves:

Or, do they say: He has forged it. Say: Then bring ten forged chapters like it and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful. (Hud, 11: 13)

"When again they failed, they were challenged to produce one more chapter of its like, as in this verse:

And if you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce one chapter of its like, and call your witnesses besides Allah if you are truthful. (Al-Baqarah, 2:23)

"They failed, despite being masters of language and literature."

"Every religion is in need of a message and proof of that message. Islam has both in the Holy Qur'an. All kinds of sciences, whether social, economic, natural or related to man's biological construction, can be found in the Qur'an. Many a scientific fact has been recently proved in science, though the Holy Qur'an referred to it fourteen centuries ago.

Still other facts have not yet been discovered by science but were revealed to the Prophet, who had been illiterate. Islam elaborated various social topics centuries ago. Some have been recognized only recently by the world, such as the 'Human Rights Charter', which states: 'Abolition of slavery, and economic solutions to prevent monopoly and exploitation.'

"You can find many similar facts in recently written books on Islam. Islam's message is independent except regarding its own concepts. In Islam, man is free to choose with dignity. The mind is not imprisoned in ignorance, nor in feelings of humiliation and regret of a sin (referring to the first disobedience of Prophet Adam). Islam does not call for ritual worship only, but also calls man to pay attention to his everyday affairs. In the Holy Qur'an you can see legislations and good foundation for life. All aspects have been tackled and solutions are applicable anytime and anywhere. Clear evidence of this is found in the Holy Qur'an. Some Chapters are named after animals, such as:

The Cow, the Bee, the Ant and the Spider. Some refer to natural phenomena and elements such as: The Thunder, The Smoke, The Moon, The Sun, and The Iron; Some refer to political and social stances such as: The Parties, The Faithful, The Counsel and Women.

"There are also Chapters that refer to historical events such as Alay-Imran, The Prophets, Yunus, Hud, Yousuf, Ibrahim, Muhammad, Al-Rum (The Romans), Maryam, and Noah. Others refer to the Hereafter and the Day of Judgment, such as: Al-Haqqa, Waqiah, and Al-Qariah. Some Chapters refer to

economic matters, including: The Spoils (Anfal) and the Food (Maidah).

There are Chapters that refer to morals and good conduct, such as: Abasa (He Frowned), Humazah (The Slanderer) and Al-Mutaffifin (The Defrauders). Other Chapters refer to religious rituals, such as: Al-Hajj and Al-Sajda. In conclusion, we see that 32 Chapters concern living creatures, and natural phenomena, 29 Chapters concern belief and ideologies, 27 refer to social and political stances and 17 concern history and philosophy.

Four Chapters concern behaviour and morals and four concern materialistic and economic subjects, while two only concern religious rituals. Thus we see that Islam is a complete religion that covers all aspects of life. It does not merely link man to his Creator.

On the contrary, it links man to the Almighty by linking him to all of humanity. So religion's scope is wide enough to cover all aspects of feelings and behaviour be it struggle for the sake of Allah or a smile in the face of a brother believer.

"Islam can meet the physical and spiritual needs of an individual and it is a perfect religion when it is performed correctly. Islam is in conformity with life and does not neglect the other side."

The alim ended his lecture, and we fixed a date for the next morning. We bid him farewell and left. Outside the door, I implored Sarah to allow me to accompany her, but she refused. I told her, "But I have something to tell you. You know, my dear, that I cannot tolerate this unfriendly behaviour. Please, tell me what is the matter. I am sure there is something very wrong."

Sarah replied, "I am going to the boarding house, and I do not want to stay here one more minute."

"Then, let me walk with you to your home." I told her.

"No, I can walk by myself, as I came by myself," was her response.

Then I asked, "But why do you still come to the lectures?"

She said, "I am interested in the subject. Now I am a person in search of truth for my own benefit. What about you? Why do you come? The Truth is clear to you!"

I said, "It has never been clear to me. I knew nothing about Islam; perhaps even less than what you know."

"Then let us continue together for the sake of knowledge," she replied.

I said, "And for my sake, dear Sarah."

"For your sake!", she exclaimed.

"Yes, don't I deserve it?"

She slowly answered, "You did deserve such a thing in the past."

"And now, what has happened to make you change your mind? You know how important you are to me. Life is meaningless without you. At least please take this letter from me. Perhaps it will clear up the

matter. Please, take it, it won't do you any harm. A small lie should not destroy our whole future together."

She said, "What small lie? A lie that is proved by evidence?"

"If one is quite sure of something, one's confidence cannot be easily shaken", I said, surprised by her allegation.

She said, "But one sometimes doubts one's feeling."

"Then one must be frank and reconsider the matter in order to be certain. Why don't you be frank and tell me the source of your anger?"

She said, "Give me more time to think."

"Please at least promise that you will read the letter."

"I will do that", she told me. "Good-bye for now."

I returned home a bit calmer than before. I picked up the book to finish it, but I put it down again to look among my papers for poem I previously copied from a book of poetry. I had intended to give it to Sarah, but I could not find it. Moreover, I could not find a photo Sarah had given me at the beginning of our friendship. My own photograph was also missing. I used to keep all these in the drawer near my bed.

The next morning, I went to college but I didn't see Sarah that day, or the next day. After three days, I met her at the door of the alim's house. Upon seeing me, she knocked on the door and gave me no time to even offer a word of greeting. We entered and were asked to wait for the alim. I was about to speak when she said, "Mohsen, can you tell me what you saw yesterday?"

This question of hers was the first line of the missing poem. I wanted to be sure, so I said, "What do you mean?"

"I mean, whom did you see?" she asked. I said,

"Whom could refer to many, but I am sure I saw no one but you, though I did not actually see you."

She interrupted me angrily, saying, "Please, that's enough. This is not the first time you are saying it."

I said, "But I have not said it to you except now!"

She answered, "Yes, but you have said it to someone else."

"But you know I don't talk to any girls except you!" I protested.

"Yes, but you can write," she answered.

I said, "Can writing be enough?"

She said, "Yes, if it is well composed."

"Sarah, why don't you be frank and tell me what you are talking about."

She said, "I wish I could be brave enough to speak. In fact, I am afraid, so you should be the one to speak."

I said, "But, I do not know what is the matter yet."

She said. "Oh, it can't be! You certainly know what is bothering me."

"Call me stupid or anything, yet I do not know the reason for your anger. I am ready to die in order to know it." I replied earnestly.

She asked, "Then you have not guessed?"

I said, "No, but there is a certain incident I thought of, then put it aside!"

"What is this particular incident?" she asked.

I started to tell her about the strange girl, but our teacher entered the room at that moment. I stood up and welcomed him absent-mindedly. I decided to tell Sarah about that girl when the lecture ended. I was not ready to lose her on account of a promise to a stranger. The alim apologized for the delay. He asked about our reading and gave Sarah her notebook with some explanations written in it. Then he began his lecture.

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/search-truth-amina-bint-al-huda/chapter-three>