

The Core of Islam



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The aim of this work is to guide Muslims, especially youths, giving clear answers to many commonly asked questions, in order to replace bewilderment with the clarity that comes from profound study of the primary sources of Islamic thought – the Holy Qur'an and ahadith of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and error-free Imams of his progeny. Thus, it examines contemporary issues, fundamentalism, extremism, radicalism, etc., through researched insights into Muslim personality, moral behavior and Islamic teachings of justice and fairness.

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This singular introduction to Islam in the English language presents, in one easily accessible volume, a coherent overview of the structures and practices of the faith of Islam. Informed by a profound level of Islamic scholarship, it answers many commonly asked questions of this much maligned faith.

It is the fruit of incessant questions 'Why?', that the almost unbelievably patient, kind, generous and knowledgeable Ayatollah Milani was prepared to give of his time to answer.

A quest to acquire knowledge of the faith, like any journey of discovery, is fraught with sometimes seemingly unsurpassable difficulty. Those who have not studied Islam and Islamic history in some depth

find many mundane and profound issues difficult to access. For example: What was the cultural context in which Islam developed? What are the faith's core beliefs?

What is sacred to Muslims? What social behavior does Islam teach? What is the position of women in Islam? What are its main groupings? And, most importantly, how can one best worship Allah?

Allah willing, later volumes will provide greater detail on both scholarly and spiritual aspects of the faith.

Amar Hegedus

Over the centuries, introductory books on Islam have tended to focus on the rituals of mosques and specific Islamic occasions. Little or no emphasis has been given to Islam's moral values or to its holistic view in which each individual's well-being is regarded as essential for the health and harmony of society.

Texts that present Islam from a historical viewpoint often ignore its intellectual and spiritual contributions to focus solely on territorial wars waged by caliphs and, in consequence, advance a view that Islam was spread by the sword.

Orientalist texts, restricted to detailed investigation of specific aspects of Islam, largely ignore everything not directly related to the focus of their attention. However, it is no easier to comprehend the faith from a concentrated study of the minutiae of a specific matter, than it is to comprehend the lifestyle of an organism from a detailed study of its mitochondria.

Muslim youth often find it difficult to reconcile information from the above sources with what they have been taught by their parents. Faced with myriad ambiguities and mystifying reports, many are confused about their own identity, about how Muslims are expected to behave, and unable to distinguish between the core of Islam and the carapace of misconception that surrounds it.

The aim of this work is to replace bewilderment with the clarity that comes from profound study of the primary sources of Islamic thought – the Holy Qur'an and ahadith of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and error-free Imams of his progeny. Thus, it examines contemporary issues, fundamentalism, extremism, radicalism, etc., through researched insights into Muslim personality, moral behavior and Islamic teachings of justice and fairness.

Dr. Sayyid Fadhel Hosseini Milani

Sallallahu Alayhi wa alihi wa Salaam

May Allah's greetings and blessings be upon him and his progeny (used immediately after referring to the Prophet Muhammad (S))

Alayha al-Salaam (a.s.) – Peace be upon her

(used immediately after referring to Khadijah, Fatimah, Zaynab and Maryam)

Alayhi al-Salaam (a.s.) – May Allah bless him

(used immediately after referring to a single Imam or Prophet)

Alayhima al-Salaam (a.s.) – May Allah bless them

(used immediately after referring to two Imams or two Prophets)

Alayhum al-Salaam (a.s.) – May Allah bless them

(used immediately after referring to three or more Imams or Prophets)

Rahimahu Allah – May Allah grant him mercy

(used immediately after referring to a single deceased and respected person)

Rahimahum Allah – May Allah grant them mercy

(used immediately after referring to deceased and respected people)

Quddisa Sirroh – May his soul be blessed

(used immediately after referring to a single deceased and respected scholar)

Quddisa Sirrohuma – May their souls be blessed

(used immediately after referring to deceased and respected scholars)

Radi Allahu anhu – May Allah be pleased with him

(used after referring to a respected companion of the Prophet or the Imams)

1.1 Broadmindedness

In the pre-Islamic Arab peninsula the elemental principle of survival was loyalty to the clan – without any regard whatever to their being in the right or not. This aspect of clan membership – of paramount importance at a time when Arab clansmen roamed the isolated terrain intent on primeval plunder – was extended to allies with whom treaties of mutual protection had been established.

Thus, when Makkan clans jointly determined to assassinate the Prophet Muhammad' they designated a

member of his own Hashemite clan to commit the heinous act on their joint behalf in order to forestall revenge attacks by his clan and its allies.

Nationalism and racism were also deeply rooted in pre-Islamic Arab society. No one could have envisaged a time in which non-Arabs would hold positions of status. It was inconceivable that a non-Arab, black or white, would ever be considered the equal of an Arab.

It was within this setting that the Prophet proclaimed the Islamic Principle of Equality – that all of humanity is equal and all are entitled to equal rights – regardless of race, background or tribal extraction. Astoundingly, shortly after he had done this, the first line of worshippers in congregational prayers – that included Persians like Salman, Roman slaves like Suhaib and black Abyssinians like Bilal – stood shoulder to shoulder with the most distinguished members of the Quraish tribe.

In one famous Hadith, the Prophet is reported to have said, 'All of humanity are as equal as the teeth of a comb.' Although today this doctrine may appear to be accepted, in those times it was regarded as a bizarre, revolutionary concept. So, what we refer to today as 'Human Rights' were in reality established 14 centuries ago – when Divine Will revealed the principle of equality to the Prophet Muhammad.

It was the broadmindedness of the Prophet's teachings that gave impetus to Islam and its principles being spread throughout the world. Compliance with equality and justice is a core value of Islam, even in dealings with those who have treated us, our family or other Muslims unjustly.

Allah tells us in the Qur'an:

Ill-feeling towards others should never cause you to behave unfairly. Act justly, for that is closer to piety. (5:8)

Ill-feelings towards those who barred you from entering the sacred mosque are not valid grounds for unjust behavior. (5:2)

It is recorded that once, while the Prophet Muhammad (S) sat with his companions, a funeral cortege passed by and he stood up out of respect. A companion remarked that this was only the funeral of a Jew, implying that that was far too unimportant for the Prophet's attention. He challenged this by asking, 'Was he then not also a human being?'

Myriad examples of Islamic broadmindedness are recorded in historical reports. Here are some examples:

Regarding justice, fairness and impartiality

When a Jewish person sued Imam Ali (a.s.) – then the Caliph – over a shield that the plaintiff claimed was his, the judge – who addressed the defendant by his title and the plaintiff by name – was criticized by the Imam for not being impartial.

Regarding openness to criticism

People confronted by a diversity of views often hold resolutely to their own opinions and are loath to accept criticism, or the validity of contrary views. Despite Islam teaching that only the Prophet and his error – free progeny are protected from error in their decisions and behavior, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (a.s.) declared, 'May Allah be merciful to those who make me aware of my shortcomings.' The Imam here emphasizes the need for people not to be irate when their opinions are contradicted or their faults exposed, but rather to be grateful to those who afford them the opportunity to improve.

Regarding forbearance and patience

In *Surah* 18 (the Cave), Allah relates the dialogue between the Prophet Musa (a.s.) and the person traditionally referred to as Khidr – who is renowned for his Divine gift of great wisdom. Musa asks permission to accompany Khidr to draw benefit from his wisdom. Before agreeing, Khidr warns Musa that his patience and forbearance are not adequate to comprehend Khidr's actions. So Musa (a.s.) promises to remain silent until Khidr has explained his actions.

On their journey together, Khidr smashes a hole in a boat's hull, murders a young man and rebuilds a wall without request or payment. Musa finds these actions inexplicable and unacceptable and on each occasion criticizes Khidr – who responds by saying, 'I warned you that you would not have the patience and forbearing to understand.'

In his later explanation, Khidr reveals that he had damaged a poor family's boat in order to prevent it being pillaged by an approaching tyrant; that the murdered boy was depraved and about to bring about the ruin of his parents; and that the wall he rebuilt was owned by two orphans whose parents had secreted their inheritance under it. He ended by saying, 'This is the interpretation of my actions that you were not patient enough to accept.'

This story is an illustration of the need to remain patient, regardless of how bizarre life's occurrences may occasionally appear to be.

Regarding considered decisions being better than hasty ones People's immediate responses reflect what they see as being of benefit or disadvantage to themselves. However, Islam teaches that decisions should not be made prior to considered reflection on the long-term benefit and/or disadvantage of situations. Indeed, Allah tells us in the Qur'an:

You may dislike a thing that is beneficial and love a thing that is potentially harmful. (2:216)

You may dislike something that Allah has endowed with abundant benefits. (4: 19)

Regarding remaining receptive to a variety of opinions

To arrive at safe and sound conclusions in their inferences of rulings from Islamic sources, Muslim jurists employ rigorous intellectual analysis of the variety of relevant issues that need to be considered. While unstinting in their effort to seek out and examine the widest variety of possible opinion prior to issuing a ruling, they always leave room for the possibility of further opinions being considered later.

When a jurist relies on an unequivocal text, he/she presents the ruling as a '*fatwa*' or independent binding opinion. However, when a text is equivocal or ambiguous, or if more than one potential interpretation of the facts is perceived, in place of a *fatwa*, jurists who follow *Ahl al-Bayt* traditionally issue a statement that underlines that their recommendation is to be followed as 'an obligatory precaution'. This, by definition, means that one may either accept their opinion or refer to the next most learned jurist for one.

There is no overarching central authority that issues '*diktats*' for Muslims to adhere to. Everyone is free to consult the 'learned counsel' of their choice to resolve questions regarding rulings of *Shariah*, vis-a-vis their daily lives, or to pass judgements in their disputes.

Another sign of his broadmindedness is observed in the advice the Prophet gave regarding seeking the advice of those who are knowledgeable – regardless of their being believers or not.

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, “With the same relentlessness with which a person searches for a precious item they've lost, a believer's search for wisdom even includes consulting those without faith”¹.

As the above examples clarify, broadmindedness was, indeed, an essential characteristic of the Prophet Muhammad's (S) personality.

1.2 Emphasis on the doing of good and the condemnation of evil

One of the most important teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (S) is his emphasis on it being the duty of every Muslim to work towards the establishment of a moral environment. In numerous ayat in the Qur'an, Allah counsels believers that it is their moral responsibility to enjoin that which is good and to condemn all things that are evil:

And there should be among you a group who call [humanity] to virtue, who enjoin good and condemn evil; it is they who will prosper. (Qur'an 3: 104)

All nations are equal in the eyes of the Creator. Not one is superior to any other, except in its moral standards:

The best nations are those that believe in Allah, enjoin good and condemn evil. (Refer to: (Qur'an 3: 110)

Asharite belief is that the human intellect is not able to distinguish between good and evil – in the absence of *Sharia* rulings. In contrast, *Imamiyah* and *Mutazilite* belief is that common values are shared by everyone who is of sound mind (regardless of their religious faith) and that this commonality is rooted in humanity's innate instincts – *fitrah*. Honesty, charity, fairness, truthfulness, modesty and all other moral values are commonly accepted as desirable, while dishonesty, greed, arrogance, deception and all other vices are commonly accepted as being undesirable qualities.

These teachings are clearly part of the Prophet Muhammad's (S) personality and attitudes, for in addition to preaching them, he exemplified and implemented them during his lifetime. The following narrations evidence his emphasis to enjoin good and condemn evil:

1. The Prophet said, 'My nation shall live in prosperity while they enjoin good, do not tolerate bad behavior and cooperate with one another in good works. When they abandon these, Allah's blessings will be withdrawn and some [i.e. tyrants] will overcome them so that they suffer without relief or refuge on this earth.'²
2. Imam Ali (a.s.) said, 'Always adopt the practice of virtue and enjoin others to do so too – and take care to practice what you yourself preach.'³

The Qur'anic term for a good deed is *hasanah* and for an evil deed *sayyi'ah*. Whilst the former may be committed by both humankind and Allah, the latter are only committed by human beings. He tells us in the Qur'an:

Whatever good befalls you is from Allah while all the ill that befalls you is from yourself. (4:79)

In order to encourage humanity to do good and avoid evil, Allah promises to multiply good deeds by a factor of ten but to consider each evil action only as a single unit. For, He tells us in the Qur'an:

While those who present a virtue will receive a tenfold reward, those who present a vice will only be accountable for a single act. (6: 160)

Another Qur'anic term related to this subject is *ihsan* – derived from the word *husn* – the quality of being good and beautiful. *Ihsan* is referred to in the following *ayat*:

1. ***Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness and generosity to one's relatives, but He forbids indecency, wrong doing and aggression. (Qur'an 16:90)***
2. ***Can the response to goodness be anything other than goodness? (Qur'an 55:60)***
3. ***Allah's mercy is close for those who do good. (Qur'an 7:56)***

See also Qur'an 2:195; 28:77; 4:36.

1.3 Mercy as the basis of all action

Allah tells us in the Qur'an that:

The Prophet Muhammad (S) was sent as a mercy to humanity. (21: 107)

Many ayat of the Qur'an combine guidance and mercy to underline that both mercy and kindness are necessary to 'guide people to the right path'. See, for example, Qur'an 6: 157; 7:52; 7: 154; 7:203; 10:57; 12:111; 16:64; 16:89; etc.

Allah's mercy encompasses all things. (Qur'an 40:7)

The Qur'an is itself a remedy and a mercy. (Qur'an 17:82)

Marriage is considered a source of tranquility, love and mercy. (Qur'an 30:21)

Allah is The Most Merciful. (Qur'an 7: 151; 12:92; 23: 109)

All but one *Surah* of the Qur'an commence with:

'In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Most Merciful'

Affection and kindness between people is a sign of Allah's mercy to His creatures. According to one Prophetic Hadith, Allah Almighty created 100 different categories of mercy – each one as wide as the distance between the heaven and the earth. Only one of that hundred lies at the root of motherly kindness; the facility creatures have to find water; and the ability of humans to live in harmony and peace⁴.

When Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) was told that Al-Hasan Al-Basri had said: One should not be surprised at the numbers who perish, nor how they perished – but rather by the numbers who survive and how they survived.

The Imam commented: "One should not be surprised by the vast numbers who attained salvation, but rather by why the whole of humanity does not."⁵

In order to receive Allah's Mercy on 'The Day of Judgement', the Prophet Muhammad (S) advised his followers to be kind to their fellow human beings:

The Prophet (S) said:

*Those who are not merciful will not receive mercy.*⁶

*Those who are not merciful while on this earth will not receive mercy in heaven.*⁷

*Allah is the All Merciful and loves those who are kind.*⁸

*Convey mercy to three groups of people – those of distinction who have been humiliated; those who were rich but have lost their wealth; and scholars who live amongst the ignorant.*⁹

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, *'Be kind to those in inferior positions to you, and the One who is above you will show kindness to you.'*

As mercy is the basis of desirable behavior, violence and hatred are rejected by Islam. And Islam teaches that merciful treatment is to be directed to all of Allah's creation – not only to human beings.

Comparison between teachers who treat their students with kindness and those who treat them with indifference or contempt illustrates that kindness leads to improvement in learning and achievement. Similar effects may also be observed in the plants of gardeners, who tend them lovingly, compared to those for whom gardening is merely a chore; and the recovery rates of patients who are nursed with loving care.

So, we are in no doubt that we always need to remain merciful.

1.4 Education

Education is the distinctive activity that enables human beings to fulfill their mental and social potential. It is through this process of social normalization that humanity is endowed with its character. While individual biological characteristics, such as hair, eye color and physical features, are inherited, the mental and social constituents of personality are acquired through education. It is the only process by which maturity and improved spiritual, material and social character may be achieved. The objectives of education then are:

1. To inculcate individual discipline.
2. To promote social trends beneficial to society.
3. To encourage a broadminded approach to the search for knowledge.
4. To promote comprehension of the philosophy of life.
5. To promote commitment to the development of society.
6. To promote and develop individual artistic talent.
7. To promote rigorous research methodologies.
8. To enhance spiritual development and purification of the soul.
9. To promote professional development and competence.

10. To programme for academic, intellectual and economic progress.

The faith of Islam emphasizes the significance of knowledge and accords the highest social status to those who are learned. In the illiterate society of the Arabian Peninsula, bereft of educational structure or centers of excellence, the Prophet Muhammad encouraged everyone to seek knowledge.

Allah tells us in the Qur'an:

Allah will elevate to high status - those who have faith and those who have been given knowledge. (58:11)

Many *ahadith* refer to the significance of knowledge. The Prophet said:

The merit of a scholar, compared to that of a worshipper, is like a full moon compared to a tiny star. 10

Scholars are the successors of the prophets. 11

The most valuable people are those who are the most knowledgeable, and the least valuable, those who have the least knowledge. 12

Those who leave home to seek knowledge in order to support truth or to remove confusion from the public's minds, will gain the reward of having worshipped for 40 years. 13

Imam Ali (a.s.) is reported to have told his companion:

O Kumayl, knowledge is better than wealth because knowledge safeguards you, while it is you who has to safeguard wealth. In addition, while knowledge is increased and deepened in being disseminated, wealth dwindles in being distributed. 14

Further:

It is incumbent upon all Muslims to seek knowledge. 15

Angels spread their wings for those who seek knowledge and plead for their forgiveness. 16

The best charity is to teach what one has learned. 17

It is the responsibility of the scholar to clarify and to guide. 18

In the search for knowledge one should be prepared to travel as far abroad as China. 19

At the time of the Prophet .even the many months-long journey to the distant centres of knowledge in China was considered to be worthwhile. The Prophet encouraged everyone to seek knowledge – from the cradle to the grave – for education and the pursuit of knowledge are not limited by time or distance.

1.5 Focus on the 'eternal' rather than the 'temporary'

Those who consider this life to be the sole manifestation of existence are surely short-sighted, for all Divine messages emphasize that this life is but one small step towards the eternal.

It was extremely difficult to uproot the materialistic attitudes of the Arabian Peninsula and convince people of the significance of the hereafter. Most of the Prophet's time in Makkah was spent promoting awareness of the life to come. For without any perception of the eternal existence of God, it is difficult to talk about eternal life.

Essential qualities of the 'eternal' are:

1. By definition, the eternal is self-existent – it has no beginning, because if we were to suppose it had a beginning, we would have to acknowledge that it had been non-existent before that beginning.
2. By the same token, the eternal has no end and is understood to be everlasting.
3. That which is eternal also has to be self-sufficient – for it cannot be in need of anything.
4. Thus, the eternal can be neither compound nor mixture.
5. That which is eternal cannot by definition be subject to change.

The above points may be summarized as follows:

A timeless God does not remember or forget; has neither future nor past; does not change; and there can be no temporal gap between His forming a plan and its execution.

Having explained the concept of an 'Eternal Creator', we now examine the concept of 'eternal life'.

The question is: have we been created for a temporary existence in this world – or for a more all-embracing existence? To quote Imam Ali's (a.s.) advice to his son:

*O my son, know that you have been created for the next world and not for this one....you are in a place that does not belong to you – a house in which to prepare for your passage to the next world.*²⁰

In a sermon Imam Ali (a.s.) describes the movement of the whole of humanity towards the hereafter, saying:

*Oh people, this world is a passage but the next world is a place of permanent abode. So take all that you can in your passage to your permanent abode ... here you have been put on trial, for you've been created for the next world.*²¹

It is clear that Islamic teaching emphasizes the significance of eternal life and considers the materialistic

world to be nothing other than a bridge over which to pass to arrive at the 'other side'.

All evil is the consequence of desires for the things of this world. On the other hand, focus on the eternal and preparation for it is the quality that leads to righteous behavior.

Although it is not possible to make comparison between that which is 'limited' and that which is 'eternal', Allah does tell us in the Qur'an that a single day in the life that is to come is equivalent to 50,000 years of life on this earth ...22

The Qur'an provides 76 references to 'eternal life', both for those who are to benefit from its endless bounty and bliss, and for those who are to face endless unpleasantness and grief.

Not only does focus on 'eternal life' broaden our perspective on the purpose of life, it also extends our ability to understand how to behave in order to ensure that we meet our objective.

No single act – good or evil – is missed, for all are 'bricks' for the construction of the life to come and contribute to the promised bliss or chastisement that we are warned about.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 78, p.34.
2. Tahzeeb al-Abkam, Vol. 2, p.58.
3. Ghurar al-Hikam, p.569.
4. Ref. Kanz al-Ummal, Tradition 10407.
5. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 78, p. 153.
6. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 82, p.76; Kanz al-Ummal, Tradition 5971.
7. Kanz al-Ummal, Tradition 5972.
8. Kanz al-Ummal, Tradition 10381.
9. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 74, p.405.
10. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 1, p. 164.
11. Al-Kafi, Vol. 1, p.32; Sunan abu Dawud, Vol.2, p.285.
12. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol.1, p. 164.
13. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol.1, p. 182; Kanz al-Ummal, Tradition 28835.
14. Nahjul Balaghahh, Maxim 147.
15. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol.1, p. 177.
16. Kanz al-Ummal, Tradition 28745.
17. Bihar al-Anwar , Vol. 2, p.25.
18. Nahjul Balaghahh, Sermon 3.
19. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 1, p. 180.
20. Nahjul Balaghahh, Letter No.31.
21. Nahjul Balaghahh, Sermon 203.
22. See Qur'an 70:4.

2.1 The Universe and its Creator

All Divine religions teach that the source of every perfection – the Omnipotent and Omniscient Creator –

created the Universe and that the entirety of existence is an effect caused by Him. In contrast to the atheist's viewpoint, every Prophet promoted the belief that all of creation derives its 'existence' from One Pure and Perfect Source – the Almighty Creator.

Even though human beings tend, in general, to believe only in tangible things, and have difficulty comprehending things that lie beyond the senses, every Prophet has stressed that the Creator does not fall within the orbit of human sensual ability. Islamic theology has striven to study and clarify that it is only via 'inner sight' that we are able to access the concept of the Creator.

At the time of the emergence of Islam, idolaters justified their beliefs with claims that ***'We only worship them to bring us closer to Allah' (Qur'an 39:3)***. This illustrated that despite their actions being diametrically opposed to their claims, they nonetheless inwardly acknowledged that a Creator had brought everything into existence. In their attempts to rationalize such human beliefs, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle established Ontological, Cosmological and Teleological arguments in proof of the existence of God. However, many Christian and Muslim thinkers combined the above quoted arguments with textual sources to conclude that 'the whole Universe was created by one Omnipotent and Omniscient Creator'.

Belief in such a Creator is the bedrock of all theistic religion. Despite this, anthropomorphism appears to have created confusion in the minds of Christians, who believe in 'the Trinity', and those Muslims who describe the Creator's actions in human terms. Islam removes all such ambiguity:

Allah is One. Allah is He on whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like Him. (Qur'an 112)

Nothing is like Him, for He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (Qur'an 42: 11)

All praise is due to Him for He is immeasurably exalted, beyond their comprehension. (Qur'an 17:43)

Not the weight of an atom in heaven or on earth escapes His knowledge. (Qur'an 34:3)

The technical term for belief in 'One True God' – *tawhid* – encompasses two levels. The first is rejection of many deities for the affirmation of One Divinity. In other words it's the rejection of finite deities for the affirmation of One Absolute and Infinite Divinity. The second level of *tawhid* is only attainable by the most devoted and sincere. It is only achieved through the total annihilation and extinction of the 'self' – and after that, there is the possibility to pass beyond all stations, levels and manifestations of the contingent phenomenal world. As the faith of believers deepens, so does acceptance of natural causes being expressions of Divine Will. This was articulated by the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) when he said,

It is He who guides me and provides me with food and drink; and when I become sick, it is He who cures me; who will bring about my death; and it is He who will bring me to life and, I hope,

forgive my iniquities on the Day of Judgement. (Qur'an 26:78-82)

The above statement does not negate the role of natural causation, but rather clarifies that natural causes are but tools through which Divine Will operates. It follows that in the comprehension of *tawhid* at its deepest level, a believer does not consider the salary paid by his/her employer as being the main provision for life, but sees that Allah Almighty is the true provider – and that His provision reaches them in the form of an employer's salary, maintenance provided, charity given or other means. Similarly, in seeking medical help, a patient will regard that help as coming from Allah, via the assistance of the National Health Service.

2.2 It is the Creator who makes the law

All societies have legal systems to establish and maintain order, regulate business and social relationships, safeguard rights and prevent anarchy. Without such controls chaos would reign.

Two types of law exist – that which is written and that which is not. The term 'unwritten law' refers to the common laws based upon customs that have obtained the force of law by being established with the implied consent and practice of illiterate people. Such laws have not been instituted by charter or parliament and are unrecorded and unregistered – other than in the memory of the people.

On the other hand, 'written laws' in most democratic systems emerge from a legislative body that has been elected by the people [parliament].

As far as 'religious law' is concerned, legislative authority lies entirely and absolutely in the hand of the Creator. Although jurists strive to apply Principles of Religion to contemporary issues of life, 'Revelation' is the bedrock upon which their analysis and conclusions rest. According to the Qur'an, Allah is both Creator and Lawmaker. When the Prophet Musa (a.s.) was ordered to invite the Pharaoh to the 'One True God', Pharaoh asked, 'Who is your Lord?' Musa replied, '**Our Lord is the One who created all things and then guided them**' (*Qur'an 20:50*). Here, guidance refers to both spiritual enlightenment and legal order.

In a hadith reported from Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.), we are told that Allah has provided humanity with two sources of guidance – one internal, the other external. Internal guidance is provided by wisdom and the intellect, external guidance from Allah's Prophets. It is through this external resource and authority that the intellect is able to acquire comprehensive guidance. The human being is a complex, obscure and indivisible whole that cannot easily 'be known'. We still lack the methodology to enable us to understand all the various parts of the whole being. Numerous techniques and precise sciences are necessary even to study one small part of this complex system, let alone the complexity of the whole that incorporates the mysterious spiritual aspects of the soul. Only the 'One who Created a Being' is aware of its full complexity, capabilities and well-being.

Shariah is the technical term for religiously established laws, described in (Qur'an 45: 18 as being 'the path to be followed'. As emphasized in Qur'an 42: 13, Allah has ordained the religion that was enjoined upon Nuh (a.s.), Ibrahim (a.s.), Musa (a.s.) and Isa (a.s.) when He said, 'Establish the religion and do not be divided therein.'

Allah has no need for advantage or profit from ordaining the law and encouraging His creatures to follow the right path. Indeed, all 'dos' are purely for the advantage of His creatures – and all 'do not's' are purely to avert disadvantage from His creatures.

2.3 Messengers are human beings inspired by divine knowledge

Allah tells us in *Surah* 17 that the disbelievers in Makkah were not prepared to accept Muhammad (S) as Allah's Messenger without supernatural evidence for his claim of being the Prophet of God.

They said to him, 'We will not believe you [O Muhammad(S)] until you make a spring of water gush forth for us from this [arid] land. Or until you have a garden of palms and vines and make rivers suddenly surge through it. Or you cause, as you threaten, the heaven to shatter and drop upon us; or you bring Allah and the Angels face to face before us. Or you have a house of gold, or ascend into the heavens; and we will not believe you have been there unless you bring back a book which we may read. Say then (O Muhammad) "Glory to my Lord. I am only a mortal who has been sent as a Messenger." (Qur'an, 17:90–93)

The reason for the above *Ayat* being revealed was because a group of well-known members of the Quraish tribe – including Walid, the son of Mughirah and Abu Jahl – had gathered near the Kaabah to request the Prophet Muhammad (S) to open discussions with them. The Prophet attended in the hope of guiding them towards the right path. The Makkan spokesperson began by listing the many changes Muhammad (S) had wrought to the traditions and customs of their tribe. He concluded, 'You have disrespected our gods, ridiculed our religion, annulled our ambitions and created disunity. If your purpose is to gain wealth, we are prepared to help you achieve that; if you are after political power, we are willing to establish you as the head of the tribe; if you are suffering from anything, we will assist you in any way we can.'

Muhammad's response was, 'I seek none of these; the truth is that Allah has sent me as a Messenger and revealed His Divine scripture for me to deliver to you. If you accept it, you will gain the prosperity of this life and the life hereafter. If you reject it, I will patiently persevere until Allah passes His Judgement between us.'

The spokesman replied, 'If you persevere, you will not find a place more uncongenial than our city – so ask your Lord to move these mountains and make rivers flow in our land like those of Syria and Iraq.'

The Prophet Muhammad (S) responded, 'I was not sent to do such things.' They said, 'Then ask your

Lord to send down Angels to certify your status and to bestow on you castles of gold within lush gardens.'

The Prophet (S) said, 'I was not sent to do such things. I brought you what has been sent with me and what I have been ordered to deliver. If you do not accept this, I must leave the matter with Allah.'

They then said, 'Then cause, as you threaten, that the heavens shatter and drop down upon us.' He said, 'That is up to Allah.'

The Prophet then left. Abdullah, the nephew of Atikah and Abu Umayyah, went with him saying, 'O Muhammad (S), they made you generous and fair offers, yet you refused them. When they challenged you, you declined to accept their challenges, so we will not believe you until you ascend into the heavens and bring us back a book to read.'

Abu Jahl threatened, 'If he does not cease disrespecting our gods and ridiculing the customs of our ancestors, I will have a boulder dropped on him when he prostrates himself.' The Prophet who hoped they would follow the right path, was disturbed by the incident until the above *ayat* were revealed.

If they thought all this would end the Prophet's claim to prophethood, he disappointed them. The Prophet's twofold response to the Makkan suggestions designed to safeguard idol worship and existing traditions, was:

1. Allah Almighty is glorified and above puerile requests.
2. That he like them. was human, while the supranatural incidents and miracles they demanded were under the sole control of Allah Almighty and could only be brought about with His permission.

The Holy Prophet (S), sent as a teacher of humankind, shared their joys and sorrows, mingled with them and was acquainted with their doings. He was merely a human being who had been inspired with Divine wisdom. There would have been no point in Allah sending angels as messengers. Had they been sent, they would have caused confusion rather than understanding.

The leader of society must match the nature of those who follow, be a role model whose characteristics people can emulate. This is not possible unless feelings, emotions and desires have a similar basis. Had the Messenger of Allah had no idea about anger, greed, jealousy, self-centeredness or other human emotions, how could he have been in the position to propose solutions for them?

Familiarity with the hardships, difficulties and sufferings of ordinary folk provides eligibility for a leader to empathize with his people and make realistic proposals. To give an example, Imam Ali (a.s.) wrote to his governor in Basra after the latter learned that he had attended a banquet.

Remember, everyone emulates their role model. Be informed that your leader [himself] has contented himself with two shabby garments out of all the comforts of the world – and only two loaves for his daily

sustenance. It is unlikely that you will be able to do the same, but at least support me by remaining pious, chaste and upright. By Allah, I have no treasure of gold in this world nor have I plentiful wealth ...Should I be content with being called Commander of the Believers, even if I do not share with them their lives' hardships? ... I try to keep myself engaged in piety so that I am secure on the Day of Judgement and steady on the slippery path. If I wished, I could have found my way to pure honey, fine wheat and silken clothing – but I dare not allow passions to lead me to greed. ¹

It is clear from the above that Allah's Messengers are human beings who share the same qualities as all other human beings. Notwithstanding this, they have been inspired by Divine Will, and at Allah's discretion, to present miracles and supernatural evidence of His existence.

2.4 Humanity is en route to eternity

The materialists' vision of life is limited to the short period of existence that begins at birth and ends at death. They do not accept, and thus do not contemplate or have aspirations or objectives for, the time after death. In contrast, the Prophet of Islam emphasized that all of humanity is continuously and inexorably being driven towards eternity. Believers thus seek perfection – by the elimination of their shortcomings and negative thoughts – in pursuit of the elements of salvation and spiritual advancement.

Many *ayat* in the Qur'an point to the inevitability of humanity ultimately meeting their Lord:

Truly, we are Allah's and to Him we shall return. (Qur'an 2: 156)

Your final destination is with your Lord .. [on the Day of Resurrection]. (Qur'an 75: 12)

You will be driven to your Lord on that day [Day of Resurrection]. (Qur'an 75:30)

And your Lord is your final destination. (Qur'an 53:42)

In Qur'anic terminology, 'The Lord' is the Absolute, Perfect, Limitless and Eternal Existent, and thus it is to this that the whole of humanity is being directed. Imam Ali (a.s.) described this temporary life as the bridge that spans the gap between 'that which is limited and that which is unlimited'. He explained the role of this analogy in the establishment of Islamic personality when he said,

This world is a thoroughfare but the next world is a permanent abode. So, garner in this thoroughfare all that you will need in your final abode take your hearts away from this world – prior to your bodies being taken from it – because here you are 'on trial', but your destination is the everlasting hereafter. When a person dies people ask what property they have left – but the Angels ask what good actions they have sent forward. May Allah bless you – send forward something that will benefit you and do not leave anything behind that will be burdensome to you there. ²

In some *ayat* of the Qur'an, those who do not strive for advancement in their spiritual life are described

as losers, and in others as being animals. Vis-a-vis temporal and eternal life, Allah tells us in the Qur'an:

You prefer the life of this world, even though the hereafter is everlasting and superior. Indeed, this is mentioned in previous scriptures, the scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa. (Qur'an 87: 16–19)

2.5 Islamic jurisprudence – Shariah – is to guarantee justice

As in many legal systems, the 'beam-balance scale' – *mizan* – is used to represent the Islamic concept of 'equitable and unbiased justice' that is indispensable in all social and commercial interactions. Allah tells us in the Qur'an, ***Truly, Allah commands you to return everything that is placed in your trust and that when you pass judgment between people, to do so with justice'*** (Qur'an 4:58) – and no one is excluded from this ruling regardless of their status or position.

When a woman at the highest social level of the Makhzum clan was accused of theft, influential members of the tribe were fearful lest she be sentenced to have her hand amputated. In discussions over the societal effect of such an occurrence, they pondered on who should represent her when her case was put before the Prophet (S) – Knowing of the Prophet's high regard for Uthman bin Zayd, they asked him to plead for mercy on her behalf. The Prophet responded to Uthman bin Zayd's plea with the question, 'Are you asking me to violate a decree of Allah?' He continued, 'The communities that preceded you were destroyed, because regardless of their being found guilty, those at the highest social levels were not obliged to fulfill the terms of their sentences, while in sharp contrast, lower socio-economic groups could not evade being punished for their misdeeds. By Allah, had Fatimah (a.s.) been convicted of stealing, I would have had her hand cut off.'

When Imam Ali's (a.s.) blind brother Aqil asked him for extra funds from the Bayt al-Mal. his irritated response was,

*By Allah, I would rather lie sleepless on a bed of thorns, or be driven a captive in chains, than have to meet Allah and His Messenger on the Day of Judgment as an oppressor of people or a usurper of worldly wealth ...I saw my destitute brother Aqil beg me for three kilograms from your share of wheat, and I saw his emaciated children suffering the pangs of hunger. He came several times to repeat his request in the hope I would sell my faith to meet his need. When I heated a piece of iron and brought it close to his body so that he could feel its heat, he cried out in pain. I then said to him, 'Aqil, why do you cry on account of the heat of this piece of iron while you try to drive me towards the fire that Allah Almighty has promised those who violate his just ruling?'*³

Imam Ali (a.s.) was punctilious about both the collection and distribution of Bayt al-Mal funds and the behavior of appointed governors. He wrote to the governor of Azerbaijan:

Certainly, your assignment is not to provide you with the means to accumulate wealth; it is in reality a

trust around your neck. Until passed on to me you are liable for the funds in your safekeeping – for they are the property of Allah Almighty. 4

On another occasion, Imam Ali (a.s.) wrote to the governor of Basra:

If I should discover you have misappropriated any Muslim funds, large or small, I shall inflict punishment upon you that will leave you empty-handed, heavily burdened and utterly humiliated.5

Although affection and kindness between people is a sign of Allah's Mercy to His creatures, the establishment of justice in an absolute and uncompromising way has a significant role in every aspect of Shariah.

1. Nahj al Balaghah, Letter No.45.
2. Nahjul Balaghahh, Sermon 203.
3. Nahjul Balaghahh, Sermon 224.
4. Nahjul Balaghahh, Letter No.5.
5. Nahjul Balaghahh, Letter No. 20.

3.1 The Holy Mosque in Makkah

While the primary function of a mosque is as a place of worship, mosques are also centers for learning and charity – in addition to being the place of the community's social, cultural and political activity.

Over 4,000 years ago, the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) and his son Ismail (a.s.) built the Ka"bah – lit. 'cube' in the Arabic language – for the worship of Allah, and this now stands at the centre of the Holy Mosque in Makkah. Wherever they might be, all Muslims align themselves to face in the direction of the Ka"bah when they offer prayer and it is thus, for Muslims worldwide, the most revered place of worship in the world.

It is believed that the Ka"bah, constructed of stone blocks, was erected on the original site of a sanctuary established by the first Prophet, Adam (a.s.). Embedded in the corner of the structure is the foundation stone initially used by Ibrahim a meteorite that is referred to as the 'Black Stone'.

The city of Makkah lies in the Valley of Ibrahim, located within a rugged landscape of granite rocks, some as high as 300 metres (1,000 feet) above sea level. To the North lie the *Al-Falaq* and *Qu'aqi'an* mountains, to the South the *Abu Hudaidah* range, to the West the *Kuday* and to the South and South-East the *Abu Qubais* and *Khindimah*.

There are three main entrances to Makkah: *Al-Mu"allat* (also known as *Al-Hujoon*), as well as *Al-Musfalah* and *Al-Shubaikah*. It is generally agreed that *Al-Mu"allat* serves those areas that are higher than the Holy Sanctuary, and *Al-Musfalah* those that are lower.

Qur'anic references to the Ka bah

And remember Ibrahim's (a.s.) plea:

O Lord, make this land secure and shield me and my children from idol worship. O Lord, idols have led many astray, so those who follow [my faith] are truly of me, and for those who disobey me – You are truly the oft-forgiving the merciful.

My Lord, in order to establish prayer there, I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near Your sacred house. Please, incline people's hearts towards them, and grant them fruitful sustenance so that they have reason to be grateful. (Qur'an 14:35-37)

Recall that when Ibrahim (a.s.) and Ismail (a.s.) were raising the foundations of this house [they prayed], 'O All-Knowing, All-hearing Lord, accept this labor from us.' (Qur'an 2: 127)

When We confirmed to Ibrahim the place for this house [We said]:

Do not associate anything with Me, and keep My house clean for people to walk round – stand before – and bow down and prostrate.

Now make the [duty of] pilgrimage known and call upon people to come to you on foot, and on beasts made lean by travel from far distant places. (Qur'an 22:26, 27)

So that the Quraish remain secure and safe during their winter and summer journeys, empower them to worship the Sustainer of this house who has granted them food against hunger and safety in the face of danger. (Qur'an 106: 1-4)

3.2 History of the Holy Mosque

Over the years, the pagans of the Arab peninsula forgot the message of Ibrahim and filled the Kaabah with idols – some say with as many as 365.

As de facto custodians of the Kaabah, the pagan Quraish tribe, who resided in Makkah, promoted pilgrimage to the then idolatrous 'holy site' for the undoubted commercial benefits that this brought.

After the Prophet Muhammad's (S) peaceful reconquest of Makkah in the year 8 AH/630 CE, the Kaabah was purified of idols. Ahmad ibn Hanbal narrates in his Musnad and al-Nissa'i in his *Khasais* that the Prophet (S) asked Ali (a.s.) to kneel down so that he could stand on Ali's (a.s.) shoulders to reach the roof of the Kaabah. However, as Ali (a.s.) felt himself to be an inadequate support for the Holy Prophet of God, it was Ali (a.s.) who stood on the Prophet's shoulders to complete the purification process. Once the Kaabah had been cleansed, pilgrimage was made an obligatory once-in-a-lifetime duty for Muslims who can afford it, and worship was redirected to Allah – Creator and sole Divinity.

At that time, the Holy Mosque consisted of an open circular space of some 2,000 square metres (21,528

sq ft). Throughout history, successive Islamic regimes have striven to dignify and honour this most Holy of mosques. This matter of extreme pride has been – and still is – considered their greatest and most treasured responsibility. Thus, over the centuries, the Holy Mosque in Makkah has been extended many times.

Regarding the change of Qiblah from Jerusalem to Makkah

When the Prophet Muhammad (S) prayed for the first time in the Holy Mosque, together with his wife Khadijah (a.s.) and cousin Ali (a.s.), they faced in the direction of Jerusalem. After his migration to Madinah, he continued to face Jerusalem until the following ayat was revealed:

As We see your face turning to the heavens [for guidance], We shall direct you towards a qiblah that will please you. So turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque – and face in its direction wherever you may be. (Qur'an 2: 144)

At the time of this revelation, the Prophet Muhammad (S) was visiting the village of the small 'Bani Saleem' clan. There, he and his companions offered Salat al-Dhurr facing Jerusalem – but after the above revelation came down, they faced in the direction of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah to offer Salat al-Asr. As the result, this 'Bani Saleem' mosque, on the outskirts of Madinah, has become known as 'The Mosque with Two Qiblahs' – and it is today still visited by pilgrims on Hajj and Umrah. It is remarkable that the Prophet .with no map or geometrical instruments to indicate the direction of Makkah from that mosque, was nonetheless able to turn to face in the precise direction of Makkah.

Prior to this change, the Jews of Madinah had teased Muslims that they had no option other than to face this Holy Jewish site.

The significance of Makkah itself

I swear by the existence of the fig, the olive, Mount Sinai and this secured city [Makkah], that We indeed created human beings in the most excellent of moulds; yet diminish them to the lowliest form – except for those who believe and perform commendable deeds that merit endless recompense. Who can then refute this 'Moral Law', is not Allah the Most Just Arbitrator?(Qur'an 95: 1-8)

In the above Surah, Makkah is referred to as 'The Secured City' – *Al-Balad al-Amin* – to indicate that immunity is granted to all who seek refuge within the Holy Mosque at its centre, even in circumstances in which this is done to evade prosecution. However, many scholars argue that for justice to be served, those in charge should prevent relatives and friends bringing food to the mosque so as to encourage such people's departure.

However, on the 1st Muharram 1400 A.H , after the 1979 Hajj season – when a gentleman called Al-Utaibi declared himself the Mahdi and his followers urged those inside the mosque to pay allegiance to

him – the authorities of the Hijaz invited a Special French Rapid Response Force to enter the sacred mosque in armoured vehicles and hunt him down.

3.3 The Divine Final Scripture (the Qur'an)

The Prophet Muhammad (S), invited the whole of humanity to Islam. In presenting the matchlessness of the Qur'an as proof of his prophethood, he challenged the Arabs to produce its like, as individuals or in collaboration with one another. He later reduced the degree of difficulty of his challenge to the composition of ten, and later, to only one surah like it¹.

Arab society clearly expected those renowned for eloquence and oratory among them to rise to this direct challenge to their ability, reputation and status – for the duty to negate the proof submitted by the Prophet had clearly been directed at them.

However, reflection on the eloquence of the Qur'an led such acclaimed Arabs to concede that they could not replicate the matchless content of the Qur'an. Hence, some of them believed the 'Caller to the Truth' and accepted the call of the Qur'an. However, there were others who chose rather to for sake eloquent words and counter his claim by force of arms.

While the prophecies of earlier prophets were limited to their own times – Divine Wisdom decreeing their miracles be of short duration – in the case of the Eternal *Shariah*, the miracle that attests to its truthfulness remains its timelessness. For if the validity of this miracle had been limited, it would not have been meaningful to those distanced from it by location or time.

It was the Qur'an that enlightened the hearts of those who had been devoted to idols, tribal warfare and pre-Islamic vainglory. It was the Qur'an that disposed them to kindness and empathy towards each other and to for sake those who rejected faith. Hence, by virtue of Islam, Muslims became the cohesive and convincing group that attracted others to their faith.

Many *ayat* in the Qur'an deal with the essential issues of theology and ascribe attributes of perfection appropriate to Allah Almighty's prestige – and exalt Him beyond the effects of deficiency and contingency. No other Divine Scripture deals with these issues in such a precise manner.

Vis-a-vis monotheism

They [unbelievers] say: God has taken to Himself a son, be He glorified. No, whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His. All are subservient to Him – the 'Originator' of the heavens and the earth! When He decrees a thing, he only says 'Be' and it is. (Qur'an 2: 116–7)

Your God is One God; there is no Divinity save Him, The Merciful, The Compassionate. (Qur'an 2: 163)

Allah, there is no Divinity save Him, The Ever-living, The Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. All that is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Him. (Qur'an 2:255)

Nothing in the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allah. It is He who fashions you in the womb as He pleases. There is no Divinity save Him, The All-Mighty, The Wise. (Qur'an 3:5-6)

Such is Allah your Lord. There is no Divinity save Him, the Creator of all things, worship Him for He tends everything. Vision comprehends Him not, but He comprehends all. He is The Subtle, The Aware. (Qur'an 6: 102-3)

Say, Allah produces creation, then reproduces it. How, then, are you misled? (Qur'an 10:34)

It is Allah who raised up the heavens without visible support, then mounted the Throne and compelled the sun and the moon to be of service. Each runs to an appointed term, and it is He who orders their course. He details the revelation that you may be certain of the meeting with your Lord. (Qur'an 13:2)

It is clear from the above examples that the Qur'an describes the Creator of the Universe in a manner that accords with reason. For it would not have been possible for an unlettered person, who grew up in an environment of ignorance, to bring forth such distinguished knowledge.

Vis-a-Vis Prophethood

Qur'anic references to prophets confirm their excellent virtues and accord them the status appropriate to their sanctified station of prophethood and Divine Deputyship:

Those who follow the Messenger; the Prophet; the unlettered one; the one whom they find mentioned in the Torah and Injil, he commands them to do good; forbids them to commit evil acts; makes all pure and good things lawful for them; and all things foul and filthy unlawful.. (Qur'an 7: 157)

It is He, who sent among the unlettered ones, a Messenger of their own, to recite to them His Revelations and teach them the Book and Wisdom ... (Qur'an 62:2)

Thus, did We show Ibrahim (a.s.) the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who possess certainty. (Qur'an 6:6)

We bestowed upon him [Ibrahim (a.s.)] Ishaq (a.s.) and Yarkob (a.s.), each one of them We guided, and Nuh (a.s.) we guided before this, and of his seed we guided Dawud (a.s.) and Sulayman (a.s.) and Ayub (a.s.) and Yusuf (a.s.) and Musa (a.s.) and Harun (a.s.). Thus, do we reward the good. And Zakaria (a.s.) and Yahya (a.s.) and Isa (a.s.) and Ilias (a.s.), each of them was of the righteous. And Ismail (a.s.) and Al-Yasa (a.s.) and Yunus (a.s.) and Lut (a.s.). Each one of them did We prefer above Our creatures, with some of their forefathers and their offspring

and their brethren. We chose them and guided them to The Straight Path. (Qur'an 6:84-87)

These are of the seed of Adam to whom Allah showed favor from among the prophets, and of those whom We carried in the ship with Nuh (a.s.), and of the seed of Ibrahim (a.s.) and Isma'il (a.s.), and from among those whom We guided and chose. When the revelations of the All-Merciful were recited to them, they prostrated in respect and wept. (Qur'an 19:58)

While the above *ayat* refer to the holiness and righteousness of prophets that accords with their position as role models for their communities, the sacred book of Christianity and Judaism, in marked contrast, portrays some prophets in rather unflattering terms – for example:

II Samuel

1:11-16 David has the Amalekite killed – who had brought Saul's crown and bracelet to him after acquiescing in Saul's request to slay him.

II Samuel

David commits adultery with Bathsheba (wife of Uriah the Hittite):

11:2 ...he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful.

11:3 David sent someone to enquire ...'This is Bathsheba ...the wife of Uriah the Hittite.'

11:4 So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. [Now she was purifying herself after her period.] Then she returned to her house.

11:5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant.'

11:6 So David sent word to Joab (commander of his army), 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.'

In 11:7-13 David encouraged Uriah to go home to his wife, but Uriah felt it not right for him to go home to eat and drink and lie with his wife while his comrades were camping in the fields and still in danger.

11:14 David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it to him by the hand of Uriah.

11:15 In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.'

11:16 As Joab was besieging the city [Rabbah], he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew their most valiant warriors would be.

11:17 ...Uriah was killed as well.

11:27 When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife

and she bore him a son.

I Kings

11:3–10 David [and Bathsheba's] son Solomon – who had 700 royal wives and 300 concubines – did not in old age remain wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord. He followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Phoenicians [NRSV Bible – Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians]; and Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites, built a shrine for Chemoth, the abomination of Moab etc., and the gods of all his strange wives.

Socio-ethical teachings of the Qur'an

The Qur'anic legislative system and its teaching is rational. The Qur'an advocates justice in the clearest manner possible.

Vis-a-Vis justice

Allah commands that you return all valuables held in your care and that if you pass judgement on anyone, you do so with justice. (Qur'an 4:58)

Deal justly, that is closest to your duty. (Qur'an 5:8)

If you give your word, keep true to it, even if that may be to the detriment of a kinsman. (Qur'an 6:152)

Allah enjoins you to justice and kindness and to give to kinsfolk, but forbids lewdness, abomination and wickedness. He exhorts you to take heed. (Qur'an 16:90)

Vis-a-Vis The condemnation of miserliness

Let not those who hoard what Allah has bestowed from His bounty think that doing so is better for them. No, it is far worse, for what they hoard will prove a burdensome yoke for them to bear on the Day of Resurrection ... (Qur'an 3:180)

On the other hand, the Qur'an condemns extravagance and squandering:

Do not be spend thrift for Allah loves not those who are extravagant or wasteful. (Qur'an 6:141)

Those who squander wealth are brothers of the devil. (Qur'an 17:27)

Do not be miserly and worthy of reproach, nor so generous that you become destitute. (Qur'an 17:29)

Vis-a-Vis Qur'anic evidence and scientific fact

Some matters that the Qur'an informs people about were unknown until later advancements in scientific learning and discovery. For example, everything in the earth has its own specific weight:

We have spread out the earth with stabilizing mountains and caused everything to grow on it in proper measure.. (Qur'an 15:19)

Well before scientists discovered that each element has a specific atomic weight, the above ayah could not be fully understood or made sense of.

Among the unknown things that the Qur'an disclosed 14 centuries ago is the existence of other continents. In this respect, Allah Almighty declares,

[Allah] Lord of the two Easts and Lord of the two Wests. (Qur'an 55:17)

This *ayah* perplexed Qur'anic scholars for many centuries. Numerous interpretations were proposed – that the ayah refers to where the sun and the moon rise and set – or that it refers to seasonal changes in the rising and setting angles of the sun and moon. However, in the light of current scientific knowledge, this *ayah* is clearly seen to allude to the existence of another continent – on the other side of the earth – where the rising of the sun corresponds to its setting on this side.

This is clear from the following *ayah*:

Until he comes to us he will say [to Shaytan]' I wish there was the distance of the two Easts between you and me.' (Qur'an 43:38)

i.e. the furthest distance possible, namely at the other side of the world.

Another unknown thing to which the Qur'an refers is the fact that the earth is round:

Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and Lord of the sun's risings. (Qur'an 37:5)

This ayah indicates that the sun rises and sets over the earth at more than one point, and this cannot be understood other than by the earth being a rotating sphere. That the rising of the sun over any part of the globe coincides with its setting over the other is also mentioned in other Qur'anic references:

I swear by the Lord of the Easts and the Wests that We are able to replace them with better people. (Qur'an 70:40-41)

We conclude that the Qur'an is the eternal miracle and the strongest proof that this final Divine scripture was Allah's revelation to the Prophet Muhammad (S). It follows that every statement contained within it is sacred. Although it is the content of the Qur'an that is sacred, Muslims treat the physical book with the

deference due to its content. They do not permit it to be exposed to anything that might be construed to be disrespectful. One *Shariah* ruling concerning the Qur'an is that no one who is not in a state of ritual cleanliness is permitted to touch its script. This is based upon the *ayah*,

It is truly an honourable scripture from a safeguarded source, and none may touch it without having been thoroughly purified. (Qur'an 56:77-79)

3.4 Muhammad – Guide and Exemplar

The value and validity of received information relates, not only to the relevance of the authority of its source, but also to the credibility and integrity of those who convey it. The Prophet of Islam could not have successfully invited others to comport themselves in a manner that he himself was unfamiliar with. This applies equally to the error-free Imams J. who followed him, for they too needed to be seen to evidence the behavior that they advocated.

The characteristics of Allah's final Messenger described in the Holy Qur'an are:

1. That Muhammad (S) is a Messenger – this is emphasized in many ayat, for example: ***Muhammad (S) is only a Messenger, other messengers have passed away before him. (Qur'an 3:144)***

What is Sacred to Muslims?

2. That obedience to Muhammad (S) reflects obedience to Allah:

The Messenger himself drew no benefit or authority from people hearing the message he was sent to deliver. The benefit, and the authority invested in him, is derived solely from the authoritative source of the message that was revealed to him (S):

O you who believe, obey Allah and obey His messenger and those vested with authority over you, and then, if you really believe in Allah and the last day, refer your disputes to Allah and His Messenger. (Qur'an 4:59)

Those who obey the Messenger, indeed obey Allah. (Qur'an 4:80)

3. That ten characteristics are attributed to Muhammad (S):

Those who follow the Messenger [1]; the Prophet [2]; the unlettered one [3]; the one whom they find mentioned in the Torah and Injil[4]; he commands that they do good [5];forbids them to commit evil acts [6];makes all pure and good things lawful for them [7];and all things foul and filthy unlawful [8]; and relieves the yoke of burdens upon them [9]; thus, those who believe in him honor him, help him and follow the light sent with him [to] achieve success and salvation. (Qur'an 7:157)

4. That he (S) invites you to a life of enlightenment:

O you who believe, respond to Allah and to His Messenger when he calls you to that which will give you life ... (Qur'an 8:24)

5. That he (S) is an excellent exemplar:

Truly, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent exemplar ... (Qur'an 33:21)

6. That being softly spoken in his presence is a sign of piety:

O you who believe, do not raise your voices above that of the Prophet...truly, those whose hearts have attained piety speak softly in the presence of Allah's Messenger. (Qur'an 49:2-3)

7. That previous Messengers gave glad tidings of his coming:

Isa (a.s.), the son of Maryam, said, O children of Isra'il, truly I am Allah's Messenger - assigned to confirm the Torah sent before me, and to transmit the good news that a Messenger named Ahmad (S) is to come after me ... (Qur'an 61:6)

8. That he (S) has been delegated to bear witness for all communities:

Deeds that communities and individuals commit in this temporary life are to be judged on the Day of Resurrection. The objective of each Messenger has been to guide their community to the 'Right Path'. Although they fulfilled their assignments, not everyone has adhered to their teachings. So should any plead that they did not receive a message, and as such, were unaware of what was expected of them, the need for reliable witnesses arises:

What will they do when We bring witnesses from each community, with you [Muhammad(S)] to be a witness against these people? (Qur'an 4:41)

On the day when We raise up in each community a witness against them, We shall bring you [Muhammad(S)] as a witness against them ... (Qur'an 16:89)

9. That He is a Mercy for the whole Universe:

It was only as a mercy for the worlds that We sent you. (Qur'an 21: 107)

10. That His message is addressed to the whole of humankind:

We have sent you to convey good news and to be a Warner for the whole of humankind. (Qur'an 34:28)

The above-mentioned points summarize the personality of the Prophet Muhammad (S)- the one sent to guide the whole of humankind towards light, mercy, justice and every good quality. He is venerated by all Muslims.

3.5 Acts of Devotion

There are many reports in *Al Sihah al-Sittah* – the six major Sunni reference books on ahadith of the Holy Prophet – that the pillars of Islam are five:

1. *Salah* (five daily prescribed times for worship)
2. Fasting during the month of Ramadhan
3. Payment of *zakah*
4. Pilgrimage during the Hajj season
5. Declarations that there is no divinity but Allah, and Muhammad (S) is His Messenger²

However, the Shiah source this information in Kulayni's *al-Kafi* that the Prophet said, 'Islam is established upon five pillars':

1. *Salah* (the daily five prescribed times for worship)
2. Fasting during the month of Ramadhan
3. Payment of *zakah*
4. Pilgrimage during the Hajj season
5. *Wilayah* – the guardianship of the faith by error-free Leaders whom believers love and turn to for guidance³

When we compare these two sources, it is apparent that all Muslims agree on the significance that acts of devotion, such as Prayer, Fasting, payment of *zakah* and Pilgrimage, have with regard to faith commitment. Without these 'acts of devotion' faith would be worthless.

In many *ahadith*, the acceptance of good deeds hinges upon prayer also being accepted – if that aspect is rejected, all others are too.

To summarize the significance of daily devotional prayer:

1. It improves communications with The Lord.
2. It is able to be offered individually as well as in congregation.
3. It is considered to be the 'instrument' by which believers ascend to the spiritual realm.
4. It is not regarded as a duty but rather as a confirmatory aspect of submission to the Almighty.

All the above and the details of how to pray and what is to be recited during the prayer are explained in chapter 9 of this book.

1. See Qur'an 7:88; 52:34; 11:13; 2:23; and 10:38.
2. Sahih Bukhari, Chapter of Faith, Vol. 1, p. 9.
3. Al-Kafi, Vol. 2, p. 15; Wassalil al-Shi'ah, Vol. 1, First chapter, Tradition No. 1.

Respect for Elders – Parents in Particular

Allah Almighty instructs humanity to reciprocate their parents' devotion to their well-being and education through tender, kind and thoughtful consideration for them in their old age. Qur'anic references include:

For your Lord has ordered you not to worship any except Him. He also commanded you to be good to your parents. Should either or both of them reach old age and need care, do not behave irritably or reproach and reject them but always respond to them gently.

Treat them with humility and tenderness and pray, 'Lord be merciful to them, as they were to me when I was little.'

Your Lord is aware of what is in your heart and how you behave [towards His Creation]. He is All-Forgiving to those who repent. (Qur'an 17:23-25)

Here, as well as in ayah 151 of Sarah 6, Allah Almighty links His order – not to worship any other than Him – with His command to treat parents well,

Come, I will clarify what Allah really prohibits, do not associate anyone or anything with Him; and be good to your parents ... (Qur'an 6: 151)

These two commands are linked in order to emphasize the significance of parental rights. The assertion 'Allah is Divine' separates atheist from Muslim, as does obedience to heavenly injunctions.

Society depends on parents maintaining responsibility for the care, nurture and education of their offspring – and this is balanced by the reciprocal responsibility to be good to parents.

The Qur'anic expression 'lower the wing of humility' implies compliance and acceptance of the will of another. The analogy of a bird lowering its wings to conceal and protect its offspring illustrates the tender, caring treatment that parents most need when they themselves are old and dependent. We are told to be gentle and to ensure we do not express any irritation that might upset aged parents – regardless of how they may behave in their dotage.

Many *ahadith* emphasize the need for patience and kindness towards parents, beautifully expressed by Imam Ali ibn Husayn (a.s.) in the *dua*,

O Allah, fill me with an awe of my parents like the awe in which people hold tyrannical sovereigns; let me be devoted to them with the devotion of a compassionate mother!

Make my obedience and commitment to them more pleasing to me than sleep to the drowsy, more refreshing than drink to the thirsty; so that I prefer their inclination over mine.

O Allah, thank them for my upbringing, reward them for their kindness, and protect them as they protected me in my infancy.¹

In considering the degree of parental duty to mature children, jurists have debated the extent of a father's responsibility regarding decisions over his son's property. Some conclude that there are no limits to a father's complete authority over his offspring. They base this on the *Hadith*, 'You and your property belong to your father.'¹ However, we understand this to relate to ethical values rather than civil laws concerning ownership.

During the daily formal prayers – *salat* – we are recommended that when standing in submission to Allah – *qunut* – we should pray, 'O Lord, be merciful to my parents as they were to me in infancy.'¹ It is highly recommended that gratitude towards parents continues to be expressed even after they have died. After that time, Muslims should beg Allah to shower their parents' souls with His mercy. We take comfort in the belief that prayers, which Allah has specifically ordered us to offer, will indeed be accepted by Him.

Although the above is addressed specifically to parents, by inference it extends to all senior members of the family and community. Indeed, in this 'two-way system of Islam', elders are expected to treat the young with mercy and kindness, and the young to reciprocate by treating the elderly with deference.

4.2 Charity

Giving and caring for others is an elemental characteristic of Islamic behavior. Indeed, everything around us is a manifestation of giving. The sun has provided light and heat for millions of years, and continues to do so, for without it life on earth would not be possible. Forests provide the oxygen that sustains us in addition to the material with which to produce the millions of publications that educate and inform us. Our hearts beat to supply life-sustaining blood to our other organs. All these manifestations demonstrate the significance of giving. The Qur'an and *Hadith* describe the concept of charity as follows:

From the Qur'an

Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah are like grasses with seven ears – each with 100 grains. Truly, Allah gives manifold increase to whomever He wills ... (Qur'an 2:261)

While it is acceptable to give donations in public, it is preferable not to reveal one's generosity to the poor. That will redeem some of your evil deeds and Allah is aware of all that you do. (Qur'an 2:271)

Sincere giving of what one has – out of a longing to please Allah – may be likened to a garden on elevated ground. Rain falls freely upon it and it yields two fold fruits ... (Qur'an 2:265)

O you who believe, spend of the good things you have earned from what We have brought forth from the earth. Do not give as charity worthless things which you would not want yourselves ... (Qur'an 2:267)

[O Muhammad (S)] take charity from their wealth to cleanse and purify them and then pray for them. Truly, your prayer is an assurance of their tranquility. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts His servants' repentance and receives their charity ... (Qur'an 9: 103–104)

There is seldom good in secret deliberations other than to enjoin charity, goodness or to reconcile people. Those who meet in secret in order to seek Allah's pleasure will be granted enormous rewards. (Qur'an 4: 114)

Vie with each other to obtain the Lord's forgiveness and paradise – which is as wide as the heavens and earth. It has been prepared for those who safeguard themselves with full awareness of Divine law. Those who spend, while prosperous or straitened, who control anger and forgive people... (Qur'an 3: 133–134)

Those who recite the book of Allah, establish prayer and spend what We have given them – openly or in secret – aspire for imperishable reward. (Qur'an 35:29)

From Ahadith

The Prophet said:

My community will prosper whilst they remain faithful to one another, return the things that they hold in trust and give in charity. When they no longer fulfill these duties, they will face famine and shortage.²

While charity is delivered by the hand of its owner, it voices four statements:

I was perishing and you have given me existence.

I was insignificant and you have given me significance.

I was an enemy and you have turned me into a friend.

I was protected by you and you have made me your protection until the day of resurrection.³

Give charity to restore your family – for charity removes bad fortune and ailments, prolongs life and increases rewards.⁴

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

Allah Almighty has established the livelihood of the destitute in the world of the rich. If the destitute are

*hungry, it is because they have been denied their due by those who are rich.*⁵

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said:

*When you are in financial need, get out of bed early – for the means of subsistence are distributed before sunrise. Allah Almighty blessed this nation in its early hours. So give charity in the early hours, for adversity does not follow charity.*⁶

*The first thing which will be weighed on the Day of Judgement will be the charity given to relatives.*⁷

Commentary

While Islam promotes charity it does not encourage people to accept it, not to mention ask for it. However, as there are always people who need assistance, it is important for those with means to remain sensitive to the needs of others – so that none are ever obliged to ask for help.

Human beings are only temporary custodians of Allah's sustenance and favor. In the past this has been in the safekeeping of others, as it will be again in the future. Thus, commendable charity is given 'for the sake of Allah', in the knowledge that what is being given is not owned or earned by the donor. Therefore, to be parted from property presents no problem. Muslims who comprehend this never humiliate or belittle those to whom they give, nor do they feel they have done a great favor for which reciprocation is due.

Charity is not restricted to the giving of money; it is a broad concept that embraces greeting others warmly, smiling and seeking to solve another's problems – without expectation of gain.

The theme of the Qur'anic ayat 2:261–274 that exhort believers to give charity willingly for the pleasure of Allah, makes the following points:

1. The motivation should be to seek Allah's pleasure and not to 'show off' (2:264).
2. The act should not be followed by self-reproach or injury (2:263) (2:264).
3. What is given must be lawful and pure.
4. Maintain trust in the Provider and ignore Shaytan's encouragement not to give.
5. Give both openly and in secret.
6. The rewards for giving are in both this world and the one to come.

Those who give to display magnanimity should not expect to be rewarded by Allah. To clarify this, He provides the analogy of soil being completely washed off a smooth rock in the first heavy downpour, while similar rainfall on fertile earth is absorbed so that the earth eventually becomes adorned with abundant vegetation.

To conceal charitable gifts is to protect the recipient of them from embarrassment, shame or disgrace, and to preserve their standing in the eyes of others. This is emphasized in the *Hadith* of the Prophet – ‘one hand knows not what the other gives.’ However, this in no way implies that there is no reward in giving openly as stated in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 6, verse 1 – ‘Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen by them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven.’

4.3 Care of others – Orphans and the Destitute in particular

Orphans, deprived of tender, loving, parental attention, are entitled to the utmost care and consideration in Muslim society. The Prophet Muhammad (S) declared that in paradise, those who have cared for orphans will remain in close proximity to him. He illustrated this by holding together two fingers of one hand, to demonstrate that they would never find them selves further away from him than those two fingers.

It is the duty of a guardian to employ the utmost diligence to safeguard the rights and property of orphan(s) under her/his protection. Allah tells us in the Qur’an,

Safeguard the property of orphans until they attain maturity ... (Qur’an 17:34)

In another ayah He tells us:

Those who unjustly consume the property of orphans ingest the fire that will soon envelop them. (Qur’an 4: 10)

With good deeds balanced against bad, we are led to understand that jealousy consumes good deeds in the same way that fire consumes wood. Thus, usurping the property of an orphan is described as ingesting fire rather than food.

A lady came to the Prophet (S) saying, ‘O Messenger of Allah, my husband died leaving me and his daughter, but we did not inherit a thing.’ The deceased's brother said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, how can she expect to inherit from him when she neither rides a horse, attacks her enemies, nor earns. What she needs, others have to provide for her?’ It was in response to this that the above ayah was revealed.

Islamic jurisprudence deals comprehensively with the matter of guardianship of minors and orphans. Guardians are obliged to continue to support orphans in their care until they attain physical and spiritual maturity and the competence to deal with their own property.

In a general guideline, Allah's order to the Prophet is:

Do not oppress orphans. (Qur’an 93:9)

In the Qur’an, Allah Almighty addresses the Muslim community directly, ‘O you who believe’, or indirectly, via His instructions to the Prophet Muhammad (S), as in the above example. Such instructions include

the care of helpless creatures – orphans, dependants or those incapable of managing their own affairs for whatever reason – as sacred trusts. Such sacred trust also applies when one is petitioned to help – by the poor seeking financial assistance, the ignorant seeking information, knowledge or guidance or the helpless seeking protection. All petitions should be granted in accordance with the resources Allah has made available, for a Muslim's duty is to share Allah's bounties with those who have been endowed with a lesser facility than ourselves – whatever that facility might be.

In another *ayah*, Allah refers to those who neglect the needs of orphans, as having no belief in the Day of Resurrection:

Have you seen a person who denies the existence of final judgement? Well, that is the one who rejects orphans and does not encourage the feeding of the poor. (Qur'an 107:1-3)

Allah Almighty tells us in the Qur'an that the good deeds that will repel misfortune on the Day of Judgement include:

The freeing of captives and feeding those who have insufficient food to survive on, the orphans and the homeless. (Qur'an 90:15)

An essential lesson that Allah taught previous nations was:

Do not worship any other than Allah, treat your parents and kindred well and care for orphans and the needy. (Qur'an 2:83)

To underline this point, Allah likens the care of those in need to the care of one's own parents and relatives.

Even though it is only close relatives who normally expect to be included in an inheritance, Allah recommends that a portion of an estate be earmarked for distribution to orphans and the needy when disbursement is made:

When kinsfolk and orphans and the needy are present at the time the estate is being disbursed, also provide for them from it and speak kindly to them. (Qur'an 4:8)

Although the Prophet Musa (a.s.) and Khizr (a.s.) were refused food and hospitality after their journey, Khizr (a.s.) immediately began to repair a wall that was in danger of collapsing. Musa argued, 'If you had wished, you surely could have received a payment for this work.' However, Khizr (a.s.) explained that the wall belonged to a pair of orphaned boys whose inheritance had been secreted within its foundations – and so your Lord has willed that they receive their inheritance when they attain maturity. (Qur'an 18:82)

This *ayah* underlines the importance of safeguarding the property of orphans – even if in doing so one is also required to undertake a little unpaid work.

4.4 Honesty

The integrity of the Prophet Muhammad (S) before he received Allah's Divine Message, was due to two evident aspects of his behavior: honesty and truthfulness – *Al-Sadiq* and *Al-Amin*. Pagan and idolatrous Arabs entrusted their wealth to the care of the Prophet Muhammad (S) simply because honesty is admired by all, regardless of faith, race or color.

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said:

*There are three meritorious acts that are not excusable to ignore: the return of what has been entrusted, regardless of the owner being righteous or a sinner; the fulfillment of covenants, regardless of these being held with honorable or dishonorable people; and being kind to parents, whether they are righteous or not.*⁸

The above *hadith* emphasizes the merit of honesty and trustworthiness, that the Qur'an refers to as being signs of true faith:

Those who are faithful will certainly attain success ...[as will] those who remain true to their trusts and covenants. (Qur'an 23:8)

Even though acts of worship reflect commitment to faith, true faith is verified by one's honesty rather than the duration of one's ritual activity. The Prophet once said to his companions:

*Do not be misled by the time someone spends offering prayer, fasting or the frequency with which they go on pilgrimage, but rather form your opinion by how truthful and trustworthy their behavior is.*⁹

The above criterion was held in such esteem by the error-free Imams that Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said:

*Had the murderer of Imam Ali (a.s.) entrusted me with anything, I would most certainly have returned it to him.*¹⁰

4.5 Fairness and Justice

Fairness and justice are observable characteristics of elevated and purified souls, for those who are fair do not wrong others and avoid selfish or self-centered actions. Islamic teaching describes these commendable qualities thus:

From the Qur'an

O you who believe! Stand firmly with justice. (Qur'an 4: 135)

O you who believe! Remain principled for the sake of Allah and bear witness with justice. Do not let hatred of anyone provoke you into intolerant behavior. Conduct yourself honorably, for that is

nearer to piety. (Qur'an 5:8)

If you judge, judge with impartiality, for truly, Allah loves those who are just. (Qur'an 5:42)

Give full measure and weight with justice, and be just when you speak, even if it is against a kinsman; fulfill Allah's covenant. (Qur'an 6: 153)

Say, my Lord has enjoined justice. (Qur'an 7:29)

Measure with justice and do not shorten the balance. (Qur'an 55:9)

In truth, We sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent with them the book and the balance so that people can establish themselves in justice. (Qur'an 57:25)

From Ahadith

The Prophet (S) said:

An hour's justice is worth more than 70 years of fasting the whole day and praying the whole night. One hour of injustice is worse than 60 years of sin. 11

The highest level of justice is to love for others what you love for yourself, and hate for them what you hate for yourself. 12

Whoever is in charge of ten people and does not deal with them justly will, on the Day of Judgement, arrive with their hands and legs in chains. 13

When someone said to the Prophet (S), 'I would like to be one of the most just people', he (S) replied, 'Then love for others what you love for yourself.' 14

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

Justice is the most secure of foundations. 15

Allah created justice in order to sustain and protect humanity from sin and cruelty. 16

Faith is based on four pillars: patience, certainty, justice and jihad. 17

Imam Ali (a.s.) included in his will the advice to his sons: Be just to friend and foe alike. 18

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said:

Justice is more welcome than water discovered by the thirsty. 19

A seeker of wisdom followed a wise man 700 miles for the answer to seven questions. The sage answered the question, 'What is greater than the whole world?' with the single word – 'Justice.' 20

Commentary

Chingiz-Khan sent three Muslim envoys to offer peace and safe commercial relations to Sultan Muhammad of Khwarazmshah. Although the Sultan responded favorably, when a caravan of 450 merchants and Muslims arrived from Mongolia with 500 laden camels, he detained and murdered them. He subsequently also murdered other envoys sent by the great Khan. From 1219 to 1221, Mongol armies pursued Muhammad and his son Jalal al-Din across Iran through Azerbaijan and into Syria – leaving death and devastation in their wake. The entire Kingdom of Khwarazm passed into the hands of Chingiz-Khan, together with a sizeable part of Iran. The Mongol conquest of central Asia that ended the Caliphate was achieved in less than three years.

When he came to Baghdad, the Mongol Lord Hulagu assembled Muslim scholars to ask, what is preferable, an unjust Muslim ruler or a just non-Muslim governor?' With the concurrence of the other scholars present, the highly respected Sayyid Ali ibn Tawus responded, A just non-Muslim is better than an unjust Muslim'²¹. He based his response on a *hadith* in which the Holy Prophet said, while the state may function on disbelief, it cannot continue with injustice'.²² That reply is claimed to have saved Hilla, Najaf, Karbala and all the inhabitants of southern Iraq from destruction.

It is unsurprising to find that 'The Just' – *Al-Adl* – is one of Allah's most beautiful names and that the *Imamiyah* include justice as one of the five principles of faith.

Adl is itself the root word from which *Al-Adl* – The One who is Just – is derived. *Al-Adl* is He who is just and from whom all justice emanates – the justice that underpins peace, harmony and order from which balance flows. He gave all things existence, created all things perfectly and, with absolute justice and generosity, sited creation in a perfectly balanced environment. Each aspect of creation is fully equipped to fulfill its own special function. *Al-Adl* represents absolute justice, the converse of tyranny – justice that represents right as opposed to wrong, order as opposed to chaos and harmony as opposed to dissension.

Even though we are not able to observe things at every stage of their journey, or permitted to see their inner aspects, everything is treated justly and is as He likes it to be'. Everything has been created with purpose. If we only see clouds, we know that without them we would not appreciate clear skies. Without weakness we would not appreciate strength, without poverty, riches etc. Allah knows His creation and it knows He is just.

Humankind's share in the attribute *Al-Adl* is limited to allowing reason and religion to control the passion and anger that cause injustice. To behave justly towards ourselves, our families, relatives, neighbors, employers and employees, we must restrict ourselves to the parameters of Divine Law. On no account may we bestow inappropriate advantages to disrupt order and balance.

Humankind's greatest benefit arises from accepting Allah Almighty's justice, for His plans, decrees and

actions are just, whether they correspond with our will or not. In the same way that patients accept the medication that doctors prescribe to alleviate their physical suffering, our acceptance of Allah's Divine and absolute justice alleviates the suffering that stems from objecting to and resisting Allah Almighty. Absolute faith lies in acceptance of what He has ordained with absolute justice.

The justice of Allah became a matter of controversy among Muslims. The Shiah and Mutazilites believe that Allah is 'Absolutely Just' in the sense that it would be contrary to His nature to wrong anyone. The Asharite school considers it objectionable to regard Allah Almighty thus. 'Who are we,' they ask, 'To place any stipulation on the will of Allah?' They are certain that no one has the right to any opinion on how Allah will decide any matter, even if he is to commit the righteous to hell and reward the criminal on 'The Day of Judgement'.

The Shiah and Mutazilites reject that view. They say 'Allah Almighty Himself promised to reward the righteous and to punish the criminal and, they claim, Allah never breaks his promises. Because of their support of Allah's justice, the Shiah and Mutazilites came to be known as 'Those who are pro-justice' – al-Adliyah. The Imamiyah school consequently includes 'The Justice of Allah' as a 'Root of Religion'.

4.6 Repelling evil and exemplifying good

By the grace of Allah surges of adrenaline enable us to react swiftly to stress and danger. However, as with our other abilities, we have the choice to employ this wisely and appropriately – or to squander it on foolishness.

Adrenaline-induced 'fight or flight' responses generate biochemical changes in the brain that may make us aggressive and unpredictable, or make us timid and urge us to flee. At such time our natural judgment system is turned down and more primitive responses take over. If our body triggers the fight or flight response for situations that are not truly life-threatening, we experience what is, in effect, a false alarm. Too many such alarms may result in stress-related disorders, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, immune system disorders, migraine headaches, insomnia and sexual dysfunction.

Fortunately, in civilized society we rarely need to avail ourselves of this risk-facing enhancement, other than in 'extreme sports'. So, it clearly makes sound sense, physically, psychologically and legally, for us to control our aggressive and unpredictable urges. A society in which aggression-induced stress is constantly met by reciprocal aggression must be the closest thing to hell that we can imagine.

The ability to restrain anger and suppress retaliation not only signifies a refined and developed psyche, but control and self-denial are also pre requisites for spiritual development. Imam Ali (a.s.), the epitome of courage and bravery, is reported to have said,

The most courageous are those who manage to control their ego's desires. 23

In the Qur'an, Allah encourages us to repel evil via good deeds:

[And those] – who in adversity are kept patiently steadfast by their longing to face their Lord; who maintain prayer and give, privately and openly, of what We have provided them, and who repel evil with good – will find fulfillment in the hereafter [their ultimate abode]. (Qur'an 13:22)

It is these who shall receive a twofold reward for having remained steadfast in adversity, for having repelled evil with good and for having given to others from what We have provided them. (Qur'an 28:54)

But, [as] good and evil are diametric opposites, repel [evil] with that which is better, and the hatred of those who regard you as their enemy may be transformed into intimate friendship. (Qur'an 41:34)

The above *ayah* stresses that when controversial subjects need to be discussed, Muslims should present the points they wish to make in a mild and inoffensive manner. They should not regard those with whom they debate as enemies, but rather as colleagues with whom they are having amicable discussions.

This is also emphasized in the prayer of Imam Ali ibn Husayn (a.s.):

**O Allah, bless Muhammad (S) and Muhammad's Household and direct me:
to resist with good counsel, those who behave dishonestly towards me,
to repay with gentle devotion, those who distance themselves from me,
to reward with generosity, those who have deprived me, to recompense with cooperation, those
who exclude me, to counter with excellent praise, those who slander me,
to shut my eyes to evil and give thanks for good!²⁴**

The Messenger of Allah (S) once asked:

Would you like me to clarify what the best morals for this world and the hereafter are? They are to forgive the one who oppressed you, to establish bonds with those who avoid you and to be kind to those who insult you.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said something similar:

Three noble qualities belong to this world and the hereafter – to forgive those who oppressed you; to make bonds with those who separate themselves from you; and to show forbearance when insulted.²⁵

These are not empty exhortations for they were exemplified by the lifestyles of the error-free Imams – When a man from Damascus who was in Madinah happened to chance on Imam Husayn (a.s.). he broke into an abusive tirade about him and his family. The Imam's response was to say, 'I see that you are a newcomer to town. If you have not yet found accommodation you are welcome to stay at my house; if you are famished by your journey please dine with us; if the costs of travel have strained your finances I will be pleased to be of assistance.' Those who overheard this exchange were amazed by the

differences in tone of the two men and quite taken aback when the Damascene accepted the proffered hospitality. Before this traveler left Madinah he let it be known that he had hated Husayn (a.s.) when he arrived in the city, but was leaving it with his heart overflowing with love for him.²⁶

In a similar incident, Imam Ali ibn Husayn (a.s.) was once confronted in public by an onslaught of vituperation from a cousin. At that time, he (a.s.) chose to ignore both his cousin and his comments. Not to be silenced, his cousin shouted, 'I am speaking to you', to which the Imam (a.s.) replied, 'And I am ignoring you.' Shortly after the offender left, the Imam (a.s.) suggested to his companions that they follow him home. They assumed the Imam would confront him, but when the door was opened they heard the Imam say, 'If the statements you made about me are true, I ask Allah to forgive me. However, if they were untrue, I ask Allah to forgive you.' This embarrassed his cousin into making an apology. At this, the Imam turned to his companions and asked, which of the two actions was the better?²⁷

4.7 Relationship with other faiths

In the view of Allah the whole of humanity consists of one single community,

To the one community of humankind Allah sent Prophets, as bearers of good tidings and as Warners. He sent down to them The Book with the Truth so that He could judge between people ... (Qur'an 2:213)

Three facts emerge from the above ayah:

1. The unity of all humanity under One God;
2. The distinctiveness of the different religions brought by various prophets;
3. The role that revelation (The Book) plays in resolving differences that occur between people.

The Qur'an does not deny the variety of religions, nor that contradictions might exist between them regarding beliefs and practices. At the same time it emphasizes the need to recognize the 'oneness' of humanity created by Him, and the need for all to work towards a better understanding between the followers of the different faiths.

This is illustrated by history. For example, when conditions in Makkah were unfavorable to the early Muslim community and a challenge to the inhabitants of that city, Allah commanded His Messenger to say, '***you to your religion and me to my religion***' (Qur'an 109:5). This was even more relevant when real issues of co-existence arose between the followers of Divine scriptures in Madinah.

The universal message of the Holy Qur'an thus reveals that, without subordination to any limited historical and cultural context, revelation accepts religious pluralism as a necessity. It teaches Muslims to continually negotiate the transformation of society via emphasis on the fundamental aspect of the unity

of humanity that lies in its origin – its creation by the Divine Being. This affirmative principle of diversity is the cornerstone of the Creation

Narrative in the Qur'an and serves to remind people:

Surely this community of yours is one community and I am your Lord: so worship Me. (Qur'an 21:92)

Rather than regarding diversity as a source of inevitable tension, Qur'anic teaching underlines the indispensability of variety in defining common beliefs, values and traditions for the community life of the variety of specific traditions.

O humankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing of you. (Qur'an 49:13)

The unique characteristic of Islam is conviction that belief in the Oneness of God unites the Muslim community with all of humanity – because He created every human being, irrespective of their religion, tradition or background. And on the Day of Judgment, all the inhabitants of the world are to be judged, regardless of their sectarian affiliation or moral performance.

In his letter to his governor in Egypt, Imam Ali (a.s.) wrote, 'Humanity is made up of two kinds of people, those who believe that they are like others because all have been similarly created, and those who only believe that they are like those who follow the same faith.' The Persian poet Sa'di (d. 1292 CE) elaborated, 'Human beings are members of a body, in which every part is related to every other part, and each of those parts has been created from a single essence.'

Divine gift requires humans, regardless of their particular religious affiliations, to live harmoniously together and to strive for justice and peace throughout the world. In the Qur'an, Allah urges humanity to '***... compete with one another in doing good***' (Qur'an 5:48).

Islam does not claim that revelation was limited to the Prophet Muhammad (S) alone, for it is known that other prophets also received the truth.

We have revealed to you, as We revealed to Nuh (a.s.), and the prophets after him. We revealed to Ibrahim (a.s.), Ismai1 (a.s.), Isaq (a.s.), Yacqub (a.s.) and the Tribes, 'Isa (a.s.) and Ayub (a.s.), Yunus (a.s.), Harlin (a.s.) and Sulayman (a.s.), and We gave to Dawud (a.s.) Psalms [in the same way as we gave to] messengers We have mentioned to you and messengers We have not mentioned to you – and Allah spoke to Musa (a.s.). Messengers who gave glad tidings and warnings in order that people may have no argument against Allah. (Qur'an 4:163–165)

Islamic recognition of the variety of communities, each with its own laws, attests to the validity of the Jewish and Christian faiths, despite Islam – which avoids extremes and cautions moderation in

everything – being the ideal for 'the best community'.

The Qur'anic notion of religious pluralism, even when the right path is conceived of as being the only basis for the success of humanity, objects to intolerant claims that various religious communities sometimes make. The Qur'an refers to moral as well as to religious obligations. While universal guidance indicates that moral standards underpin human well-being, specific guidance indicates the necessity for human beings to exercise their volition in matters of personal faith, if for no other reason than because any attempt to enforce faith would lead to its negation.

Justice is Islam's most sacred concept. Many ayat in the Qur'an emphasize its significance for all of humanity. Qur'anic injunctions stipulate the action to be taken whenever justice is violated, If two parties of believers fight one another, make peace between them [by trying to minimize the causes of the conflict], then, if one of them transgress against the other, fight the transgressor until they comply with Allah's command. However, when the transgressor once again submits to Allah's law, make peace between them with fairness and justice and act equitably. Truly Allah loves those who are just. (Qur'an 49:9)

It is obvious that no lasting peace can ever be established without the elimination of the causes of conflict, violations of justice and equity. Consideration of the universal and absolute nature of the moral categories of justice and equity indicates that the Qur'anic answer to conflict resolution is not limited to believers only. Rather, it conveys universal significance, and an answer to the demand for peace between conflicting parties to be restored by them both and for both to behave justly and equitably towards each other. 'Truly Allah loves those who are just.'

In another *ayah*, Allah tells us in the Qur'an,

O you who believe, always remain upright before Allah, bear witness with justice and do not let repugnance of others provoke you into not behaving equitably. Behave equitably, that is nearer to piety. (Qur'an 5:8)

Islam orders just behavior, even when 'being just' does not advantage one's own case (Qur'an 4:135). The obvious conclusion of all of the above is that justice is an absolute concept and one which is not limited to any one religion or race.

During Imam Ali's (a.s.) caliphate a dispute arose between the Caliph and a Jewish citizen over the ownership of a shield in the caliph's possession. Imam Ali (a.s.) attended the court but when the judge addressed him by his title and addressed the claimant by his name, the Imam reminded the judge to observe equity between both parties in the manner in which he addressed them.

It is interesting to note how Allah addresses humanity, regardless of their beliefs, compared to the way in which He addresses believers. The Qur'anic expression for the first group is 'O humanity' – *Ya ayuha al-Naas* – while the term used for the second group is 'O you who believe' – *Ya ayuha alladhina Amanu*.

The ayah mentioned earlier

O humanity, We created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes so that you may know one another' – is an example of the former group (Qur'an 49: 13).

Directives related to justice, fairness and all aspects of moral and spiritual values are addressed to humanity at large. Those that refer to acts of worship and Islamic law are addressed to those who believe in Islam.

Life is a gift of our Almighty Creator, and none may take it from any of His creation. Taking the life of one individual is considered equivalent to taking the lives of the whole of humanity. On the other hand, saving the life of one individual is regarded as being as noble as saving the lives of all of humanity (Qur'an 5:32). In this *ayah*, Allah doesn't limit sacredness of life to Muslims only. The behavior of all who arrogantly ignore this is not acceptable to humanity, and neither is it acceptable to those who believe in Islam.

1. The Psalms of Islam, Prayer No.24.
2. Wasa'il al-Shiah, Vol. 6, p. 13.
3. Al-Ithna Ashariyah, p.223.
4. Kanz al-Ummal, Vol. 6, p.371.
5. Nahjul Balaghah, Maxim 328.
6. Al-Amali by Sheikh Mufid, p.72.
7. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 49, p.94.
8. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 74, p. 176.
9. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 75, p. 114.
10. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 75, p. 114.
11. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 75, p.352.
12. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 75, p.25.
13. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 75, p.345.
14. Kanz al-Ummal, Tradition No.44154.
15. Ghurar al-Hikam.
16. Ghurar al-Hikam.
17. Nahjul Balaghahh, Vol. 3, Maxim 31.
18. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 77, p.236.
19. Al-Kafi, Vol. 2, p. 146.
20. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 75, p.344.
21. Al-Fakhri fi al-Adab al-Sultaniyyah, p. 17.
22. Kashif al-Ghita, al-Din wal Islam, Vol. 1, p. 116.
23. Ghurar al-Hikam.
24. Psalms of Islam, Supplication 20.
25. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 71, p.339.
26. Biography of Imam Husayn (a.s.) by Ibn Asakir, p. 160.
27. Qadatuna, Kayfa Narifuhum, Vol. 6, p. 124.

5.1 Gender Equality

No gender differentiation is found in the Qur'an. The following *ayat* provide a few examples of the all-embracing nature of the Qur'an vis-a-vis men and women:

I do not permit the efforts of workers male or female to be unappreciated – all of you stem from the same source (Qur'an 3: 195)

Believers male or female who commit righteous deeds shall surely enter paradise ... (Qur'an 4: 124)

We shall certainly ensure that the male and female believers, who commit good acts and live virtuous pure lives, will be rewarded for their actions. (Qur'an 16:97)

Male or female believers, who commit good acts, will certainly enter the garden of paradise and receive sustenance beyond measure. (Qur'an 40:40)

O humankind, we created you male and female and appointed you races and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing among you. (Qur'an 49: 13)

From the above *ayat* it is clear that gender differentiation is not a component of Qur'anic teaching.

Further, in a Qur'anic *ayah* that refers to laudable qualities, repeated reference to both 'men and women' emphasizes that the same standards apply to both sexes and that Allah's recompense is in no way related to gender:

- Muslim men and Muslim women
- Faithful men and faithful women
- Obedient men and obedient women
- Truthful men and truthful women
- Patient men and patient women
- Humble men and humble women
- Charitable men and charitable women
- Men who fast and women who fast

Men who control their private parts and women who control Men who frequently remember Allah and women who remember Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and great reward. (Qur'an

33:35)

However, vis-a-vis rights and obligations, some duties are considered to be the province of men and others of women. For example, in Islamic law a husband is required to maintain his home and family, while his wife is not required to contribute anything to it, be she a millionaire or not. That is why the Islamic Law of Inheritance provides sons with double that of daughters, not in any way to indicate discrimination, but rather to reflect their actual responsibilities and duties¹.

5.2 Preparation for motherhood

As mothers are, de facto, at the helm of family life, motherhood is considered to be the cornerstone of Islamic society. For Muslims, the concept of motherhood is inextricably linked to the Islamic concept of leadership and nationhood – for, in the Arabic language, both are derived from the same root word:

Um = mother

Ummah = nation

Imam = leader

The question is, if a sound and healthy society depends on good mothers, how is this achieved? Muslim interest in the importance of motherhood does not in any way imply that Muslim women should not be educated or fulfill their career objectives (See sections 1.4 Education, 5.1 Gender equality and 5.5 Women jurists and scholars), or be isolated from society, but it does underline the significance of preparation for this most important role. A quotation comes to mind,

*Parents wonder why the streams are bitter, when they themselves have poisoned the fountain.*²

A whole panoply of scientific research indicates that, before and during conception, fetal development and birth, a new organism's nourishment and well-being depends on, and is affected by, its mother's physical and psychological condition. Whilst the following facts have been uncovered over the last 30 years or so, Islam has always promoted the well-being of Muslim society by encouraging family life, insisting on no-premarital sex and prohibiting the consumption of substances that can be harmful, such as alcohol.

Contemporary society

Research into contemporary concerns for motherhood has been undertaken by a gamut of scientists such as Larry Bumpass, PhD, N. B. Ryder Professor of Sociology at University of Wisconsin-Madison. In his paper, 'The Changing Contexts of Parenting in the United States', he refers to increasing instability in the lives of children in Europe and the United States, brought about by the changing social context in which parenting interactions and child development take place. He asks, 'do we really value stable relationships and parenting?'

Pregnancy

Research studies in prenatal stress and risk for psychopathology early or in later life by Anja C. Huizink, Edu J. H. Mulder and Jan K. Buitelaar, who refer to the work of Hepper and Lake, suggest that maternal stress during pregnancy may lead to offspring with much higher rates of childhood autism, psychosis, schizophrenia, emotional and behavioral disorders, and psychiatric disorders in general. Further, it has been reported by Dr Joy Goodfellow that population studies conducted in the last decade suggest that environmental factors active during embryonic and fetal development have substantial consequences vis-a-vis the occurrence of metabolic and cardiovascular disorders in adulthood.

Substances

Caffeine

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises pregnant women to eliminate or limit the consumption of products containing caffeine, including coffee, colas, tea, cocoa, chocolate and some over-the-counter remedies. Caffeine has been implicated in miscarriages and low birth weight. Caffeine stimulates increased heart and metabolic rates in babies, just as it does in adults. Furthermore, caffeine may remain in the baby's bloodstream longer and at higher levels, because a baby's immature liver cannot get rid of the caffeine as quickly as its mother's can.

Smoking

Lower birth weight may result from nicotine poisoning narrowing uterine blood vessels and reducing blood flow to the baby. Increased levels of carbon monoxide reduce blood oxygen that in turn affects the development of the baby's organs. The level of carbon monoxide in the blood of pregnant women who smoke is 600–700 per cent higher than in those who do not. Brain injury results not only from reduced oxygen but also from chemicals in cigarette smoke that poison developing brain cells.

Children of mothers who smoked during pregnancy have also been found to have smaller head circumferences, decreased mental performance scores at one year, reduced IQs and diminished academic performance at school, compared with the children of mothers who did not smoke. There is also an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) if mothers smoke – if both the father and mother smoke, the risk of SIDS is nearly double.

Alcohol

Alcohol has the potential to damage male sperm and women's eggs and decrease the chances of conceiving by 50 per cent or more. As women do not necessarily know they have conceived for the first four to six weeks of pregnancy, abstinence from drinking alcohol will prevent babies from being exposed to it during the early weeks of growth and development.

The World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that there is no safe level of alcohol for women during pregnancy and recommends abstinence from all alcohol for the entire pregnancy. Heavy alcohol consumption during pregnancy can cause Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), a disorder that encompasses a variety of abnormalities. FAS babies are lighter, shorter and have smaller brains than normal babies. Their brains are sometimes malformed and as a result they sometimes suffer mental retardation.

Illegal drugs

When a mother takes a substance, so does her baby! If a mother is addicted, so is her baby. If she breast feeds, the baby will drink drug-laced breast milk. If she does not breast feed, her baby will suffer symptoms of drug withdrawal – convulsions, no appetite, bluish pallor, heavy sweating and endless high-pitched crying. Possible effects of illegal drugs on the developing baby include stillbirth, miscarriage, reduced birth weight, mental retardation, prematurity, and an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Researchers believe that such drugs may constrict blood vessels in the placenta and thus reduce the oxygen supply to the unborn baby – a suffocation effect similar to that caused by nicotine.

In the Holy Qur'an, the significance of the 'Immaculate Conception' is to illustrate that every precautionary measure had been taken to ensure the safe delivery of Isa (a.s.). In the following *ayah*, Allah employs the word 'peace' to embrace both physical and spiritual purity in reference to the successful completion of the first stage of life – the period of pregnancy. ***'Peace be with him the day he was born ...' (Qur'an 19:15)***, and in another *ayah*, Isa (a.s.) says, ***'Peace be with me the day I was born ...' (Qur'an 19:33)***.

In Islam, preparation for motherhood begins with the selection of a suitable marriage partner. As both genetic background and educational environment contribute towards personality, it would be wrong to ignore them. This is why the background of a prospective spouse is considered to be so important in Islamic culture:

*Do you expect, forsooth, that a mother will hand down to her children principles that differ from her own?*³

As it is parental behavior, especially that of the mother, that establishes the standard pattern of a child's behavior, it is highly desirable that parental behavior is exemplary. Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

*The best legacy to leave one's children is good manners.*⁴

*The question for the child is not 'Do I want to be good?' but 'Whom do I want to be like?'*⁵

For women to be effective role models they, of course, need to participate in, and be part of, society. It is nonsensical to expect them to be in a position to guide the younger generation if they themselves are isolated from, and unaware of, what occurs within society.

5.3 Hijab is to protect, not to isolate

To understand *Hijab* we need to look at the following:

1. What the Qur'an and *aHadith* teach us about *Hijab*.
2. The different styles of *Hijab*.

What the Qur'an and ahadith teach us about hijab

Tell Muslim men to dress modestly and to lower their gaze [when in mixed company] for that will contribute to their spiritual purity...

And tell Muslim women to lower their gaze, to be modest, to conceal the embellishment of their beauty [e.g. jewelry and cosmetics] – other than that which is outwardly visible. To draw their veils over

Hijab is to protect, not to isolate their bosoms and to only reveal their embellishments to their husbands, brothers, nephews... (Qur'an 24:30-31)

O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and those women who believe, to conceal their bodies under long loose garments so that they do not excite attraction. (Qur'an 33:59)

The precise word for virtuous, modest conduct – an essential Islamic teaching – is the Arabic word *Haya'*, that is considered to lie at the root of self-discipline and moral behavior.

The Prophet (S) said:

*Modest behavior encapsulates the whole of religion.*⁶

Imam Hasan (a.s.) said:

*Those who do not behave with modesty have no religion.*⁷

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said:

*Absence of modest behavior equates to the absence of faith.*⁸

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said:

*Modest behaviour and faith are linked – where one goes, the other follows.*⁹

In recognizing the compelling effect of sexual attraction, Islam guides us to regulate and direct our natural urges and avert their uninhibited expression. This is analogous to the trickles of pure sweet water that burble from mountain springs to flow into streams and rivers. If unchecked, these may later rise to become great torrents of water that cascade over riverbanks and flood defences, to overwhelm and

destroy everything in their path. To avert such destruction, society regulates and directs such waters into reservoirs and dams to contain and preserve their mighty volumes for future use.

Sigmund Freud based his studies on the sexual urge being the foundation of all human characteristics and activity. He started with the identification of two main and powerful human objectives – the defense and protection of each human being's very existence, and the expression of each human being's sexuality. However, he later ignored the first to concentrate solely on the second. The damaging result of this indicates that love loses its spiritual purity and is transformed into sexual gratification. This distortion led him to link suckling at the mother's breast to the provocation of adult sexuality by the female bosom. He also considered the relationship between teacher and pupil, fatherly love for offspring and purity of friendship to be emanations of sexuality. Today, there is a voluminous and complex literature in this area.

At the opposite end of the scale, some consider sexual activity to be almost sinful. Indeed, ascetic Christian, Buddhist and Hindu orders link spiritual progress to a celibate life – the renunciation of sexuality.

Islam rejects both these views as extreme. It considers sexual intercourse to be a natural, beautiful and pleasurable act that is to be enjoyed, even when not indulged in, to ensure the continuation of the human race. As mentioned above, Islamic teaching is to regulate and direct natural sexual urges towards beneficial and fruitful ends, e.g. to strengthen the bonds of love and mercy between men and women within the secure boundaries of marriage:

Among His signs is that He created mates for you, with yourself same essence so that you may dwell together in tranquility, and He instilled between you love and compassion. (Qur'an 30:21)

The most suitable means to secure the above objective is to advocate and promote 'modest behaviour – *Haya*'.

In the story of the Prophet Musa (a.s.) two girls wait for their turn to water their flocks. As stronger shepherds pushed them aside to jump the queue, the Prophet Musa (a.s.) helped them. Afterwards while resting in the shade, he prayed, 'O my Lord, I have need of the good that You have sent me.' Later, one of the girls came up to him in an exceedingly modest manner to tell him that, despite her father being too frail to come himself, he wanted to thank Musa (a.s.) for his kind help. This incident eventually led to her marriage to *Hijab* is to protect, not to isolate Musa.¹⁰

The respectful, decorous way in which the girl conveyed her father's message exemplifies the manner in which all contact between males and females should be conducted. *Hijab* is entirely to serve the above purpose.

Does Hijab hinder the freedom of women?

Those who claim that *Hijab* limits freedom and hinders women from taking their rightful place within society do not in reality understand the concept of freedom. A woman in *Hijab* is free to express her views, own property in her own right, decide if she wishes to accept a proposal of marriage, etc. Her parents cannot force her in one direction or another.

Hijab does not prevent her from pursuing her studies and fulfilling her potential, nor does it prevent her from driving a car, earning her own living or directing a commercial or industrial enterprise. Rather, *Hijab* enhances her dignity and encourages males with whom she comes into contact to behave in a respectful manner towards her.

While western society ridicules *Hijab* and claims it to be oppressive, Muslims believe that it is the answer to a multitude of societal problems. The *Hijab* is protection to shield them from the unwanted and lascivious gaze.

Different styles of Hijab

Having explained the concept of *Hijab* according to Islamic teaching, we now look at a variety of cultural approaches to meet the requirement. Women in diverse parts of the Muslim world deal with this matter differently. In parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan, some cover themselves completely in a *burku* leaving only a small grid before their eyes. In other parts of the world, women only cover their heads with a scarf and wear modest contemporary clothes. Here is a small variety of examples of the *hijab*:

1. Scarf – The headscarf, regarded by many Muslims as a symbol of both religion and womanhood, comes in a myriad of styles and colors and is commonly seen in the West as a covering of the head and neck – leaving the face clear, provided that no cosmetics are used.
2. *Niqab* – This is a veil that covers the face leaving only the area around the eyes clear. Jurists differ regarding the necessity for a *niqab* to be worn – especially when no cosmetics are used and there is no intention to attract the notice of others.
3. *Khimar* – This is a long cape-like veil that hangs down to just above the waist. It covers the hair, neck and shoulders completely, but leaves the face clear.
4. *Chador* and *Abaya* – Both of these full-body cloaks may be accompanied by a smaller headscarf beneath them. The *chador* is worn by Iranian women and the *abaya* by Iraqi women.

The fuss over covering the hair

There is some debate over whether women covering their hair is an aspect of *Hijab* or not. What is significant?

Mark of a woman

As is seen in the following, hair is recognized by society to be a secondary sexual characteristic.

'Hair is so significant because of what it is and where it is,' says Dr Martin Skinner, social psychologist at the University of Warwick. 'It is part of us, much more intimate than things like clothes. If you cut it away, you are cutting away a bit of yourself. Whatever we do with it is very much part of our identity.'

So why is hair – particularly long hair – viewed as such a defining part of a woman and inextricably linked to femininity? Zoologist Desmond Morris suggests that women traditionally have long hair because their ancestors, the aquatic apes, developed long hair to give their babies something to hang on to. In recent times, he argues that women have styled their hair to reflect their self-image, with long hair suggesting a certain availability.

Nature also plays a role. People are programmed to take notice of hair because it is a secondary sexual characteristic.

'Thick, healthy, long, glossy hair or fur is seen as a sign of good hormonal health and is one of the things animals use to select a mate – humans are no different,' says evolutionary psychologist Nick Neave of Northumbria University.

Why long hair is so linked to femininity could come down to many things, say experts. It is about youth, health, grace and movement.

Just look at shampoo advertisements, typically featuring models swinging their long, glossy locks. And look at how much the average woman spends on her hair – £600 a year, according to one study. Men spend just £90.

How this association started is not so easy to answer, but it has been entrenched in what is seen as the feminine for centuries' says psychologist Lorraine Sherr. 'As far back as cavemen, there are drawings of women with longer, glossier hair.'¹¹

The purpose of the *Hijab* is then to shield this important aspect of feminine sexuality and beauty from unwanted attention.

5.4 Share of inheritance

Under Islamic law, a male is entitled to inherit twice the share a female is entitled to inherit. This ruling may appear objectionable – some say it is unjust, others that it is a sign of Islam's low regard for women.

However, for a better understanding of women's rights under *Shari'ah*, we need to explore family law according to the Qur'an and *ahadith*.

First, as soon as a marriage is conducted, it is incumbent on the husband to care for his wife's every need. A woman is not expected to make any contribution towards the family's living expenses, regardless of the extent of her personal wealth. Indeed, should a woman elect to accept employment, her earnings are not expected to contribute to the family.

Second, any dowry a woman receives remains her personal property – to be invested or disposed of as she wishes.

As an illustration of inheritance distribution, if a man dies leaving a wife, a son and a daughter, his assets would be distributed in the following proportions:

The wife's share of the estate is 12.5%.

The balance of 87.5% is divided into three equal parts. One to go to the daughter – 29.166% – and two parts to the son – 58.333%.

In this distribution it is understood that when the son marries he is expected to pay a dowry and to maintain his wife. However, when the daughter marries, it is she who receives a dowry and lifelong maintenance from her husband – this is in addition to keeping everything that she inherited from her father.

Once in possession of these facts, Islamic inheritance laws no longer appear to be inequitable.

In cases in which parents share in an inheritance, the deceased's mother and father receive equal shares, namely 16.66% each. Indeed, in some situations the mother receives twice the share of the father. For further details see references on Islamic law.

5.5 Women jurists and scholars

There has never been a time, throughout Islamic history, when women were faced with discrimination in their pursuit of Islamic knowledge. From the time of the Prophet (S), women played prominent and highly respected roles in the collection and dissemination of *Hadith* – and this has also been the case in every subsequent period of history. Biographies of a large number of women are recorded in tomes such as Ayatollah Khomeini's 24-volume Encyclopaedia of *Hadith* Narrators – *Mu'jam Rijal al-Hadith*.

The most notable women at the time of the Prophet (S) were the Lady

Fatimah; Asma, the daughter of Abu Bakr; her sister 'Aisha; Um Salamah; Anas bin Malik's mother Um Salma; and Amamah daughter of Abul 'As. In later generations, many prominent lady scholars are also recorded as having taught the Qur'an, *ahadith*, Arabic literature, etc.

Towards the end of the first Islamic century, "Amra, daughter of "Abd al-Rahman, Hafsa, daughter of Ibn Sirin, and Umm al-Darda were acknowledged to be the most prominent traditionalists of their time.

"Amra's reputation was so distinguished that the Caliph "Umar ibn "Abd al-"Aziz ordered Abu Bakr ibn-Hazm, the celebrated judge of Madinah, to notate all the traditions of which she was the recognized leading authority.

Zaynab, daughter of Sulayman – whose father was cousin to Al-Saffa, the founder of the "Abbasid dynasty – a most celebrated traditionalist, was mentor to many renowned scholars. Another famous woman scholar of the seventh century AH known simply as Karimah the Syrian¹, is described by biographers as the supreme Syrian teacher of *ahadith*.

In his work Hidden Pearls – *Al-Durar al Kamina*, Ibn Hajar names and provides brief biographies of 170 prominent women of the eighth century AH.

In mentioning Juwayriya, the daughter of Ahmad, he records that many of his contemporaries, as well as some of his own teachers, attended her discourses. Umm Hani (d. 778 AH), who learned the Qur'an by heart as a child, later became learned in all the Islamic sciences, including Theology, Law, History and Grammar. She pursued her study of *ahadith* under the renowned *Hadith* scholars of Cairo and Makkah. She is also celebrated for her mastery of calligraphy, her command of the Arabic language and her poetry. She carried out a rigorous programme of lectures at the great colleges of Cairo, where she had the authority to grant licenses of competence to many of the scholars of the time.

Throughout Islamic history there have been many women who took their seats as students and teachers in public educational institutions – along side male counterparts at the highest levels. In the last century, a renowned jurist – *mujtahid* – from Isfahan in Iran, Mrs Amin, taught Islamic Law, Jurisprudence, Exegesis and Arabic Grammar for many decades. Many still refer to her legal opinions for guidance.

In contemporary times, there are colleges and religious centres headed by women in Qum, Mashad and Tehran, in addition to those beacons of illumination and guidance, the women professors at the University of Tehran.

1. See section 5.4 Share of inheritance.
2. John Locke, 17th-century English philosopher.
3. Juvenal's Satires, Sat. vi, 1.239.
4. Ghurar al-Hikam.
5. Bruno Bettelheim, 20th-century German/American child psychologist and author.
6. Kanz al-Ummal, Vol.3.p.121.
7. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 78, p.110.
8. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 71. p.331.
9. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 78, p.177.
10. See Qur'an 28:23–28.
11. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/6375683.stm> [9]

¹Mark of a woman' by Denise Winterman BBC News Magazine, 20th February 2007.

6.1 Introduction

The most controversial event in the history of Islam, subsequent to the Prophet Muhammad's (S) death, was his succession. There was a dichotomy of views – one that the Prophet had appointed Ali (a.s.), son of Abu Talib, as his successor; another that the Prophet (S) had left the matter of his succession to the Muslim community.

After the death of the Prophet (S), the first group followed the Islamic teaching of Ali (a.s.) and, because the Prophet is reported to have said, '... Ali (a.s.) and his followers – *hatha wa shiatu* ...' they became known as followers – Shiah. Shiah sources rely upon the reports of the Prophet's sayings and doings relayed via the error-free Imams from his progeny – *Ahl al-Bayt*.

The second group, who followed the caliphs after the Prophet (S) came to be known as Sunni because they identify themselves as being followers of custom – *sunnah*. Sunni sources rely upon reports of the Prophet's sayings and doings relayed by any of the Prophet's 'companions'. The two schools are thus recognized by the following names:

- Shiah School of Ahl al-Bayt
- Sunni School of the Companions and Caliphs

The word Sufi is thought to be derived from the Arabic word for wool – *suf* – because early ascetics are supposed to have preferred simple rough woolen clothing to finer materials. Sufis may briefly be described as being dedicated to the esoteric aspects of Islam, in much the same way as mystics of other religions are dedicated to the esoteric aspects of their faiths.

Sufi groups – *uruq* (singular *tariqah*) – are organized around spiritual masters who guide the spiritual development and progress of dedicated followers.

6.2 Shiah

There are dozens of valid Shiah arguments to support the view that succession, like prophethood itself, is a matter of Divine decree and not human preference. For brevity, here are three items of valid evidence:

The summoning of his family

In the early days of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad was ordered to invite his kinsfolk to Islam.¹ To this end, he invited approximately 40 of the family's menfolk to dine with him. Those present included his uncles Abu Talib, Hamzah, Abbas and Abu Lahab. At the end of the meal the Holy Prophet (S) addressed his guests: 'O children of Abd al-Mutalib, I do not know any amongst the Arabs, who has given his nation a better gift than that which I now present to you [i.e. Islam]. As Allah has ordered me to

invite you to Islam – I now offer you the 'good' of this life and that of the one to come. I will regard whichever one of you is willing to help me convey the faith of Islam to the people as my brother, the executor of my Will and as my successor.'

The only one present to respond was Ali (a.s.), the youngest person present. He immediately arose to announce that he was ready and willing to share the Prophet's burdens. The Messenger of Islam placed his hand on Ali's (a.s.) shoulder and said, 'This is my brother, the executor of my Will and my successor – so listen to what he says and obey him.'

The family considered this outrageous and said to Abu Talib (a.s.), 'Now you are being ordered to listen to and obey your own son.'

It is evident from this event that from the very earliest days of his mission, the Prophet Muhammad had concerned himself with the matter of his succession. As he had made it clear to all his relatives that Ali (a.s.) had been appointed to take over this position, subsequent to that event, all of them were aware that Ali (a.s.) would eventually take charge of the Muslim nation. Hence, their jibe at Abu Talib (a.s.) being ordered to listen to and obey his own son.

The following sources support the content of this report:

- Tabari in his History, Vol. 2, p.216
- Tha'alabi in his Commentary – (Qur'an 26:214)
- Kanji Shafiei in *Kefayat al-Talib*, p.89
- Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad*, Vol. 1, p.159
- Mutaqi Hindi *Kanz al-Ummal*, Vol. 6, p.391

His appointment of a deputy each time he had to leave Madinah

Meticulous study of the history of Islam shows that the Prophet (S) never left Madinah without leaving an appointed deputy to take charge of Muslim affairs during his absence. This was so even when he planned to be away for a single day or to go on a short journey, such as to Uhud:

1. When he left Madinah in the year 2 AH, he appointed Sa'd bin 'Abadah to be in charge in his absence.
2. When he left for the Battle of Bowat in year 2 AH, he appointed Sa'd bin Ma'ath.
3. When he left for the Battle of Badr, he appointed Ibn Um Maktoum.
4. For the Battle of Bani Qaynaqa and Sawiq, he appointed Abu Lubabah al-Ansari.

5. When he went to Salim and Ghatfan in year 3 AH, he again appointed Ibn Um Maktoum to be in charge.
6. He appointed 'Uthman bin Affan when he left for DhiAmr.
7. He appointed Ibn Um Maktoum when he left for Uhud, Bani al-Nadir, Dawmat al-Jandal and Azab.
8. When he left Madinah for Bani al-Mustalaq, he appointed Zayd bin Harithah.
9. He appointed Abu Ruham al-Ghifari when he left for Bani Quraylah.
10. When he left for Khaybar he appointed Sibac bin Arfatah.
11. He appointed Abu Ruham al-Ghifari while he took charge of the conquest of Makkah.
12. The only occasion that Ali (a.s.) was ordered to take charge in Madinah was when the Prophet (S) left for Tabuk.

The above facts corroborate that the Prophet never neglected to appoint a deputy when he knew he was not going to be present. It would have been contrary to his customary practice, and quite out of character, for him to have left the Muslim nation without having appointed a deputy and successor. It is not logical to imagine that this occurred.

Ghadir Kumm

Ghadir Kumm lies near Jofah between Makkah and Madinah. On the Prophet's journey home from his final pilgrimage, Jibra'il delivered this urgent command from Allah:

O My Messenger, deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord for if you do not, you will have failed to have delivered His message [completely]. Allah will protect you from the people. (Qur'an 5:67)

The Prophet (S) immediately drew to a halt and ordered those ahead of him to be called back while he waited for the stragglers to arrive. Acacia thorns were swept away, cloaks spread underfoot and overhead as protection from the heat and a platform, constructed of camel saddles, was raised. When all were present, the Prophet ascended this makeshift structure to address them as follows:

O people, know well that Jibra'il has come down to me several times with the Lord Most Merciful's order to halt here to inform all, white or black, that Ali (a.s.), son of Abu Talib (a.s.), is my brother, my successor, my caliph and the Imam that has been appointed to follow me. His position in relation to me is as that of Harlin to Musa (a.s.), except that no prophet is to follow me. Ali (a.s.) is your master after Allah and His Prophet (S).

In most reports, the Prophet, also informed them of his approaching demise and called them to witness

that he had faithfully discharged his duties. He then asked, 'Do I not have more authority over you than you have yourselves?' They responded that he certainly had greater rights over them than they themselves had. The Prophet (S) then said: 'Whoever I am master over – *mawla* – Ali (a.s.) is also *mawla*.' He ended with the prayer, 'O Allah, love those who love Ali (a.s.) and oppose those who are Ali's (a.s.) enemies.' When he had finished, the following ayah was revealed:

This day I have perfected your religion for you, granted you my bounties and approved Islam as your faith and way of life. (Qur'an 5:3)

Three important aspects need to be examined regarding the above reports:

- a. Their authenticity.
- b. The general meaning of the word *mawla*.
- c. The specific meaning of the word *mawla* as used in this context.

a. Authenticity

Allamah Amini recorded his comprehensive eleven-volume study of this subject entitled *Al-Ghadir*. In this he lists the chains of narration throughout the 14 centuries of Islamic history and traces every Arab poet whose work mentions the events at Ghadir.

In his book *Abaqat al-Anwar*, another scholar, Sayyid Hamid Husayn, presents all the chains of narration on Ghadir and includes comprehensive details of each narrator and their reliability that have been confirmed in dozens of Sunni books.

In the first volume of Allamah Amini's *Al-Ghadir*, the names of 110 of the Holy Prophet's companions who narrated *hadith* on this subject are listed.

Only those companions whose names start with the letter *alif* have been included below:

1. Abu Layla al-Ansari
2. Abu Zaynab ibn Awf
3. Abu Fadhalah al-Ansari
4. Abu Qudamah al-Ansari
5. Abi Amra ibn Muhasin
6. Abu al-Haytham ibn al-Tayyihan
7. Abu Rafia'

8. Abu Dhuwayab
9. Usamah ibn Zayd
10. Ubayy ibn Ka'b
11. Asad ibn Zurarah
12. Asma bint Umays
13. Umm Salamah
14. Umm Hanibint abu Talib
15. Anas ibn Malik
16. Abu Bakr
17. Abu Hurayrah

Allamah Amini also includes the names of 84 of the generation that followed the companions – the *tabiun* – followed by succeeding generations. In referring to scholars and writers who include this Hadith in their works, Allamah Amini lists 360 scholars throughout the 14 centuries of the Hijri calendar.

In his book *The Right Path*, Allamah Sharafuddin quotes Al-Hakim alNishaburi, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Al-Nissai'i and many others, who included this Hadith in their works.

b. General meaning of the word 'mawla'

As Sunni Muslims cannot deny the authenticity of the Ghadir Hadith, they downplay its significance with claims that the word maw/a in this Hadith means 'friend' – that the Holy Prophet simply wanted to announce, 'Whoever's friend I am, Ali (a.s.) is also their friend. 'The problem with this assertion is that not a single person present at Ghadir understood that to be the case. Hassan ibn Thabit, famously regarded as being the Prophet's poet, composed a few lines before the audience present at Ghadir. In these he clearly described the occasion in which the Prophet said, 'Arise O Ali (a.s.), for I am pleased to appoint you Imam and Guide after me.'

The fact that, at that time, no one objected to Hassan's words, confirms that those present had all understood maw/a to denote that Ali (a.s.) was their Master and Guardian. This comprehension is confirmed by the phrase that Umar ibn al-Khattab used to congratulate Ali (a.s.) congratulations O son of Abu Talib. This morning you have become the *mawla* of every believing man and woman.'

Not only was Ali (a.s.) known to be friendly to all – it is clear that no congratulatory declaration would have been apposite if the Prophet had stated, 'Those to whom I am a friend, Ali (a.s.) is also friends

with.'

Scholars who recorded the phrase that Umar used include:

1. Al Fakhr al-Razi in his *Tafseer*, Vol.12, p.49
2. Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad*, Vol.4, p.281
3. Al-Tabari in his *Tafseer*

All references are documented by Alamah Amini in Al-Ghadir, Vol. 1, p.270

While it is true that Arabic lexicons make reference to 22 different meanings for the word *mawla*, what defines the specific meaning of all homonymous words is the context in which they are used. Thus, depending on the context, *mawla* may mean:

Owner Lodger/Guest

Master Partner

Slave Son

The one who frees another Uncle

The one who has been freed Cousin

The benefactor Nephew

The beneficiary Son-in-Law

Friend Relative

Companion Follower

Protector Helper

Neighbor The one in authority

c. Specific meaning of 'mawla' in the above context

To examine the meaning implied by *mawla* in the context of the Ghadir Hadith, we find scores of 'associations' that point clearly towards 'Master' being the only meaning which fits that context. Here are some such 'associations':

1. The question that the Holy Prophet (S) asked prior to his declaration: 'Do I not have more authority over you than you have yourselves?' When they responded in the affirmative, the Prophet declared, 'Whoever I am master over – *mawla* – "Ali is also *mawla*.'

The word *mawla* used in this declaration has the same meaning as *awla bikum* – 'having greater authority over you' – in the preceding question. At least 64 Sunni scholars have quoted the above question that the Prophet asked, including Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Majah, Al-Nissari and Al-Timidhi. See Al-Amini, P-344 for detailed references.

2. The prayer that the Holy Prophet (S) offered just after this declaration is, 'O Allah, love those who love Ali (a.s.) and oppose those who are Ali's (a.s.) enemies. Help those who help Ali (a.s.) and forsake those who forsake Ali (a.s.)'. From this it is clear that on that day "Ali (a.s.) was entrusted with a responsibility that by its very nature would arouse the enmity of those eager for that position.
3. The Prophet (S) declared, 'I am soon to depart from this world in response to Allah's call.' This points to his making arrangements for the leadership succession after his departure.
4. The expressions of joy of the congratulatory companions leave little room to doubt the meaning of the word *mawla* in the context of the Prophet's declaration.
5. Consider the ludicrousness of the Holy Prophet halting his, and nearly 100,000 travellers', journey at midday, to assemble together in a thorn-strewn area and erect a platform of camel saddles – in the relentless sun of the Arabian desert – simply to tell them that Ali (a.s.) is their friend?

Protection from error

As the result of the Prophet's (S) explicit directive, 'I leave behind two precious things – *thaqalain* – the Book of Allah and my progeny that will, while you adhere firmly to both, safeguard you from being led astray,' after the death of the Prophet (S) Shia Muslims acknowledge the error-free Imams to be the ultimate source of Islamic knowledge, theology, exegesis and law. On the other hand, those who classified themselves as Sunni Muslims elected to accept and support the narrations and interpretations of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs.

Despite this, even those who accepted and submitted to the authority of the caliphs acknowledged that, in terms of knowledge, wisdom, righteousness, charisma and leadership, there were marked differences in the qualities and characters of the Imams and the caliphs. Whilst caliphs were observed to indulge themselves in power and the pleasures of this world, the error-free Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) are recorded by history to have led pious, humble lives and been primarily concerned with the enlightenment and spiritual enhancement of the Muslim community.

6.2.1 The Twelvers – Ithna Ashariyyah

The majority of Shiahs who follow the progeny of the Holy Prophet are referred to as 'The Twelvers' – *Ithna Ashariyyah* – because they follow the 12 error-free Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) who are regarded as being the true spiritual successors of the Prophet. The twelfth Imam is alive but hidden until, on Allah's command, he is to reappear to overcome corruption and tyranny and ensure that justice and truth reign.

The information provided above in this section refers mainly to this group.

6.2.2 Zaydis

After the death of the fourth Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.), the majority of Shia Muslims accepted Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) as his father's appointed successor. The significance of this Imam (a.s.) rests on his enduring focus on the dissemination of knowledge and promotion of education. However, some Shiahs chose instead to support his brother Zayd son of Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.), in his unremitting renunciation of the tyranny of the Umayyad dynasty.

As the result of their confrontational characteristic, anyone seen with a dagger in their cummerbund was assumed to be a *Zaydi*. The *Zaydis* relied for their Islamic teaching on a collection of *ahadith*, called '*Musnad Zayd*', that incorporated the traditions reported by his predecessors. However, as Abu Hanifa benefited greatly from Zayd's knowledge, later Zaydi jurists adopted Hanafi *fiqh*. Zaydi Imams ruled Yemen for centuries until the revolution led by Abdullah al-Sallal turned Yemen into a republican regime.

6.2.3 Dawoodi Bohras

Another sub-group emerged after the death of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) Whilst the majority of Shiahs followed Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.), a few believed that his elder brother Ismail should rightfully be the Imam. However, as Ismail had passed away during his father's lifetime, his inheritance of the Imamate did not make any sense to the majority of Shiahs.

The Fatimid dynasty, established by the descendants of Ismail, ruled Egypt until a further division occurred in the time of Al-Mustansir – who died in Cairo in 487 AH/1094 CE – as to which of his two sons, Mustali or Nizar, should succeed him. The group who followed the former have come to be known as Dawoodi Bohras, whilst followers of the latter have come to be known as Agha Khanis or Ismailis.

According to the Dawoodi Bohras, the Imamate starts with Imam Hasan (a.s.), who died in 49 AH/669 CE, and ended with Imam al-Tayyib (who chose complete seclusion in the year 526 AH/1132 CE). Over the years 52 *Dais* have been charged with the group's leadership; the current Dawoodi Bohra *Dai* is Muhammad Burhanuddin.

Whilst the Dawoodi Bohras share all acts of devotion with the Muslim nation, the Agha Khanis, also known as Ismailis, following their leader Agha Khan IV, perform prayer in a different manner.

6.3 Sunni

For a clear understanding of Sunni Islam, three aspects need to be understood – the succession to the Prophet (S), the Principles of Faith and the Four Schools of Law.

Succession to the Prophet (S)

As the Prophet (S) was undisputed leader of both the spiritual and civil aspects of Muslim society, Shiahs believe that the nomination and appointment of the leader to succeed him was made by the Divinely guided Prophet himself. For had not precedent already established religious authority to be the province of Divine determination? Sunnis reject this view in favour of one in which both aspects of leadership are held by an individual whom the majority of a populace are prepared to pay allegiance to.

History records that after the death of the Prophet a meeting was held at *Saqifah*, and after some debate between those who had migrated with the Prophet and their Madinah hosts – the *Muhajerin* – and *Ansar*, Umar and Abu Ubaidah introduced Abu Bakr as the Caliph to whom all Muslims in Madinah were ordered to pay allegiance. This method was later referred to as 'consensus' – despite its non-acceptance and nonapproval by many companions as well as the entire Bani Hashim clan.

Abu Bakr appointed Umar to be the second Caliph Umar selected a consultant committee of six to appoint his successor, that resulted in Uthman becoming the third Caliph. When Uthman was assassinated, Ali (a.s.) the only one ever to have the actual consensus of the people in Madinah, became the fourth of the so-called 'Rightly Guided Caliphs'.

The Umayyad dynasty, that Muawiyah started, ended on the death of Marwan al-Himar. The concession for family control of the caliphate was then taken by the Abbasid dynasty.

Historical evidence thus clearly refutes the caliphs' assertions that their prerogative to hold supreme religious authority was derived from their being the successors to the Prophet Muhammad (S). Notwithstanding this, Sunnis believe the caliphs to have validly held supreme spiritual, as well as temporal, leadership over the Muslim nation.

Sunnis consider ten qualifications necessary for a person to be eligible for appointment as caliph:

1. To be a Muslim.
2. To be of age.
3. To be male.
4. To be of sound mind.
5. To be courageous.
6. To be a free man (not a slave).
7. To be accessible.
8. To be able to lead troops in battle.

9. To be just.

10. To be qualified to pass legal judgments.²

Despite the first eight items being unexceptional, unbiased historic scholarship shows that item numbers 9 and 10 were not met by the vast majority of appointed caliphs.

Principles of faith

From the earliest days of Islam, scholars debated a variety of issues that today form the basis of what we refer to as Islamic Theology, namely: Are Divine attributes part of the 'Essence', or separate from it? Is the Holy Qur'an eternal or created? Do people have free will, or are all things pre-ordained? Is a sinner to be regarded as an unbeliever? Plus a variety of other equally arcane subjects.

The first disagreement that was made public arose between Ashcarites and Muctazilites, who had each established their own Sunni 'school of theology' – *Kalam*. While the former group was known for uncompromising adherence to tradition, the latter were known as 'defenders of the intellect'. Throughout history, various caliphs adopted contradictory stances, e.g. the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (198–218 AH) supported Muctazilite doctrine, while the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (232–247 AH) endorsed and supported Ashcarite doctrine.

Qadi Abu Bakr Baqillani (d.403 AH), the most influential scholar of his time to spread Ashcarite doctrine, spared no effort in his attempt to establish this belief as the sole presentation of Sunnifaith. He resolutely attacked the Muctazilites, to the extent that few were emboldened to adopt that *mathhab*.

Abul Macali Juwaini (d. 478 AH), who followed in the footsteps of Abul Hasan al-Ashari and Baqillani, contributed to the institutionalization of Ashcarite teaching by his relentless and vociferous refutation of the Muctazilite doctrine on free-will. His view was that all worldly incidents, good or evil, advantageous or disadvantageous, are created by Allah.

The outstanding Sunni theologian Al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH) put the finishing touches to Sunni belief. He became celebrated as 'The Authority in Islam' – Hujjat al-Islam – when he combined Principles of Jurisprudence with Philosophy and Theology.

Thus, what is today known as Sunni belief is in fact the exclusive view of the Asharite school.

Four Schools of Law

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad (S) Muslims turned to his companions – *Sahabah* – for answers to questions regarding *Shariah*. The next generation of Muslims consulted those who had studied under his companions, known collectively as 'Followers' – *tabi'un*. Both of these groups relied on the *ahadith* of the Holy Prophet, a methodology that is later referred to as 'The School of Tradition'. Another group of scholars of the time, distinguished by their faculty for intellectual reasoning, is later

referred to as 'The School of Opinion'.

Malik ibn Anas (93–179 AH) headed the School of Tradition centered in Madinah, and Abu Hanifah (80–150 AH) the School of Opinion centered in Baghdad. Both scholars gained renown as distinguished authorities. While further scholars later emerged within the Islamic world, Kufah and Madinah continued to be the most prestigious centers of excellence.

To control the authority and support for the opinions of other Islamic scholars, in the fifth Islamic century it was decreed that only four schools were to hold official authorization, namely those of Malik, Abu Hanifah, Shafii and Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

The Hanafi School

Perhaps the most influential of all the Sunni schools is the rational and liberal Hanafi system of jurisprudence. Despite having been the official school of the Ottoman Empire, India, Egypt and Sudan, it is today followed in Central and South Asia, Europe and America. Abu Hanifah was reluctant to accept the authenticity of any *Hadith* without having first examined its content and those who reported it. To solve problems about which no clear Qur'anic or hadith references are to be found, he relied heavily on analogy– *qiyas*.

In addition to *qiyas*, he cited *istihsan* as being another valuable process by which to deduce law. *Istihsan* enables a jurist to reject *qiyas* in favour of a ruling that he believes will dispel hardship and promote the common good. In invoking *istihsan*, laws that have a bearing on an issue are permitted to be rejected if, in the opinion of the jurist, their enforcement would lead to a legal opinion not being entirely fair. The Hanafi jurist AlSarakhsi (d.483 AH) considered *istihsan* the best method by which to seek facility and ease in legal injunctions.

Abu Hanifah studied under Imam Jafar al–Sadiq (a.s.) for two years and under Zaid, son of Ali ibn Husayn (a.s.) for several more.

The Maliki School

This school – *mathhab* – founded by Malik ibn Anas (d. 179 AH) prevails in Egypt, Sudan, North Africa, West Africa and a variety of areas in different Arab countries. Malik's jurisprudence is based primarily on textual sources

– he did not subscribe to the methodology of analogy – *qiyas* – favoured by Abu Hanifah.

The Maliki *mathhab* uses narratives of the Prophet's companions as a source of Islamic law. Concern for the public's interest – *Maslahah Mursalah* – permits considerations, in harmony with the objectives of the legislation, to be made in order to secure a benefit or prevent a harm. Such *Maslahah* has to be genuine, general – and not in conflict with a principle or value – and upheld by a clear text or consensus. The Maliki *mathhab* concerns itself more with the application of the spirit of the law rather than with its

letter. The consideration of *Maslahah* is propounded by the famous Maliki jurist Shatibi (d. 790 AH) in his book *Al-Muwafaqat*.

The Shafii School

Founded by Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafii (d. 204 AH), this *mathhab* presents a middle-course between the Hanafi rational system of jurisprudence and the more traditionalist Maliki school. According to Shafii, the textual resources of Islamic Law – the Qur'an and the Sunnah – are paramount. Analogy is only permitted to be employed in circumstances in which neither of these two textual sources is able to provide a solution. Further, it is a Shafii School convention that the consensus of Muslim scholars takes precedence over traditions that are based upon a solitary report. Shafii rejected the Hanafi use of *istihsan*.

This school of law predominates in Southern Egypt, East Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia and some other parts of Central Asia.

The Hanbali School

The Hanbali *mathhab* founded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241AH) derives legal authority solely from the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. It entirely rejects consensus as being a valid source of Islamic Law. Ibn Hanbal tired of the use of reason and analogy in the legal coding of Islamic law. However, he developed the Principle of Permissibility, by which all actions that do not contradict the Qur'an and *Sunnah* are presumed to be lawful.

When the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mamun officially supported proponents of the belief that the Qur'an is created and thus eternal, Ahmad ibn Hanbal publicly opposed that view. Despite being imprisoned and tortured he resolutely refused to retract his opposition.

This *mathhab* was promoted by Ibn Taymiyah and later by Muhammad ibn AbdulWahab. The majority of Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar follow the Hanbali School.

Differences in opinions

The four schools of Ahl al-Sunnah hold different opinions concerning every single matter of Islamic Law. Differences between any two of them are sometimes greater than the differences between Sunnis and Shiah. For a quick overview, refer to *The Five Schools of Islamic Law* by Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah (Ansarian Publications, Qum, 2000).³

6.4 Sufi

Most Muslim scholars concentrate on the manifest aspects of *Shariah* – i.e. the Jurisprudential or Islamic Law rulings that relate to an individual's relationship with the Almighty and other human beings.

However, there are Muslim thinkers who focus their attention on the spiritual significance of Islamic teaching. To them, *Shariah* is but the outer shell of its spiritual 'kernel'. The matter that concerns them is the elemental characteristic of Islamic teaching – that this temporary life is but a pathway to humankind's final destination, the hereafter. Neglect of the natural needs of the body and emphasis on the purification of the soul became the hallmark by which they became recognized.

Sufis claim that all acts of worship, rules regarding business and trade, personal law and all other *Shariah* rulings are only concerned with the superficial exterior. The 'way' – *tariqah* – concerns itself with the most precious pearls in the depths of Islam's 'mercy oceans'. They teach that to act upon *Shariah* and walk the path of *tariqah* leads to the achievement of complete truth – *traiqah*.

Kulayni relates in *Al-Kafi* that after offering the Dawn Prayer one morning a young man – Harithah ibn Malik ibn Nu'man al-Ansari – caught the Prophet's eye. Lean, pale and sunken-eyed, he appeared unable to maintain his balance and seemed unaware of his own condition. When the Prophet (S) asked him how he felt, he responded by saying that he had attained certainty. When asked what had led him to that conclusion he said that certainty had immersed him in grief, had kept him fasting all day and at worship all night.

This had separated him from the world and its affairs so completely that he felt he could see all humankind raised from the dead, and the Divine Throne on Judgement Day, from which all people's accounts were settled. At that very moment he could see the people of paradise enjoying their bounty, the people of hell suffering their torments, and hear the roar of the flames.

The Holy Prophet told his companions that Allah had illumined his heart with the light of faith and told the young man to preserve his condition and not to let it be taken from him.

The young man asked the Prophet to pray for Allah to grant him martyrdom and his wish was shortly after realized on the battlefield.

Many *ayat* of the Qur'an emphasize that purification – *tazkyah* – is the main purpose of this life and the reason why Allah sent 'Messengers and Warners' to teach humanity how to attain the prosperity that *tazkyah* brings:

By the soul and the power that perfects and inspires it with the ability to distinguish between good and evil, truly it is those who purify [their souls] who realize success. (Qur'an 91:7-9)

Despite their earlier manifest errors, Allah conferred his favors upon believers by sending them – from amongst themselves – His Messenger [Muhammad (S)], in order to familiarize them with His signs, to purify them, to teach them the book [(Qur'an)] and wisdom. (Qur'an 3: 164)

Indeed, it is only those who purify themselves who achieve success. (Qur'an 87: 14)

Just as bodily infections have to be overwhelmed by medicines for health to be regained; spiritual

infections need to be overwhelmed for the soul to regain health. While bacteria and viruses impact upon the body, sins and negative thoughts impact upon the soul. Regrettably, the majority of people stay oblivious to such infection. While the merest intimation of water being polluted is sufficient to drive the public to stockpile bottled water, attention drawn to sources of spiritual pollution is met by indifference.

Most people attend to the cleanliness and attractiveness of the human form, spending billions each year on cosmetics and other aspects of external 'beauty'. However, few give consideration to inner beauty. Imam Ali (a.s.) compared these two aspects of beauty when he said,

*Inner adornment is of greater beauty than external adornments.*⁴

In supplication number 20 of *Al-Sahifah al-Kamilah al-Sajjadiyyah*, Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) refers to 'Adornment of the Righteous' and 'Ornament of the God-fearing' as practical steps by which to attain purification of the soul.

According to Abu Nasr al-Sarraj (d.378 AH/988 CE) there are ten positions (*ahwal*) and seven stations (*maqamat*) within Sufism.

The positions are:

1. Vigilance
2. Proximity
3. Love
4. Fear
5. Hope
6. Spiritual Yearning
7. Familiarity
8. Tranquility
9. Contemplation
10. Certainty

And the stations are:

1. Repentance
2. Abstinence

3. Asceticism
4. Poverty
5. Patience
6. Trust in Allah
7. Contentment

Sufi practice is adopted by Shiah and Sunni Muslims alike. However, when the Divine love of Allah settles in His servants' hearts it leads to *wilayah* – traceable to the error-free Imams of the progeny of the Holy Prophet. It is unsurprising that the 'Chain of Mastership' – *silsilah* – of many Sufi orders include the name *Maruf al-Karkhi*, a servant of Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.), the eighth Imam of the progeny of Muhammad (S).

Historic reports

1. Distinguished guests invited by a prominent socialite included luminaries such as the Minister of Health, prominent physicians and one Sufi Shaykh renowned for his healing prowess. When the daughter of the house suddenly became pale and faint and had to retire, the host asked the Shaykh to pray for her.

While he did so at some length, the health minister was heard to remark that superstitions no longer had any place in today's society, 'With our efficient health service, specialist medical practitioners and array of scientifically approved medicines to cure all manner of ailments, such old-fashioned nonsense can only stand in the way of effective treatment.'

Then, turning to the Minister, the Shaykh responded by saying that until then, he had been unaware that the government had elevated a donkey to the status of Minister! How could such a foolish and ignorant person be a doctor, much less so a Minister of State?

The Minister's face flushed and he became so utterly apoplectic that he was unable to utter a word. The Shaykh then offered, in a gentle and kindly voice, his profuse apology. He said he had only uttered such insulting words to make a point. If a short secular speech could instantly trigger dramatic physical changes, flood the body with adrenaline, set the heart racing and dilate the blood vessels so as to suffuse the face with color, was it not possible that a few holy words from Allah's Revelation could help bring about physical healing?

2. While a Shaykh, who had been asked about the subject of 'patience', spoke eloquently and at length about it, his foot dislodged a scorpion that repeatedly stung him. Despite being in acute pain he continued his address and did not falter. When someone noticed what was happening and asked why he did not feel it, he replied that before Allah, it was not possible to teach others about patience without

displaying any oneself.

It goes without saying that until a person has purified her/his own soul and complied with everything required of a true 'wayfarer', she/he is not in a position to guide others. This is why we so appreciate the error-free Imams whose guidance we follow. Sufis are renowned for their focus on spiritual enhancement and disregard of natural urge. However, Islam neither promotes asceticism nor counsels people to abstain from the pleasures of this world. Notwithstanding this, it is evident that those whose sole focus is self-gratification, social standing and the things of this world will not taste the sweetness of closeness to Allah, nor enjoy the light He bestows upon His worthy servants.

To balance the spiritual with the temporal, Imam Ali (a.s.) said,

*By Allah, if you cry like a she camel that has lost its calf; coo like a dove; chant like a devoted recluse; or leave your wealth and children to secure nearness and status in His eyes; or forgiveness for the sins recorded by His angels – your effort will be as nothing compared to His reward that I anticipate for you, or His retribution that I fear for you.*⁵

1. See Qur'an 26:214.
2. Al Taftazani, Sharh al-Maqqid, Vol. 2, p.272.
3. Online at: <https://www.al-islam.org/five-schools-islamic-law-allamah-muhammad-jawad...> [10]
4. Ghurar al-Hikam, Maxim No. 5582.
5. Nahjul Balaghahh, Sermon 52.

7.1 Muslim identity

According to the Holy Qur'an, virtue is the singular merit of Muslim identity. While education, talent, socio-economic status, family background and wealth are credentials for status within secular society, none of these aspects plays any role whatever in the evaluation of Islamic personality:

O people, We have created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes so that empathy may be established between you. Truly, in the sight of Allah, those who are virtuous are the most distinguished. (Qur'an 49:13)

All Messengers were proud to have been designated 'Servants of Allah'. Allah tells us in the Qur'an that the first words Isa (a.s.) uttered were, ***'I am Allah's servant . . .'*** (Qur'an 19:30). He describes Dawud (a.s.) as being ***'A worthy servant'*** (Qur'an 38:30), and Ayub (a.s.) as ***'A patient and worthy servant'*** (Qur'an 38:44).

The same is applied to the Seal of Prophethood – Muhammad Mustafa (S) whom all Muslims acclaim to be the 'Teacher of Virtue'. Indeed, the Muslim declaration of faith – *tashahud* – attests to Muhammad (S) being His servant and messenger, making it clear that to be Allah's worthy servant is the highest

standing a human being can aspire to.

Clearly, wholehearted commitment is needed to attain such a level of servant hood. Accordingly, the journey towards perfection begins with the sincere motivation to be a devoted and worthy servant. Those that achieve it truly become 'Masters of the World', for Allah tells us in a *Hadith Qudsi*, '**O my servant, obey me and I will elevate your status to one in which you have only to order "Be", for it to exist.**'

The characteristic of truly worthy servants is unfaltering consciousness of Allah's omnipresence and awareness that He knows everything they do. With the same awareness that prompts motorists to slow down as soon as they spot a speed camera, true believers remain constantly aware that Allah is witness to their actions. Their conscience is a mirror that reflects Allah's ordinances on every aspect of their lives. That is why Imam Ali (a.s.) said, 'I never undertook anything without awareness of Allah's omnipresence before it, during it and in consideration of its effect.'¹

A very long time ago a physician, renowned for his healing prowess, also earned acclaim for not accepting payment for his services. Not unsurprisingly, it did not take long for the merits of this virtuous man to spread throughout the land. So, when the king's own physicians proved unable to cure his ailing daughter, his vizier suggested they consult the famous physician from the faraway provincial town. An emissary was immediately dispatched and, in due course, returned with the physician. Not long after, he managed to effect a cure and the princess regained her health. In an expression of heartfelt gratitude, the king ordered his vizier to accompany the physician to the city limits and their present him with two pack horses loaded with the finest gifts from his treasury.

In spite of the gifts being from the king of the realm, the physician declined to accept anything. The vizier beseeched him, but the physician said that he was not prepared to alter his customary behavior. He remained resolute, even when the vizier pointed out that if he returned with the gifts he would incur the king's displeasure. When the vizier then said that his only option would be to keep the gifts for himself, the physician replied that he must do as he thought fit. The vizier then pointed out that the physician should accept the gifts because, in any event, the king would believe his gifts had been accepted. The physician responded that while that might be so, his own conscience would know that they had not.

The Prophet (S) related that Allah had said,

*'A servant may make every effort to draw close to me through voluntary prayer until I love him. When I love him, I become his ear by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his tongue by which he speaks and his hand by which he acts. When he calls I answer him and when he asks I respond.'*²

The above accurately represents the identity of a true Muslim.

According to Imam Ali (a.s.) the signs of true believers – *mu'minin* – are that they:

1. appear cheerful and optimistic;

2. do not make a display of their sorrows;
3. are broadminded and tolerant;
4. are humble;
5. eschew publicity and arrogance;
6. remain conscious of the hereafter;
7. aspire to noble objectives;
8. do not prattle inconsequentially;
9. busy themselves in worthwhile activities;
10. project gratitude and patience;
11. seriously consider all possible consequences before they act; and
12. maintain a bright demeanor and a gentle approach.

7.2 Are cultural practices binding?

One of the greatest problems for all Muslim communities is their tendency to confuse authentic teaching with customs and traditions. Sociologists understand that the emphatic nature of some traditions serves to condition people's understanding of faith. This has resulted in confusion being sown in the minds of future generations. For example, history records that the horse Imam Husayn rode on his journey to Karbala was one of the finest he'd inherited from the Prophet .

Despite there not being a shred of documentary evidence in support of that horse having any specific name, many cultures persevere in the belief that it was called 'Zuljinah'. In spite of it only being acceptable for Muslims to pray and prostrate to Allah Almighty, in some cultures prayers are offered before, or to horses that are imagined to resemble 'Zuljinah', in a misguided belief that Imam Husayn (a.s.) will hear and answer them. Yet others whisper prayers into the ears of horses of similar appearance, in the belief that these will be answered if the horse nods its head.

Some Muslims affix horseshoes to the entrance of their homes to dispel 'the evil eye'; and they believe that to hear a cawing crow when starting out on a journey is an omen of such portent that they should cancel their trip. Others believe that the number 13 is inauspicious; and that one sneeze is a sign that current activity should stop and two sneezes, that work needs to be speeded up. Unsurprisingly, none of the above has any religious basis or significance whatsoever.

Islamic scholars have scrutinized available texts in order to identify the practices and beliefs that are

based upon authentic religious texts and those that have politico-cultural foundations. The most dangerous sources of confusion are the reports, fabricated for political reasons, that falsely attribute to the Prophet (S) sayings or deeds supportive of one or other group vying for pre-eminence:

Specifically, from 132–750 on, the crucial religio-political issue for every historian had been what stance he ought to take in regard to the Abbasids – whether to see them as usurpers either of Umayyad or ‘Alid rights, as legitimate successors to the continuing and unbroken caliphate succession since Abu Bakr or even restorers of the purity and integrity of the primitive community. On one’s resolution of this delicate problem rested his whole interpretation of Islamic history during the century and a half before the Abbasid Revolution. (p.72)

The validity of Wellhausen’s arguments only seems to be deepened by the work of his contemporary Ignaz Goldziher, who demonstrated that a vast number of Hadith, accepted even in the most rigorously critical Muslim collections, were outright forgeries from the late 2nd–8th and 3rd–9th centuries – and, as a consequence, that the meticulous *isnads* which supported them were utterly fictitious³.

For example, there is a ‘*Hadith*’ that states fasting on the Day of *Ashura* (10th Muharram) is highly recommended, on grounds that it is the day Noah’s (a.s.) Ark again came to rest upon the earth, the day that Ibrahim (a.s.) was saved from the fire, the day that Yusuf (a.s.) was removed from the well and the day Yunus (a.s.) was released from the stomach of the whale – grounds that provide the rationale for many Muslims’ commemoration of Ashura.

They celebrate that day simply because that is what is done in their culture. Few question if such celebration was observed during the Prophet’s lifetime, or even why those days should be remembered at all. Many are blissfully ignorant that these so-called *ahadith* were forged in order to direct Muslim public attention away from the Umayyad slaughter of the Prophet’s grandson Husayn (a.s.) on that date.

Other than the gift of faith itself, Islam does not require Muslims to believe in any things that appear specious in the light of intellectual analysis.

7.3 Modernization, not Westernization

Muslim decline at the end of the 19th century coincided with the emergence of European power. The challenge of modernity came in the wake of European encroachment on Muslim lands at the height of the age of Western Imperialism. This elicited a variety of responses in different parts of the Islamic world. In its attempt to check and contain European domination, the Ottoman Empire pursued a policy of rapid modernization. At its outset, attention centered upon the importation of European weaponry, military organization and industrial plant technology; moves to introduce civil society and the westernization of state institutions rapidly followed. The rationale was to infuse into the Muslim way of life the elements it clearly lacked, such as European-style governmental institutions and the inherent values that went with them. This then became a quest for modernity.

In Turkey, a young officer named Mustafa Kemal, who in 1934 adopted the surname Ataturk – 'Father of the Turks' – believed that the word modernization meant 'copying'. Thus, he abolished the Arabic alphabet on which Turkish communication had been based for centuries and replaced it with the Roman alphabet used in the western world. This action effectively denied subsequent generations of Turks access to the centuries of accumulated scholarship held in Turkey's extensive and well-endowed libraries.

At the same time, the Iranian army commander Reza Shah Pahlavi ordered all Muslim women to remove their traditional head covering – *Hijab*– which he considered an important step in his drive to 'copy' the west and modernize his country. Police were ordered to rip headscarves off women who did not comply with his directive, and to arrest all men not attired in western-style clothing. His concession to public outrage was the granting of permission for five religious scholars to continue to wear the turban. In his drive to cleanse the Persian language of Arabic, an academic committee was appointed to substitute the thousands of Arabic words then in current usage, which they did with an assortment of strange and obscure 'new Persian words'.

While the use of technology, science, industrial development and western-style marketing clearly yields benefits, there is no evidence to suggest that these can only be successfully utilized after all cultural, educational and other traditions of a people have been destroyed. The areas considered to be in need of modernity were as follows.

Administrative systems

Up until then, absolute control of all state matters tended to be held by kings or emperors, who propounded the belief that they ruled by divine right and were thus only answerable to God Himself. For subjects who believed such claims, it must have been apparent that God was little interested in them, for corruption, injustice and inequality abounded at every level of society. Their hopes must have been that modernization would transform authoritarianism into a democratic system in which the people could elect representatives to legislate and act on their behalf.

In the traditional caliphate system of Muslim countries, rather than the claim to rule by divine right, caliphs claimed that their authority was based upon their being successors to the Prophet (S). The difference was slight in as much as any who challenged the caliph were deemed to have challenged the Prophet of God and, via this, God Himself, and in that the effect of such sedition¹ resulted in the same harsh punishments as levied by kings and emperors. Further and most importantly, neither emperors nor kings or caliphs were able to provide any proof to substantiate their claims. Like the rose, which by any other name smells as sweet, the stench is the same, whatever name is used for authoritarianism, corruption, injustice and inequality.

The winds of modernization struck Iran, Egypt and the whole Ottoman Empire at the start of the last century. In Iran, this brought scholars and intellectuals out in open revolt against the Qajar dynasty,

forcing the last Qajar king to make limited concessions to 'the voice of the people'. In Egypt, calls for the revival of the caliphate resulted in King Farouk proclaiming himself 'caliph'. However, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the Muslim countries that formed it were subjugated by various European powers. It was agreed among them that their 'spheres of influence' entitled each to claim some degree of control or preferential status in different foreign territories. France was to oversee the affairs of Lebanon and Syria, while Britain was to do the same for Iraq and 'Transjordan'. Palestine was to have been under dual control, but France subsequently ceded all rights to Britain, who had also maintained a protectorate over Egypt since 1882. With the discovery of oil the United States was able to establish control over Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States.

The question is, in order to benefit from modernization, is it sufficient to simply 'copy' the outward manifestations of supposedly democratic countries, or should indigenous democratic administrations develop their own strategies to satisfy the needs of their cultures and faith?

Education

The Muslim world remained the centre of education for many centuries. The works of Avicenna (Ibn Sina), Averroes (Ibn Rushd), Al-Biruni, Khwarazmi and a plethora of other scholars were for many centuries regarded by western scholars to be ultimate sources of reference in many scientific fields. A short visit to the British Museum, the Louvre or the Library of Congress will evidence the prolific scholarship of Muslim scholars through out the ages.

By the start of the 20th century, the Protestant work ethic in Europe and the laziness of the Muslim world had resulted in European scholarship surpassing that of the East. Notable Muslim families sent their children to study in the West and later made grants available for gifted Arab students from every walk of life. Regrettably, many graduates who returned home had adopted the lifestyles of the other students in their alma mater. Being young and ambitious they took pleasure not only in being qualified professionals, but in being acknowledged for their 'modern' and sophisticated European habits. To pour guests fine French wine appeared to them to be far more chic than to pour them traditional coffee from a *dallah*.

It is shocking to discover that in the 'Arab Human Development Report of 2002', no Muslim state is included in the table that records the volume of book sales in 27 world countries. To quote from it, 'The Arab world translates about 330 books annually, one-fifth of the number that Greece translates. The accumulative total of books translated since the ninth century is about 100,000 – almost the average for books that Spain translates in one year.'

Is it not high time Muslims modernized their educational systems and concentrated on the dissemination of knowledge, rather than simply aping the behavior of the European world?

Industry

The commercial success of the industrial revolution made the West the envy of the world. Mass production and its products so dazzled the public that in their rush to acquire them, they came to regard traditional skills as 'old-fashioned'. In the joy of new-found 'modernity', and belief that their production processes matched those of the leading industrial countries, it either did not occur to them, or the Muslim majority countries were simply not able, to develop overseas markets for their own production. In any event, most lands were not able to access the national wealth with which to build the modern infrastructures needed to develop their countries in the way that Asian 'Tiger Economies' have recently succeeded in doing.

By all United Nations and World Bank indicators, Arab countries trail behind other developing countries vis-a-vis job creation, education, technology and productivity. In listings of economies by gross domestic product (GDP), the highest-ranking Muslim majority country, Turkey (population 70.4 million) is 23rd, while Austria (population 8.3 million) is 22nd and Denmark (population 5.4 million) is 24th. In listings by manufacturing output, the highest ranking Muslim country, Egypt (population 78.9 million), is in 35th place, tying with Norway with a population of 4.6 million.

The above statistics underline that Muslim majority countries have not understood the meaning of modernity in the way that other peoples have, for many rely almost exclusively upon their oil resources.

To conclude, incorporation of the beneficial aspects of modernity does not necessitate copying characteristics that conflict with one's own cultural norms.

7.4 Ijtihad as means for modernization

Ijtihad is the Arabic word used to describe the processes by which Islamic legal rulings are deduced from legitimate sources, mainly the Qur'an and *ahadith*. It is derived from the Arabic root word *juhd* – that implies a need for considerable 'effort' or 'self-exertion'. In references to physical exertion *juhd* is used, and in references to intellectual exertion, *ijtihad*.

As contemporary problems and issues are not necessarily catered for in the main sources for Islamic Law (the Qur'an and *ahadith*), jurists – specialists in the field of Islamic Law – need to deduce appropriate rulings and provide clear guidance to deal with those issues. For example, the times to pray or fast in the Antarctic or in 'space'; considered Islamic views on organ transplants, genetic engineering, IVF, the maintenance of life by 'life support machines'; and hundreds of other contemporary issues. In their consideration of such issues, the Hanafi School of Law relies upon analogy – *qiyas* – and the Imamiyah upon intellectual reasoning.

Two methodologies are available to a *mujtahid* when faced with new subjects that need Islamic Law clarification:

1. To apply the basis of a known subject to another subject, and provide the same ruling (analogy – *qiyas*) was strongly supported by AbuHanifa. Alternatively, the 'spirit of a text', rather than the text itself, may be examined. This is referred to as the 'Study of the Objectives of Legislation', rather than the 'Study of that which is Apparent', an approach strongly supported by Maliki jurists and propounded by Imam Shatibi in his book *Al-Muwafaqat fi Maqasid al-Shariah*.

The majority of Sunni scholars regard Shatibi's approach to be the most practical methodology by which to reform *ijtihad*.

2. The Imamiyah, on the other hand, consider intellectual reasoning to be the fourth source of Islamic Law. (The consensus of learned scholars who reflect the opinion of the error-free Imams is the third source.) For the purpose of *ijtihad*, they undertake comprehensive examination of each *hadith* and – in conjunction with this valuable tool – see little purpose or benefit in *qiyas* or Shatibi's methodology. Furthermore, their lengthy debates have demonstrated '*qiyas*' and 'the Objectives of Legislation' to be both speculative and not definitive tools for *ijtihad*. Detailed evidence to support their view was presented by Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Hakim (R.A) in his Principles of Comparative Jurisprudence – *Al-Usul al-ammah lil Fiqh al-Muqarin*.

Conditions of *ijtihad*

A jurist – *mujtahid* – must be a competent Muslim of sound mind with the intellectual capacity to form independent judgements. In many *ahadith*, the *mujtahid* is considered to be a successor to the Prophet .This is in respect of the ability to elaborate on rulings and guide the community to 'Things that please Allah'. Trustworthiness, reliability and righteousness are thus key qualities of a *mujtahid*. Those who fail to meet one or more of these requirements are disqualified from undertaking *ijtihad*.

Shahid II (the Imami *mujtahid*, d.966 AH) said,

*Knowledge of the following six introductory studies is essential in the process of ijtihad: Theology, Principles of Jurisprudence, Arabic grammar, Morphology, Lexicology and an unquestionable comprehension of the Qur'an, Sunnah, Consensus and Intellectual reasoning.*⁴

Ibn Abd al-Shakur Hanafi scholar said,

*Ijtihad requires Faith, knowledge of the Qur'an, at least of the 500 ayat that deal with rulings, knowledge of the Sunnah – at least of the 1,200 ahadith that deal with jurisprudence – ability to identify the authenticity of narrators and a familiarity with consensus. However, being righteous is only required for those who accept his fatawa.*⁵

Al-Ghazali (Shafi'i scholar, d. 505 AH) said,

While eight branches of knowledge are needed for ijtihad, four are essential, the others being only

*introductory. The essentials are (Qur'an, Sunnah, Consensus, and Intellect. The introductory ones are, Methodology of Argument, Arabic Grammar, knowledge of 'abrogator and the abrogated', and ability to recognize authentic ahadith.*⁶

Al-Qarafi (Maliki scholar) offered a similar statement to Al-Ghazali's in his book *Sharh Tanqih al-Fusul*, p. 194.

Ibn Qudamah (Hanbali scholar) said,

The mujtahid must have complete comprehension of the Qur'an, Sunnah, Consensus, Presumption of Continuity and Analogy. As for knowledge of the Qur'an, he must be well-versed in the 500 ayat concerned with rulings, not necessarily by having committed them to memory, but knowledge of how to refer to them when needed.

As for Sunnah, he must be well acquainted with the ahadith that concern rulings, regardless of them being many or limited. Knowing that a hadith in question has not been abrogated is sufficient for the process of ijtiḥad. Differentiation between strong and weak hadith is a further requirement.

*As for consensus, it is sufficient to know if the issue in question has been dealt with by previous mujtahids or if no precedent exists. Knowledge of Grammar and Arabic language, ability to recognize – both explicit and ambivalent texts, what is literal and what metaphorical, what is general and what is specific – are essential requirements in the process of Ijtiḥad.*⁷

Al-Shawkani (Zaidi scholar) said, 'There are five requirements for a *mujtahid*:

1. Comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'an and *ahadith*.
2. Comprehensive knowledge of the issues that apply to consensus.
3. Comprehensive knowledge of the Arabic language to enable him to arrive at conclusions from the Qur'an and *ahadith*.
4. Comprehensive knowledge of the Principles of Jurisprudence.
5. Ability to recognize the abrogator and the abrogated.⁸

Examples of contemporary ijtiḥad

Insurance

Insurance, one of the more recent types of contract, was unknown to Muslim jurists before the last century. When it was introduced, jurists tried to apply general principles to this new type of contract:

One opinion was that insurance is prohibited by Islam. This was supported by many jurists in Egypt, in

addition to a few in Najaf and Qum. These based their opinions on one or other of the following justifications:

1. That no such contract was known at the time of the Prophet (S), the companions or the Imams (a.s.). They claimed that only contracts of the types known by the above categories can be considered to be binding.

2. Insurance leads to ambiguity and lack of information. Despite predetermined premiums being paid for x years, the final amount of any payout is not pre-determined and, indeed, may or may not even occur.

3. Because insurance is similar to earned interest – *riba*. As *riba* is prohibited, it is analogous that insurance needs to be also – when a person pays £500 per annum to insure their car so that they might receive £5,000 should it be written off. Such 'profiteering' ought to be regarded as earned interest.

As a matter of fact, *riba* applies specifically to loans, while 'profit', which may or may not result from an insurance contract, has nothing whatever to do with borrowing or lending.

4. Insurance contains risk, uncertainty and hazard – *gharar*. As it is reported in one *hadith* that 'The Prophet prohibited sales in which *gharar* plays any part', it follows that insurance cannot be permissible either.

A second opinion was that insurance represents a type of contract known at the time of the Prophet (S). This was suggested by a great jurist of Najaf, Shaykh Husayn Hilli, whose lectures, compiled by Sayyid Izzudin Bahr alUloom, appeared as Discourses on Jurisprudence – *Buhooth Fiqhiyah*. He suggested that insurance be recognized as a mutual agreement – *sulh* –or as a conditional gift.

Ayatollah al-Khoei accepted his opinion regarding conditional gifts and, according to his ruling, the same conditions apply to insurance as apply to such gifts. That is to say, the insured should regard, and undertake to 'gift', premium installments with the clear understanding that the insurer will return the amount mentioned in the policy, as and when the policy conditions apply.

A third opinion is that insurance is indeed an independent contract, which meets all the requirements needed for agreements to be valid in Islamic Law. None of the justifications for its invalidity apply as insurance agreements are of the type made at the time of the Prophet (S) – This is the currently favored opinion of the existing Imamiyah jurists.

In Vitro Fertilization –IVF

When artificial insemination was first discussed, Muslim jurists expressed differing opinions.

One opinion was that it is *Haram* for one of the following reasons:

1. That it would entail *non-mahram* doctors touching the pudenda of Muslim women.

2. That it would require masturbation to obtain semen.

3. And, according to many Sunni jurists, because they thought it akin to fornication – *zina*. They based their opinion on the analogy – *qiyas* – that as adultery is a major and prohibited sin, IVF must be prohibited too.

A second opinion rejects the validity of *qiyas* for this subject matter on the basis of the technical meaning of the term *zina*. In Islamic Law, this refers specifically to an act of physical intercourse – to be precise, when a male inserts his penis into the vagina of a female who is not his wife. IVF clearly does not involve any such act. As to members of a medical team touching the private parts of the subjects, we need to consider and weigh the necessity of both of these acts: a) to help a woman desperate to conceive and fulfill her biological motherhood function; and b) to involve a medical team. There are invariably sizeable sections in books on Principles of Jurisprudence, dedicated to the Table of Priorities – *Tazahum*. For certain categories a *mujtahid* will refer to these in order to examine the priority of one circumstance over another. As for masturbation, there are alternative and permissible means to obtain semen.

One may use the needed fertilized eggs and request the others be destroyed. To be on the safe side, one should have someone witness that they are destroyed and not misused. Such action is not regarded as abortion, as by definition this can only occur after a fertilized egg is lodged in the womb.

As experts in any field of endeavor may hold different opinions, jurists too sometimes have differing viewpoints.

7.5 Secularism versus Fundamentalism

As the Muslim world has not lived through the industrial revolution or the development of the commercial institutions that have fashioned the modern world, the concept and character of modernization was misunderstood and misinterpreted in Muslim majority lands. In consequence, misguided attempts to imitate the 'West' led to a growing rift between 'conservative' Muslims and those intent on reform.

During the 1960s, the current of socialism that swept over the Middle East indirectly promoted communism. In Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya and many other Muslim countries, activists urged the public to reject religion as the 'opiate of the masses', because they said it prevented social advancement and progress. With inferences that space travel evidences that God does not exist, that intellectuals are all atheists and other ideas, activists urged the Muslim public to regard *Shairah* Law as redundant and to adopt the modern cure-all solution for society's ills called secularism.

In counterattack, Islamic scholars – such as Hasan Al-Banna, Sayyid Qutub and Muhammad Al-Ghazali in Egypt; Muhammad Baqr Al-Sadr, Baqir al-Sharif Al-Qarashi and Muhammad Amin Zayn Al-Din in Iraq; Murtadha Mutahari in Iran; Abul Ala Maududi in India, Muhammad Mahdi Shams Uddin and

Muhammad Husayn Fadlulah in Lebanon; Malik bin Nabi in Algeria, to list only a few – whose unstinting efforts defended the faith, refuted that secular heresy and inspired Muslims throughout the world.

However, the collapse of the Soviet Union, destruction of the Berlin Wall, end of the cold war, and emergence of a new world order exacerbated the differences and animosity between secularists and believers. This gradually drove many Muslims to conclude that rational opposition to the war against religion was doomed to fail and that the only option left open to them was to completely reject Imperialist power, symbolized by American domination of the Muslim world and its influence over their leaders.

Globalization is the face of the new world order and Muslim resistance to its negative features inspired the new label 'fundamentalist'. Today, the whole world is aware that Imperialists are waging a war against 'fundamentalist' Muslims; the former claim that reasons of national security require the utter destruction of the latter. Thus, they employ, without restraint or hindrance, every possible means available to them, even when those entail unprovoked attack, utter disregard for basic human rights or contraventions of civilized norms of ethical behavior. On the other hand, the so-called fundamentalists believe that the term 'axis of evil' does not apply to them, but to the very people who coined it, in order to vilify them.

However, it must be made clear to both sides that torture, maiming and killing are condemned by all legal systems – religious as well as secular. Such acts are despicable, depraved and monstrous violations, regardless of who the perpetrators are, or the claims they use to justify their actions – be those intentional, or explained away as 'collateral damage'. All are equally disgusting, intolerable, shameful and utterly unacceptable, and serve only to stoke up hatred.

1. Al-Asfar al-Arbaah, Vol. 1, p. 117.
2. Al-Kafi, Vol. 2, p. 352; Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 70, p. 22.
3. Muslim Studies II, On the Development of the Hadith, pp. 82–3. Humphreys, R Stephen. Islamic History – A Framework for Inquiry. I.B. Tauris/Princeton University Press. 1991.
4. Al-Rawdah al-Bahiyya, The Brilliant Garden, Vol. 1, p. 236.
5. Musallam al-Thubut, Vol. 2, p. 320.
6. Al-Mustasfa, Vol. 2, p. 101–03.
7. Rawlat al-Nazer, p. 190.
8. Irshad al-Fuhul, p. 250.

Note: Not every Day to Remember is necessarily commemorated by all members of the faith community.

Salat al-Jumuah

Salat al-Jumuah occurs at noon every Friday after Muslims have gathered at the larger mosques to pray in congregation and listen to the weekly address – *khutbah* – that covers both religious and practical matters.

O you who believe, at the Friday call to prayer – the day of Assembly – hasten solemnly to the remembrance of Allah. Leave business and traffic for that is best for you if you but knew. (Qur'an 62:9)

The Month of Ramadhan

The ninth month in the *Hijri* calendar, during the twenty-nine or thirty days of the month of Ramazan Muslims do not eat or drink from before dawn until sunset. This fasting – *sawm* – a major feature of Islamic life promotes an extraordinary sense of community and spirituality. It is highly recommended that the whole of the Qur'an is read over this holy month.

O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed to those before you, so that you may learn self-restraint. (Qur'an 2:183)

Memorial of Khadijah – 10th Ramadhan

Khadijah bint Khwailid (a.s.) – for 24 years the beloved wife of the Prophet Muhammad (S) – was the first woman to accept Islam. She is remembered for her unstinting support, encouragement and devotion to him and for being the mother of his six children. Both their sons, Qasim and Abdullah, died in infancy.

Their daughters, Zaynab, Ruqayyah and Um-Kulthum became respected ladies of Makkah. Fatimah al-Zahra (a.s.) married Ali ibn Abu-Talib (a.s.) – the elected fourth Caliph and first of the 12 divinely appointed Imams – and mothered the second and third Imams, Hasan (a.s.) and Husayn (a.s.). The year in which Khadijah (a.s.) and the Prophet's uncle AbuTalib (a.s.) passed away has become known as 'The Year of Sorrow'.

Birthday of the second Imam, al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) – 15th Ramadhan

Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) – 'The Chosen' – was the son of the Prophet's cousin Ali (a.s.) and his daughter Fatimah al-Zahra (a.s.) – He and his younger brother Husayn (a.s.) were greatly loved by their grandfather the Prophet Muhammad (S), who passed away when Hasan (a.s.) was seven years old.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) said,

Whoever wants the pleasure of seeing the leader of the youth in paradise should simply look at Hasan (a.s.). 1

Memorial of the first Imam, Ali ibn Abu-Talib (a.s.) 21st Ramadhan

Imam Ali ibn Abu-Talib (a.s.) Commander of the Faithful – Amir al-Mu'min – was the Prophet's cousin and the first male to accept Islam. To foil the Makkan plot to assassinate the Prophet (S) in the dead of night, he risked his life to maintain activity in the Prophet's house and conceal

that the Prophet had already left Makkah.

"Ali (a.s.) married the Prophet's daughter Fatimah (a.s.) and is the father of Hasan (a.s.) and Husayn (a.s.) – He is understood by many Muslims to be the Prophet's (S) chosen successor.

The Prophet (S) said,

*I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali (a.s.) is its gate.*²

Laylat al-Qadr 29th, 21st, 23rd, and 27th Ramadhan

Laylat al-Qadr – the Night of Measure – commemorates the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad (S) – This blessed night falls on one of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadhan. Muslims remember it particularly between the 23rd and 27th night by offering extra prayers to thank Allah for His guidance.

The Night of Measure is better than 1,000 months. Therein come down the Angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission on every errand, Peace! ..this until the rise of morn! (Qur'an 97:3-5)

The last Salat al-Jumu'ah of Ramadhan

On the last Salat al-Jumu'ah of the month of Ramadhan, Muslims are sad the holy month is ending. The Imam announces the levy due for *Zakat al-Fitr* and the community contributes that, or more, for every Muslim who will be under their roof on the night of '*Fitr*'. This is paid before the *id* prayer so that everyone has the funds with which to celebrate.

The Prophet (S) said,

*'O people, the gates of Paradise are opened during this month, so ask your Lord to keep them open for you ...'*³

Id al-Fitr 1st Shawwal

Id al-Fitr falls on the first day after the fasting month ends – on which fasting is not approved. In the morning, Muslims attend *id* prayer at the mosque and have a holiday from school and work.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) said, .

*..do not finish the month of fasting until you have seen the new moon. If it is covered with clouds when you think it should be visible, add an extra day of fasting.*⁴

Memorial of the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) 25th Shawwal

The sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) – the Truthful – who passed away in 765 CE, a renowned scholar and expert in Islamic law (*Shariah*), was the founder of the *Ja'fari* School of Law. He had many famous pupils including Abu Hanifa, founder of the Hanafi School of Law. His work continues to influence the practice and understanding of Islam throughout the world today.

The Prophet (S) said,

*'Being in the presence of a scholar is in itself an act of worship.'*⁵

Birthday of the eighth Imam, Ali Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) 11th Dhul-Qa'dah

The eighth Imam, 'Ali Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) – pleased with Allah's Will – was born in Madinah in 148 AH. He was a devout, calm person who would recite the whole (Qur'an over three days. Humble and well-mannered, he lived a simple life and fasted frequently.

The Prophet said,

*Humility is an aspect of true knowledge.*⁶

Memorial of the ninth Imam, Muhammad al-Taqi al-Jawad (a.s.)

30th Dhul-Qa'dah (celebrated on the 29th if there is no 30th day that year)

Even as a young child, Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) – the Pious – al Jawad (a.s.) –the Generous – was referred to vis-a-vis questions about Islam. Crowds often gathered at his home to listen to his lectures.

The most meritorious of you are those who are the most pious. (Qur'an 49: 13)

Memorial of the fifth Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) 7th Dhul-Hijjah

The fifth Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) – the Disseminator of Knowledge

– established the first hawzah (religious educational establishment for people of all ages and levels) to nurture minds for the flowering of Islamic knowledge.

Imam Baqir said, 'Laziness harms one's life and one's faith'.

Al-Kafi Vol. 5, p.85

Hajj 9th Dhul-Hijjah

The Hajj – pilgrimage ordered by Allah – commemorates events in the life of the Prophets Ibrahim (a.s.), Ismail (a.s.) and Muhammad (S). Muslims who have the health and means to do so are expected to go on Hajj at least once during their lifetime.

The first house of worship appointed for people was that at Makkah: full of blessing and of guidance for all the worlds ... Whoever enters it reaches security; pilgrimage thereto is a duty people owe to Allah,... (Qur'an 3:96-97)

The Day of Arafah 9th Dhul-Hijjah

The Day of Arafah is the high point of the Hajj and commemorates the Prophet Muhammad's (S) farewell pilgrimage. On that day, he taught his followers how to perform Hajj while at Arafat and gave them important advice on how Muslims ought to behave. Pilgrims spend the day at Arafat praying for Allah's forgiveness and blessing.

...All believers are brothers, all have the same rights and responsibilities. No-one is allowed to take from another that which he does not allow them of his own free will.⁷

Id al-Adha 10th Dhul-Hijjah

On *Eid al-Adha* Muslims may sacrifice a sheep to commemorate the Prophet (S).

Ibrahim's (a.s.) willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail (a.s.) in obedience to Allah. This sacrifice is one of the rites of the pilgrimage. People attend *Eid Salah* on this celebratory day.

'O my son! I have seen in a dream that I offer you in sacrifice, now what is your view?' The son said, O my father! Do as you are commanded, you will find me to be one of the steadfast if Allah so wills. (Qur'an 37:102)

Id al-Ghadir 18th Dhul-Hijjah

Id al-Ghadir commemorates an event which occurred after the Prophet's last *Hajj*. Some 100,000 people gathered at Ghadir Kumm, a parting of the roads outside Makkah. The Prophet proclaimed the last revelation of the Qur'an and advised the assembled crowd that after him, his cousin and son-in-law Ali (a.s.): would lead them.

This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. (Qur'an 5:03)

Id al-Mubahala 24th Dhul-Hijjah

Id al-Mubahala commemorates the occasion when a group of Christians from Yemen queried the Islamic understanding of Isa (a.s.)– Having challenged the Prophet on this matter they declined to settle the dispute in the traditional manner, which involved both sides praying for the Lord to punish those who were lying – imprecation.

Say. 'O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you, that we worship none but Allah ...' (Qur'an 3:64)

1st Muharram

The first of Muharram commemorates the start of the Hijri lunar calendar – the beginning of the new Islamic era and is the first day of a new Islamic year.

After years of persecution in Makkah the Prophet Muhammad (S) was invited to Madinah where, in 622 CE (Common Era), he established the ideal Muslim community and first Islamic state.

. . . [Allah] provided a safe asylum for you, strengthened you with His aid and gave you good things for sustenance that you might be grateful. (Qur'an 8:26)

Memorial of the third Imam, al-Husayn (a.s.) – 10th Muharram – Ashura

On Ashura, Muslims mourn for the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ibn Ali (a.s.), the Prophet's grandson and the third of the twelve Imams. His refusal to endorse the claim to leadership of the corrupt tyrant Yazid resulted in his, and his family and followers en-route to Kufah, being intercepted by Yazid's army, denied access to the waters of the Euphrates and massacred at Karbala in Iraq in the year 680 CE.

The Prophet (S) would often say,

*Husayn (a.s.) is from me and I am from Husayn (a.s.). O Allah, love those who love Husayn. (a.s.)*⁸

Memorial of the fourth Imam, Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) 25th Muharram

The fourth Imam, Ali ibn Husayn, Zayn al-Abidi (a.s.) – Ornament of the Worshippers – was the great-grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (S)– He survived the massacre at Karbala where most of his family were killed.

Despite being prevented from teaching in any mosque, he passed on the Islamic knowledge he had

inherited. Among his works is the much loved prayer book, titled in English 'The Psalms of Islam'.

O Allah, let me pass my days in that for which you have created me. 9

Birthday of the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) 3rd Safar

The fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) – Disseminator of Knowledge – lived through the appalling massacre at Karbala when he was only four years old. His father was a great-grandson of the Prophet and his mother the Prophet's great-granddaughter. He was the first person to be a direct descendant of Imam "Ali from both sides.

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said,

Allah is displeased with those who displease their parents. 10

Memorial of the second Imam, al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) 7th Safar The second Imam, al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) – The Chosen – grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (S), was violently opposed by the governor of Syria, who was intent to usurp power. This made Imam al-Hasan's (a.s.) life difficult and endangered his family.

The Prophet (S) said,

My son Hasan (a.s.) is the Master by whom Allah will reconcile two conflicting groups. 11

Birthday of the Seventh Imam, Musa al-Kadim (a.s.) 7th Safar

The seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) – the Restrainer of Anger – was born at a place between Makkah and Madinah in 128 AH. He was known as knowledgeable and sincere. This sincerity was so convincing that after his conversations with a Christian priest, the man accepted Islam. He had a beautiful voice and loved to recite the Qur'an.

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said,

On the Day of Judgement Allah will fill with peace and faith the hearts of those who restrained their anger. 12

Memorial of the eighth Imam, Ali Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) 17th Safar

The eighth Imam, Ali Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) – Pleased with Allah's Will – was told by Abbasid Caliph Ma'mun that he wanted to install the Imam as Caliph before he abdicated. Imam Ali Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) declined the offer saying that if that position had been granted by Allah he could surely not relinquish it. And if Allah had not installed him, who was he to decide who should be Caliph.

Imam Ali (a.s.) said,

Wisdom is your friend and ignorance your enemy. 13

Memorial of the Prophet Muhammad (S) 28th Safar

The Prophet Muhammad (S) is a perfect exemplar for all Muslims. They follow his Sunnah – customs and practices, recorded in *ahadith*, which are reports of what he said and did. From these, Muslims learn that they should worship Allah and be kind and just to all of Allah's creation.

[O Muhammad,] We sent you as a mercy for the whole Universe. (Qur'an 21:107)

Memorial of the eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.)

8th *Rabi al-Awwal*

The eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.)—from the Garrison Town – was Imam for seven years during which time he was either in prison or under house arrest. Only his closest followers knew his whereabouts and were able to see him. Despite this, he was able to pass on the Islamic knowledge he had inherited.

Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) said,

All vices are collected in one room and its key is lies. 14

Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad Mawlid-an-Nabi

12–17th *Rabi al-Awwal*

Mawlid-an-Nabi – Birthday of the Prophet – commemorates the birth, life and example of the Prophet Muhammad (S) born in Makkah in Arabia in 570 CE. During 'Islamic Unity Week' between the 12th and 17th of the Islamic Month of *Rabi al-Awwal*, people meet to tell stories of the Prophet's (S) life, to give thanks to Allah and to encourage love for the Prophet (S).

You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar. (Qur'an 33:21)

Birthday of the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.)

17th *Rabi al-Awwal*

The sixth Imam, Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) – the Truthful – was born in 83 AH. He left a legacy of knowledge and scholarship that, almost 1,400 years later, is still consulted. He lived a humble life preferring simple food and clothing.

He did not agree with merchants making excessive profits and reported that the Prophet (S) had said,

The strongest fear I have for my nation is that they will succumb to the lure of unlawful income. 15

Birthday of the eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.)

8th *Rabi al-Thani*

The eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al-‘Askari (a.s.) – from the Garrison – was the son of the tenth Imam and the Lady Hadith, who was originally a slave. He was handsome, well built and considered to have a similar character to his revered ancestor the Prophet Muhammad (S) – One of his well-known sayings is,

Anger is the source of all evil. 16

Memorial of Fatimah al-Zahra (a.s.)

3rd *Jumada al-Thaniyah*

Fatimah al-Zahra the Bright – was the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and his wife Khadijah (a.s.) – She married the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu-Talib (a.s.) and was the mother of the Prophet's grandsons Hasan (a.s.) and Husayn (a.s.) – She is celebrated as being ‘The Leader of Women’ and this day is commemorated as women's/mothers' day.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) said,

Allah is pleased with those who please Fatimah (a.s.) and displeased with those who displease her. 17

Birthday of Fatimah al-Zahra (a.s.) 20th Jumada al-Thaniyah

Fatimah al-Zahra (a.s.)– the Bright – was the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and his wife Khadijah (a.s.) – and born in Makkah in 615 CE.

When the Prophet (S) and his family lived there they were persecuted for their belief in the One True God. On several occasions, while still a child,

Fatimah (a.s.) –is reported to have courageously berated those who abused her father. After her mother's death she remained inseparable from her father.

The Prophet (S) said,

On the Night Journey, Jibra'il offered me a quince from paradise; after I had eaten it I approached my wife Khadijah and Fatimah was conceived. Whenever I wished to smell paradise again, I visit my daughter

Birthday of the tenth Imam, Ali al-Naqi (a.s.)

2nd Rajab

The tenth Imam, Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) – the Pure – was the son of the ninth Imam (a.s.). A soft-spoken and courteous person, he lived in a time of political intrigue and upheaval. Despite this, he remained patient and was always ready to help people, even those who had wronged him.

The Prophet (S) said,

Allah pardons those who grant pardon. 19

Memorial of the tenth Imam, Ali al-Naqi (a.s.)

3rd Rajab

The tenth Imam, Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) – the Pure – is remembered for many good actions. He once gave medical advice to a Caliph, afflicted with pustules, who had persecuted his family. All others had been too afraid to treat the Caliph but it is recorded the tenth Imam's remedy was successful.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) said,

Be just, even to your enemies. 20

Birthday of the ninth Imam, Muhammad al-Taqi, al-Jawad (a.s.)

20th Rajab

The ninth Imam, Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) – the Pious – al-Jawad – the Generous – was born in Madinah in 811CE. He was well known for his ability to answer and resolve complex questions and issues. He is reported to have regularly travelled on horseback to distribute food and money to the needy.

You shall not attain righteousness until you are able to give in charity that which you love.

(Qur'an 3:92)

Birthday of the first Imam, Ali ibn Abu-Talib (a.s.)

13th Rajab

The first Imam, Ali ibn Abu-Talib (a.s.), was the son of the uncle in whose Makkan home the Prophet (S)

grew up. When six years old, Ali (a.s.) came to live in the Prophet's (S) own home. Later, when the Prophet (S) gathered his relatives to ask them to accept Islam, Ali (a.s.) was the first to answer this call. They remained close throughout the Prophet's (S) life and Ali (a.s.) led the prayers at the Prophet's (S) funeral.

The Prophet (S) said,

The first of you to join me at the pool [Kawthar – reported to be a pool in paradise] is the first of you who embraced Islam and that is Ali (a.s.) son of Abu Talib –21

Memorial of the seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim (a.s.)

25th Rajab

The seventh Imam, Musa also known as al-Kazim (a.s.)– the Restrainer of Anger – lived in very difficult times. While praying in the Prophet's mosque in Madinah he was arrested and taken in chains to Basra and Baghdad. For years he was moved from one prison to another before finally being poisoned.

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said,

On the Day of Judgement Allah will fill, with faith and tranquility, the hearts of those who have controlled their anger when in positions to retaliate.22

Laylat al-Isra wal Miraj

27th Rajab

Laylat al-Isra wal Miraj commemorates the Prophet Muhammad's (S) 'Night Journey' from Makkah to Jerusalem and ascent through the seven heavens to receive Allah's instructions on *Salah*,

Glory to Allah who took His servant for a journey by night from the sacred mosque to the furthest mosque whose surroundings We did bless.

(Qur'an 17: 1)

Id-al-Mab'ath

27th Rajab

Eid-al-Mab'ath commemorates the start of Muhammad's 'Prophetic Calling' as Allah's final Messenger. Muslims offer prayer and read the Qur'an, Allah's final revelation to humankind.

We have truly sent you as a witness, as a bringer of glad tidings and as a Warner, in order that you, O people, may believe in Allah and His Messenger ... (Qur'an 48:8-9)

Birthday of the third Imam, al-Husayn (a.s.)

3rd Shaban

The third Imam, al-Husayn (a.s.), son of Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (a.s.) and Fatimah al-Zahra (a.s.), was the Prophet's (S) grandson. He was born in Madinah in the fourth year of the Hijri calendar. He was generous, gentle and a staunch upholder of Islamic values. He inspired great loyalty among his family and followers.

Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) said,

*Calamity is a blessing in disguise.*²³

Birthday of the fourth Imam, Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.)

5th Shaban

The fourth Imam, Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) – The Ornament of Worshippers – was born in Madinah in the 36th year of the *Hijrah*. At night he would often go abroad in disguise to distribute money, food and firewood to the needy of the community. It was only after his death that people realized who had done those good deeds. More than anything else, he liked to pray and help others to reconcile their differences.

Those who restrain anger and forgive others; Allah loves those who do good. (Qur'an 3:134)

Laylat al-Bara'at 14th Shaban

Laylat al-Bara'at – the night of promises and forgiveness – is when Allah decides what will happen to all of His creation in the coming year. Muslims offer prayers of gratitude, forgiveness and hope for the future. Because it falls 15 days before the month of Ramadhan it is sometimes referred to as the gateway to Ramadhan.

For Allah is He who gives all sustenance, Lord of Power, steadfast forever. (Qur'an 51:58)

Birthday of the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi (a.s.)

15th *Shaban*

The twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi (a.s.) – the Rightly Guided – was born in Samara in 255 AH. People turned to this acknowledged trustworthy person for answers to religious questions. He is considered to be alive but hidden until he reappears to establish Allah's truth and justice on earth before the Day of Judgement. People pray for his return.

The Prophet (S) said,

*The end of the world will not come about until the one of my progeny known as The Rightly Guided One – al-Mahdi (a.s.) – has filled the earth with justice and truth.*²⁴

1. History of Damascus, p.78.
2. Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, Vol. 3, p.26.
3. Wassail al-Shi'ah, Vol. 7, p.227.
4. Sahih al-Bukhari Book of Fasting, chapter on Moon Sighting.
5. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 1, p.195.
6. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 2, p.235.
7. The Prophet's speech at "Arafat.
8. Sunan al Tirmidhi, Vol. 2, p.307.
9. The Psalms of Islam, Prayer Number 20.
10. Tohaf al-Uqul, p.23.
11. Sahih Bukhari, Vol 9, p.71.
12. Al-Kafi, Vol. 2, p.110.
13. Ghurar al-Hikam.
14. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol 72, p.263.
15. Al-Kafi, Vol.5, p.124.
16. Al-Tarhib wal Tarhib, Vol. 3, p.448.
17. Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol. 4. p.5.
18. Al-Mustadrak 'ala Sahihain, Vol. 3, p.156.
19. Kanz al- Ummal, Tradition No. 7023.
20. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 78, p.379.
21. Al-Mustadrak 'ala Sahihain, Vol. 3, p.136.
22. Al-Kafi Vol 2, p.110.
23. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol 67, p.237.
24. Iqd al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Mahdi al-Muntadar, Chapter 1.

9.1 The significance of prayer

Qur'anic ayat on the significance of prayer

1. Maintain prayer at both ends of the day – and the early hours of night.

For it is through good deeds that bad deeds are effaced. (Qur'an 11:114)

2. He is glorified in the morning and the evening by those – not distracted from remembrance of Allah by bargain or trade – who maintain the prayer and give zakah. For they fear a day in which hearts and sights are transformed. (Qur'an 24:37)

3. Allah will surely help those who help Him. For Allah is All-Powerful, Almighty. If We would grant them power over the land they would maintain the prayer, give zakah, enjoin what is right

and forbid what is wrong- for the outcome of all matters rests with Allah. (Qur'an 22:40-41)

4. Certainly, it is the faithful who attain salvation - those who are humble in prayer and baulk at all conceit. (Qur'an 23: 1-3)

The significance of prayer from Nahjul Balaghahh

1. Commit yourself to maintain prayer. Offer them as frequently as possible in order to seek nearness to Allah. For prayer casts off sin as trees do their leaves. The Messenger of Allah likened it to the availability of a hot bath that, used five times a day, cleanses one of all dirt. 1

2. For the God-fearing, prayer is the means by which to seek closeness to Allah.2

3. Keep Allah in mind apropos the Qur'an. No one should excel you in acting upon it.

Keep Allah in mind apropos prayer, because it is the pillar of your religion.

Keep Allah in mind apropos Your Lord's House [Ka'bah], do not forsake it while you remain alive ...

Imam Ali's (a.s.) last words to his sons

4. Sleep, in a state of firm belief, is better than prayer in a state of doubt.

Imam Ali's (a.s.) comment at seeing a *Kharijite* offering the midnight prayer

Imam Sadiq (a.s.), on the significance of prayer

1. When people stand for prayer Allah's mercy rains down upon them. Angels surround them as one of their number comments, If people comprehended the full benefit of prayer, their prayers would never cease.3

2. When anyone praised another in the presence of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) his sole interest was to know about her/his prayer.4

3. Prayer may be likened to a tent pole that is maintained in an upright position by guy-ropes and tent pegs. However, if the pole breaks, neither ropes nor pegs are able to afford it further support.5

(All quotations attributed to any of the 12 error-free Imams of the progeny of Allah's Holy Messenger (S) refer to what was said by the Messenger of Allah (S) himself.)

9.2 Introduction to prayer

All of us are able to exercise and develop our muscles. Some do so to keep fit, some to participate in a particular sport and others to shape and sculpt their bodies. Whatever our motive, success is only

achieved by way of sustained application and effort. This applies equally to intellectual development, with academic qualifications being awarded after years of diligent study, and, it follows, to the development of our innate spiritual capacities. While it is apparent that the body requires nourishment, care and protection to grow and flourish, precious few consider the soul's need for similar nourishment, care, protection and growth.

As though bedazzled by the 'limousine' that they are happy to refill, wash and securely house, many appear blind to the 'essence' of the entity it carries through this life. Like children who do not understand that education is an investment for the future, they do not grasp that this material world affords the soul the opportunity to realize its true potential and achieve its objective.

They are able to register and respond to stimuli that materially affect their 'world-space' or 'worldview' but, as spiritual life does not exist for them, they are not able to register or respond to spiritual stimuli. For similar reasons, a pack of wild wolves only equipped to register other creatures as potential meals is not able to register and respond to stimuli – such as status, gold ornaments or 'state-of-the-art' electronic equipment – that for them do not exist in any meaningful sense.

However, the fact that, to some people, a thing may seem not to exist does not prove that it is in fact non-existent. During routine eye tests those with astigmatism are often surprised to perceive details not previously apparent to them, as are those with stereopsis when enabled to see with full three-dimensional vision. And, although it may stare them in the face, those who are 'color blind' do not see numerals formed by tonal dots within fields of similarly toned colored dots.

To some extent, lack of awareness may also result from upbringing, as William Wordsworth – appointed Poet Laureate in 1843 – expresses so beautifully in these few lines from his ode, *Intimations of Immortality*,

The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, Hath had elsewhere its setting, And cometh from afar;

Not in entire forgetfulness, And not in utter nakedness, but trailing clouds of glory do we come from God, who is our home:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy! Shades of the prison-house begin to close upon the growing boy,

But he beholds the light, and whence it flows, he sees it in his joy;

The Youth who daily farther from the east must travel, still is Nature's priest and by the vision splendid, is on his way attended;

At length the Man perceives it die away, and fade into the light of common day.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own; Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,

And, even with something of a mother's mind, and no unworthy aim, the homely nurse doth all she can to make her foster-child, her inmate Man, forget the glories he hath known, and that imperial palace whence he came...

Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,

Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke the years to bring the inevitable yoke, thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?

Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight, and custom lie upon thee with a weight heavy as frost, and deep almost as life.

Despite this, the works of painters such as Edward Hopper eloquently illustrate the soul's yearning to transcend the mundane and emerge into celestial light.

Jallaludin Rumi also refers to this in his lines:

*Hearken to this Reed forlorn,
Breathing, ever since was torn
From its rushy bed,
a strain of impassioned love and pain ...6*

Having revealed the outward manifestations of the faith – its practical, ethical and social precepts – and having summoned humankind to His side, to His Inner Reality, Allah Almighty has also provided a link between the outward aspects of faith and the position of the spirit. The only nourishment needed by a soul in order to hone its ability to see everything with the help of Allah – 'Light of the Heavens and the Earth' – is 'communication with the Creator' who has granted each one the non-materialistic attribute referred to as the soul's 'eye'.

Thus, the objective of the inner and outward aspects of the faith of Islam extends beyond the life of this world. The term 'nearness to Allah' stretches beyond physical nearness to the lords of wealth and power of this world, for those who step on the path of human destiny travel a straight path to 'Nearness to Ultimate Truth' – *Al-Haqq*. Beings who exist in this world should not imagine that success is limited to excellence in the sciences, arts, skills, customs or traditions that confer status in society. Real success can only be achieved through the refinement of the soul, and appreciation that its ultimate goal is the Purified Essence of Unity.

Allah gave the Prophet Muhammad (S) access to His religious commandments and Divine precepts so that he would focus our attention on the destination of this life's journey. He taught us how these relate to our 'well-being' or 'wretchedness' in the next world; how the blessing of everlasting happiness is achieved by putting those Divine precepts into practice; how dedicated and determined effort brings us closer to Allah; and how, at the higher stages of closeness, human spirituality may approach truth and

reality.

Thus, to travel the 'Path to Nearness' is to tread the path of servitude, humility, self-annihilation and non-being rather than mastery over the things of this world. Those who travel this route are like jewels with Allah's power and strength at their core.

This is the position that Allah refers to in the Qur'an when He talks about the Prophet Muhammad (S):

Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example for those who consistently remember Allah and place their hope in Allah and the Last Day. (Qur'an 33:21)

Say, if you love Allah follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins... (Qur'an 3:31)

In these *ayat*, the Prophet Muhammad (S) is introduced as our exemplar for behavior and morality – whose example we should take as our precedent.

It evidences the Prophet's freedom from sin and error, for had this not been so, there would have been no value in Allah Almighty presenting him as a leader and as a precedent. This position was passed from the Prophet to his Household, as is witnessed by *ahadith* reported by many scholars:

I leave among you two precious things: the book of Allah and my progeny. These two will not be separated until they meet together at the pool of Kawthar [in paradise]. Always follow them otherwise you will perish, and do not attempt to instruct them, for they are wiser than you. 7

The Prophet (S) said:

I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate; so whoever wants to enter the city should come through the gate. 8

Hubshi ibn Janadah reported that the Prophet (S) said:

Ali is from me and I am from Ali and no one represents me but Ali. 9

The Prophet said to Ali (a.s.), Fatimah (a.s.), Hasan (a.s.) and Husayn (a.s.)

I am at peace with those whom you are at peace with; and I am at war with those whom you are at war with. 10

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (S) said:

Whoever loves Hasan (a.s.) and Husayn (a.s.) loves me, and whoever hates them hates me. 11

In the language of the Qur'an, the holder of 'the degree of nearness' – the one who links humankind to its Inner Reality – is called Imam. It is therefore the Prophet (S) and error-free Imams (a.s.) who hold the reins of spiritual guidance on Allah's behalf, who transmit the light of Allah to our hearts.

So believe in Allah and His messenger and the light We have sent down ... (Qur'an 64:8)

From the ayah below it is clear that Allah ordered the Prophet Muhammad (S) to direct Muslims to establish a special closeness vis-a-vis his progeny:

Say (O Muhammad(S)): I do not ask you for any reward [for the toils of Prophethood] but love of my progeny. (Qur'an 42:23)

This facet of *wila* – closeness – that relates to his progeny is reiterated in the *hadith* of Ghadir Kumm in which the Prophet (S) said:

*For those of whom I am mawla [those over whom I have authority] Ali (a.s.) is also mawla*¹²

It also appears in the Qur'anic ayah:

Truly, truly, your guardian [waliy] is Allah, His messenger [Muhammad] and those who believe, establish the prayer, and give to the poor while they bow [in prayer]. (Qur'an 5:55)

No Muslim scholar understands this ayah to be a universal instruction for all Muslims to give *zakat* while in *ruku*. Al-Tabari, Al-Zamakhshari and Fakhru'd-Din al-Razi clarified that 'pay *zakat* while they bow in prayer' refers specifically to the occasion on which, while, bent directly forwards from the waist during prayer – *ruku* – Ali (a.s.) was asked for charity – and took off his ring and gave it. The revelation of this *ayah* identifies the specific person who, in addition to Allah and His Messenger (S), is the leader of the Muslims. Leader in this sense denotes 'guardian of', or 'one who has authority over the affairs of others ...'

Another facet of closeness refers to the '*Wila* of Love' – *mababbah* – and the '*Wila* of Kinship' – *qarabah*. The '*Wila* of Love' and the '*Wila* of Kinship' indicate that people should cultivate love and closeness to the Prophet's progeny over and above the love and closeness they should have for other Muslims. Qur'anic and *ahadith* references, narrated by all Muslim sources, confirm that love for the Prophet's progeny is a basic precept of Islam.

Every Islamic precept has an underlying philosophical and spiritual reason. The reason and benefit of the need to love and feel close to the Prophet's progeny is that it is bonds of love that truly connect people to 'them'. It is those bonds that make people yearn to learn from them, to emulate their behavior and manner, and to draw benefit from their purity and closeness to Allah. Two famous scholars, Al-Zamakhshari and Fakhru'd-Din al-Razi, both narrate the *hadith* on the '*Wila* of Love'. Al-Razi quoting al-Zamakhshari relates that the Prophet (S) said:

Whoever dies while in love with the progeny of Muhammad (S)– has died a martyr;

Whoever dies while in love with the progeny of Muhammad (S)– has died in forgiveness;

Whoever dies while in love with the progeny of Muhammad (S)– has died a believer in the perfection of their faith. 13

Wila, in its sense of the Imamate or leadership of the 12 error-free Imams, is the position of authority in the faith to which matters are referred for decision. That is, it is a position that others should follow, should adopt as their example for action and behavior, and from which they should learn the precepts of the faith. Such a position is necessarily one that is free from sin – *ismah* – so that the speech and actions of such Imams are safe guidance for others.

Thus, the 12 error-free Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* are acknowledged as the authoritative source of what the Prophet said and did. Had they been associated with unrighteousness or ignorance, had they had ceased to be the complement of the Qur'an, and had they not been, like the Prophet himself, free from sin and error, they could not have been exemplars and leaders in the Prophet's place.

- In the second year after the Prophet m had migrated to Madinah revelations established the Call to prayer – *adhan*
- Mental and physical purification that conditions and readies one to commune with the Lord – *wudu*,
- Mandatory prayers – *salat*, and
- Direction to face in order to align one's being with the earthly core of Islam – *qiblah*.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) taught people how to pray – and this section is for those who seek to follow the path of servant hood taught by him (S), and who desire to adhere as accurately as is possible to his teaching – for Allah tells us in the Qur'an,

In Allah's Messenger you certainly have an excellent example for those who place their hope in Allah and the Last Day, and are constant in the remembrance of Allah. (Qur'an 33:21)

Allah's final Prophet departed this world in the year 11AH at the age of 63.

9.3 Why we Pray

O you who believe! Seek help through patience and prayer ... (Qur'an 2: 153)

The Significance of Prayer in Our Lives

As individuals

Prayer is the most highly esteemed communication between human beings and their Creator.

It develops our 'greatest faculty's' capacity for concentration – and evidences the highest level of submission to Allah Almighty.

It purifies the soul and provides a framework for life's daily discipline – in particular, prayers offered at their specified times.

Prayer affords the satisfaction of having fulfilled daily obligations, and affords a spiritual taste of the sweetness of being in Allah's presence.

Recitation and remembrance maintain 'Awareness of Allah' and encourage perception of the – everywhere evident – 'signs' of His mercy and wisdom.

As families

As Islam's first preference is for prayer to be offered in a mosque, its second is for prayer to be offered in congregation, while prayer within the family has lesser significance. Nonetheless, parents have responsibility to encourage children to fulfill this most essential pillar of Islam. When toddlers watch parents perform *wudhu*' and offer daily prayer, they inevitably copy them and adopt these practices.

As a community

Prayer strengthens bonds between community members who assemble to share common experiences five times a day (or three times – when *Duhr* and *Asr*, or *Maghrib* and *Isha*¹, are contiguously offered; ref. Qur'an 17:78). The community coheres and is unified by being together at the mosque.

As congregational prayers are often accompanied by discussions of Islamic rulings and lectures on the Qur'an and *ahadith*, the educational value and influence of community prayer is compounded.

Mosques are not merely places of worship, but also places in which social problems are often solved, fellow Muslims consulted about community affairs and crucial decisions apropos the community determined.

As an ummah

Prayer increases awareness of the needs of the 'worldwide' *ummah*, for whose contentment Muslims pray.

All Muslims face one *qiblah*, communicate with the One Divinity – Allah Almighty – and are all united by common goals and objectives.

Historical aspects of faith

The first prayer ever offered in Islam was when the Prophet Muhammad (S) stood in the Holy Mosque of Makkah with Khadijah and the young boy Ali (a.s.) behind him. From this event the apparent strength of Islam encouraged others to profess faith also. When the Prophet migrated to Madinah his first action was to build a mosque. That mosque has remained the representative symbol of Islamic heritage

throughout the centuries.

The significance of prayer for Muslims today

As secularism offers no solution to spiritual problems, all the hopes, aspirations and prosperity of human beings rest with faith and regular communication between human beings and their Creator. Prayer plays a central role in uplifting the spiritual standing of humanity.

The ongoing relevance of discipline

Consistency and regularity of daily prayer contribute to discipline and organization – the secret of every success. For Muslims the discipline of prayer is as automatic as brushing the teeth – which similarly refreshes and contributes to feelings of 'well-being'. As with the brushing of teeth, rewards – although long-lasting – yield their benefits over time.

The ongoing relevance of unity

Congregational prayers at central mosques – to which all must travel – are effective in establishing unity amongst those who attend. This serves to crumble the artificial barriers of society, professions, wealth, class and neighborhood, and to re-establish the equality of all human beings before Allah.

The ongoing relevance of identity

Congregating with others strengthens the individual's identity as a component of a larger group – in the same way that supporters identify with their football team. In the Western world in particular, congregational prayers reinforce bonds and relationships with the worldwide Muslim *ummah*. During the last decades of the 20th century Muslims were accused of being terrorists and attacking civilization. The new century will, 'Insha'a-Allah', witness the opposite and demonstrate the tolerance and broadmindedness of Muslims who participate and contribute to society – as their ancestors did.

Politicians in the Western world have begun to realize this and to count on younger Muslims for positive contributions.

The fruits of remembrance

The essential teaching of Islam is to strive to feel the Omnipresence of Allah during every single moment of life as the Qur'an and 'Traditions' emphasize:

Remembrance of Allah satisfies the heart. (Qur'an 13:28)

Remembrance of Allah illuminates the heart. 14

Remembrance of Allah leads to the love of Allah. 15

Remembrance of Allah is the key to prosperity. 16

Remembrance of Allah is nourishment for the soul. 17

Remembrance of Allah is a cure. 18

Remembrance of Allah keeps Shaytan away. 19

Remembrance of Allah prevents hypocrisy. 20

Remembrance of Allah's omnipresence inspires people and effectively deters them from succumbing to temptations and doing wrong.

The disadvantage of neglecting to remember Allah

Some advantages of the remembrance of Allah, essential elements in the building of Islamic personality, are listed above and some consequences of the failure to remember Him are listed below:

The lives of those who turn from My remembrance will be circumscribed and they shall be raised blind on the Day of Judgement. (Qur'an 20:124)

We will appoint a devil as intimate companion of those who withdraw themselves from the remembrance of The Most Gracious. (Qur'an 43:36)

Shaytan plans to create hostility and hatred between you, and to use intoxicants and gambling to hinder your remembrance of Allah. (Qur'an 5:91)

It is not those who leave art exhibitions with blurred memories of pretty pictures who appreciate or understand the stature and achievement of an artist. It is those who grasp the significance, and appreciate the artist's achievement, which in reality understand and esteem the artist's work. And it is only those of us who grasp the significance of the signs of creation in the heavens and the earth, who genuinely glorify Allah Almighty and remember Him.

9.4 Purity of Body and Soul

The manufacture of detergents and cleaning materials is a highly profitable business. Millions are spent on advertising soaps, shampoos, conditioners, washing powders etc. Families that maintain clean, wholesome and healthy homes also ensure that their bodies, clothing, bed linen, soft furnishings and houses are kept clean. That cleanliness is of the utmost importance is illustrated by a tradition of Allah's final Messenger (S) in which he said, 'Cleanliness is part of faith.' The question is – why do we assume such traditions refer only to bodily cleanliness when purification of the soul is the very objective of our existence?

Many *ayat* of the Qur'an refer to purification of the soul as the essential element in the attainment of prosperity, see Qur'an 91:9 and 87:14. This is realized in two ways – one positive, one negative. The negative is to keep away from sin, the positive is to pray.

A 'true believer' may achieve inner wisdom and knowledge of spiritual truths through her/his inner heart. The heart and 'inner heart' are closely linked. The difference between them is that the heart 'knows' while the inner heart 'sees'. When knowledge and vision combine, the unseen becomes visible and certainty is achieved. This was the goal of the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) when he saw the '*Malakut*' of the heavens and the earth referred to in Qur'an 6:75. There is no point in knowledge without vision, nor in vision without knowledge. It is analogous to visiting a foreign country without understanding its language, history or customs.

The Prophet (S) said,

*Worship Allah as if you see Him for even if you do not, He truly sees you.*²¹

Once, when the Prophet (S) explained the significance of daily prayer to his companions, he asked, 'Do you think traces of filth adhere to the body of a person who has a flowing spring at the entrance to his house and is able to wash five times a day?' His companions thought not. He continued, 'In like manner, the five daily prayers remove dirt, filth, corruption and uncleanness from souls.'

When we have decided where we want to go, and have agreed to adhere to the regulations that govern that course, we may become comfortably established – in the 'carriage' of prayer – and be transported to our destination as it travels.

The heart's presence during prayer

Prayer is a celestial formula and 'Divine Electuary'. Every part contains a hidden 'Mystery'. Prayer is an expression of love, communication, and remembrance of the Lord of the Universe. It is the most excellent channel for spiritual perfection, ascension, and nearness to Allah. In one tradition, prayer is referred to as being the believer's 'Heavenly Journey' – *Miraj*.

Prayer is such a pure sparkling stream of spirituality that those who enter it five times a day purify their souls of every category of pollution and contamination. It is the key aspect for Allah Almighty and is the criterion for acceptance of all other deeds and acts of worship. However, none of the above advantages, or fruits of prayer, are achieved without the heart being present – that is, without devoting its full attention to Allah Almighty with utmost humbleness.

All the elements of prayer – *wudhu'*, invocations, recitals of Qur'anic *ayat*, bowing with deference, prostration in submission, bearing witness and salutation – constitute the 'face and body' of the prayer, while the heart's presence and attention to the Creator express its 'spirit'. Just as a body without a spirit is acknowledged to be dead, prayer that is offered without the heart's presence – even though it might

satisfy the performance of an obligatory act of worship – does not contribute to the achievement of any higher spiritual position. Allah tells us in the Qur'an,

Establish Worship for My Remembrance. (Qur'an 20:14)

The Friday prayer has been described as an invocation:

O you who believe, when the call for the prayer on Friday is heard, hasten to the remembrance of Allah. (Qur'an 57:9)

In one tradition the Prophet (S) emphasized the above saying,

*Sometimes only half a prayer is accepted – at others, possibly only a third, a quarter, or a tenth – while some prayers, like crumpled clothes thrown by a careless child, are completely rejected.*²²

The link between remembrance and prayer

Remembrance of Allah – *Dhikr Allah* – is evidenced by the heart, by the tongue and by the limbs and – when all are combined altogether in a single communication with Allah Almighty – by *salat*.

How to obtain the spiritual advantages of salat

The Prophet (S) showed his companions how to pray and ordered them to follow his example. He (S), his progeny and his faithful companions then initiated them into how to derive the utmost spiritual advantage from prayer. They highly recommended the following:

1. To remind oneself that the prayer being offered might be our final one. The effect is to increase the intensity of concentration in the hope that the maximum benefit from this opportunity is achieved.
2. To intend to express the utmost submission and humility during prayer. None are able to 'draw close' to Allah Almighty until they are aware and have accepted that they themselves are insignificant creatures. The Prophet once commented on the carelessness of someone who was praying, saying, 'Had he been truly humble he would have remained aware of the awesomeness of his communication and been more measured in his actions.'
3. To understand, while declaring *Allahu Akbar*, that He is far greater than these words are able to express. Alternately, to have consciously and sincerely placed one's absolute reliance on the Greatest and Mightiest Power.
4. To manifest during bowing with deference – *ruku* – absolute faith and total submission, regardless of whether He should decide to behead you or not.
5. While in prostration – *sujud* – to concentrate on the fact that we have been created from earth, are returned to it by burial and will, on the Day of Judgement, be again raised from it.

6. It is highly recommended: while standing upright, for eyes to be focused on the point where the forehead will meet the earth; while bowing with deference, for eyes to be focused between one's feet; while sitting between prostrations and while bearing witness – *tashahud* – for eyes to be focused on one's lap; and while offering the invocation – *qunut* – for eyes to be focused on the palms of one's hands.

7. It is also highly recommended that the nose touch the earth during prostration. In many traditions this act is expressed as defiance to *Shaytan* – his intention being to divert submission from Allah – for this act is an expression of utter submission to Him.

8. And, when raising hands to the ears and uttering *Allahu Akbar*, to be conscious of surrender to Supreme Authority; when standing upright, to relax the arms with palms in contact with the thighs; when in prostration, for males to keep hands directed inwards and elbows outward – forming the arms into 'wings', *tajnih*) – and for females, to keep hands pointing forwards with elbows close to their sides.²³

How to pray

There are three aspects to discuss: how to prepare for worship; conditions to be complied with during worship; and the offering of the prayer. In addition, some prayers are obligatory while others are voluntary.

9.5 Obligatory prayers

Preparation

This includes:

Ablution, ablution with water – *wudhu'* and *ghusl*, and ablution when water is not available – *tayammum*.

Wudhu'

The Arabic word used in *ahadith* references – *wudhu'* – cleanliness, encompasses mental as well as physical cleansing. When used as a technical term, it refers to 'preparation for worship'. This, when done in a quiet prayerful manner, is regarded as being a part of the act of worship.

Requirements of wudhu'

- The following presumes that hands, face, head and feet are physically clean and free from impurity.
- Specific intention to achieve closeness with Allah Almighty. Thus, if the actions of *wudhu'* are done for any reason other than this, they are not considered suitable preparation for an act of worship.
- To rinse hands and the face, pour a little water into the cupped hands and, with the right-hand palm

drawn in a downward movement, clean the face from the hairline to the extremity of the beard. The area required to be cleansed is the distance between the end of the extended thumb and end of the extended middle finger. To ensure that the complete area is covered, it is recommended to overlap on each side. Water should be used sparingly as the requirement is to cleanse – not to drench. Regardless of the number of hand movements that are needed to satisfy this requirement, all are considered to be part of one complete action.

- While it is obligatory to 'cleanse' the face and hands once, and recommended to do that twice – it is considered inappropriate to do it three or more times, for Imam Sadiq (a.s.) prohibited this being done.²⁴
- The 'cleansing' that follows immediately after an intention to make *wudhu*' is considered the 'first'.
- If one intends to perform *wudhu*' subsequent to having a bath, shower or other wash, it is recommended that such 'cleansing' is done only once after the intention to make *wudhu*'.
- After 'cleansing' the face, 'cleanse' the right arm and hand from elbow to fingertip, and then the left arm and hand. To ensure that the elbows are adequately cleansed, it is recommended to start this process a little way above the elbows.
- With moistened right palm, wipe the hair from the centre of the head to the hairline, and the upper part of each foot starting at the toes and ending at the ankle.
- While it is required to moisten any scalp visible through the hair, there is no requirement to moisten any that is not. It is not acceptable, for those with very long hair, to moisten only the tips of their hair – the requirement is to wipe the head.

Ghusl

To have a shower – *ghusl* – sometimes also called 'the greater ablution', is obligatory prior to prayer and other acts of worship in the following circumstances:

Sexual intercourse and the emission of semen –janabah

After semen is discharged, regardless of whether this occurs during sleep or wakefulness, or when penetration occurs during sexual intercourse, if ejaculation occurs or not, a shower becomes necessary to prepare one for any act of worship.

Menstruation – Hayd

After the menstrual flow has stopped, a shower becomes necessary to prepare a woman for any act of worship.

Non-menstrual bleeding – istihadah

There are three categories of such occurrence:

1. Slight

Requirement:

To cleanse – change sanitary towel and make *wudu* prior to offering each of the five *salat*.

2. Heavy

Requirement:

To perform *ghusl* before offering *Fajr* *salat*. Cleanse – change sanitary towel and make *wudu* prior to offering *Duhr*, *Asr*, *Maghrib* and *Isha* *salat*.

3. Very heavy

Requirement:

To perform *ghusl* before *Fajr*, before *Duhr* and before *Maghrib* *salat*. Cleanse

– change sanitary towel and make *wudu* prior to offering *Asr* and *Isha'* *salat*.

Childbirth – nifas

After any bleeding occurs while giving birth – *nifas* – which may be for a few minutes or continue for some ten days, a shower becomes necessary to prepare the mother for any act of worship.

Death – mawt

Before burial, the bodies of Muslims are washed three times: once with water in which the leaves of the 'Lote tree' – *sidr* – have been soaked, once with water to which camphor has been added, and once with plain water.²⁵

Tayammum

Tayammum is performed in place of *wudhu'* or bathing the whole body – *ghusl*

– in the following six circumstances:

1. When it is not possible to obtain a sufficient quantity of water to perform *wudhu'* or *ghusl*.

People are required to resolutely seek water for *wudhu'* and *ghusl* wherever they may happen to be. In populated areas, this means *tayammum* may only be performed when all possibility of finding water has been exhausted. In desert areas, people are required to search for water – on their route and in the

surrounding area. In areas of rough terrain or dense forests – where movement may be severely hindered – they should, if conditions permit, search north, south, east and west to a distance of 400 steps – if not, to a distance of at least 200 steps. However, they need not look for water in directions in which they are certain no water is to be found.

If there is sufficient time before the next prayer is due – and some certitude that water is to be found a relatively short distance away – they should, if it is not going to be exceedingly difficult, set out to obtain it. However, there is no necessity to set forth on a slim possibility that water may be found. One person may be delegated to bring water for others.

If a person concludes that there is insufficient time to search for water and prays after performing *tayammum* – but later discovers that they would have had ample time – they should repeat the prayer in question.

2. If – due to age, infirmity, danger, extreme difficulty, or lack of receptacle – a person is not able to obtain water, they should perform *tayammum*.

3. People should perform *tayammum* if they have reason to fear that water may endanger their life, or prolong, complicate or aggravate an ophthalmological or other medical condition. However, if warm water for *wudhu'* and *ghusl* circumvents such danger, it should be used.

4. Those who fear subsequent shortage of drinking water if supplies of water are used for *wudhu'* and *ghusl* – should perform *tayammum*. This is specifically applicable if consequential shortages are likely to result in humans and animals – for whom one is responsible – suffering intolerable hardship, dehydration or death.

5. If the only water or receptacle available are unsuitable – having been appropriated, for example – *tayammum* should be performed instead of *wudhu'* and *ghusl*.

6. As it is not appropriate to miss a prayer during its prescribed time – if the performance of *wudhu'* or *ghusl* would cause this to occur – *tayammum* has to be performed.

The substances that may be used for tayammum

Tayammum is performed on clean soil, sand, dried clay or, if necessary, stone.

Requirements of tayammum

The primary requirement is the 'specific intention' to perform *tayammum* – that is, to purify oneself mentally as well as physically in this manner.

For the palms and fingers of both hands to simultaneously touch or pat the substance being used.

With the heel of both hands to wipe the entire forehead – from the hair line to the bridge of the nose.

Then – in one action – to rub the palm of the left hand over the back – from wrist to fingertip – and to do that also with the palm of the right hand over the back of the left hand.

Direction of the Kabah – qiblah

Qiblah is the Arabic word that denotes the direction of the *Ka'bah* – the sacred cube-shaped building in Makkah – towards which all Muslims face when they pray. This action is an exemplification of the Islamic principle, that every human action should be focused upon the single objective of seeking the pleasure of our Almighty Creator. Indeed, facing the direction of the *qiblah* is required for other actions such as circumambulation of the *Ka'bah*, burial, the slaughter of beasts and prayers of supplication – *duas*. It is also highly recommended that those who recite or read the Qur'an face in the direction of the *qiblah*.

- While standing or sitting in prayer, the frontal aspect of the body – from head to toe – is aligned to face *qiblah*, the face not being turned away from it. This applies equally to those not able to stand or sit, who should lie, preferably on their right side, but if that too is not possible, on their left side. If neither is possible for them, they should be placed on their back with the soles of their feet aligned to face *qiblah*.
- If a person is required to offer prayer while aboard an aircraft, train or ship they may employ a compass to establish the direction of the *qiblah*. If they do not have a compass available, it is appropriate for them to pray in the approximate direction of the *qiblah*. For example, in North America to face NE, in the United Kingdom to face SE, in Paris, and other European cities on the same latitude, to face E.
- The direction of *qiblah* may be determined by compass, the informed guidance of others, or indicatory niches – *miharbs* – of local mosques. However, when no means by which to determine *qiblah* is available, prayer may be offered facing any direction. In spite of this, if time permits, it is recommended that such prayers be offered four times – with the alignment of the body being changed 90° to the right between each prayer.
- If a person believes that the *qiblah* is in one of two directions, they should offer the prayer twice, facing first in the one, and then in the other direction.

Timing for obligatory daily prayer

Within each period of 24 hours it is incumbent on every Muslim to offer five prayers – *Salat* – in their prescribed sequence. Each *Salat* comprises an intention – *niyyat* – and a specific number of cycles of standing upright, bowing with deference and prostration – *rakaah* (pl. *rakaat*). It is insufficient simply to go through the motions of prayer.

Prayer must inform and motivate all aspects of the believer's existence. It is highly recommended that

each prayer be offered at the commencement of the 'preferred time specified in the *ahadith*' – *fadhilat al-waqt*.

The time for each prayer is outlined below:

Duhr – four *rakaat* – at midday.

Asr – four *rakaat* – in the late afternoon.

Maghrib – three *rakaat* – at dusk, as the sky darkens before nightfall.

Isha' – four *rakaat* – after dusk when full darkness has set.

Fajr – two *rakaat* – at 'true' dawn – *Fajr al-Sadiq*.

For example, if we assume that on a particular day, the time in London for *Dhurr* is 12.04 and that sunset is at 4.02:

The first ten minutes after 12.04 are designated as being the specified time in which to offer *Dhurr* – in other words, those ten minutes are exclusively reserved for *Dhurr* prayers, and no other prayer may be offered during that time.

The last ten minutes prior to 4.02 are designated as being the specified time in which to offer *Asr* – in other words, those ten minutes are exclusively reserved for *Asr* prayer, and no other prayer may be offered during that time.

However, both *Dhurr* and *Asr* may also be offered at any time between those two specified periods.

In many *ahadith* to pray as early as possible is highly recommended. The Prophet (S) once described the reward for a prayer offered at the commencement of each *Salat* time as equivalent to the size of a large camel whilst the reward for prayer offered towards the end of that prayer's time is equivalent to the size of a tiny bird.

Thus, there is a preferred time for each *salat* to be offered referred to as *fadhilah al-waqt* explained below:

1. The *fadhilah al-waqt* for the *Dhurr* prayer is established in the following manner:

A rod placed vertically on level ground casts its shadow towards the West as the sun rises. The length of the shadow cast reduces in size as the sun approaches noon and, in places where it is directly overhead, disappears completely. (In Makkah, for example, this occurs on 28th May and 14th July.) The time to start *Dhurr* is defined as the moment that the sun passes its highest point and begins to cast its shadow towards the East. The time in which to offer – *fadhilah al-waqt* – the *Dhurr* prayer continues until the shadow of the rod reaches four-sevenths of the length of the rod, i.e. just over half its length.

2. The *fadhilah al-waqt* for the *Asr* prayer starts when the shadow of the rod reaches two-sevenths of the rod's length, and continues till it is equivalent to six-sevenths of the rod's length.
3. The *fadhilah al-waqt* for the *Maghrib* prayer starts when the redness of sunset in the Eastern horizon is at its peak. That is, when the redness of the setting sun has shrunk to cover only the western half of the sky. This *fadhilah* continues until the redness has disappeared completely from the western sky.
4. The *fadhilah al-waqt* for the *Isha'* prayer begins immediately after this, and continues for the first third of the night.
5. The *fadhilah al-waqt* for the *Fajr* prayer is 'true' dawn – *Fajr al-Sadiq*. This appears first as a horizontal white thread on the horizon, and then broadens into a 'river of light' of ever increasing clarity and brilliance.²⁶ True dawn is not to be confused with 'first' or 'false' dawn – *Fajr al-Kathib* – that appears as a column of light that increases and diminishes until it finally withers away completely. *Fajr al-Sadiq* is technically defined as the instant in the morning when the upper edge of the sun's disc is 18 degrees below the horizon. At certain times of the year, in cities located on 48 degrees of latitude or above, the sun's disc does not descend 18 degrees below the horizon, and for those times, *Fajr al-Sadiq* occurs when the upper edge of the sun's disc is 12 degrees below the horizon. This applies in London and similarly located cities between 22 May and 23 July each year.

The details of all these circumstances are explained by Ayatollah Sayyid Fadhel Milani in his *Frequently Asked Questions on Islam*, pages 57–59 (Islam in English Press, London 2001).

- A prayer not offered until after the specified time of its succeeding prayer is considered to be an unfulfilled duty and squandered opportunity. In such circumstance a 'surrogatory prayer' – *qada* – must be offered. In other words, if a person has time to offer only one prayer of four *rakaat* before the specified time for *Asr* ends, they must offer their *Asr* prayer, and immediately thereafter their *qada* prayer for *Duhr*.

In the opinion of all Islamic scholars, a deliberate breach in the sequence in which prayers must be offered renders such prayers invalid.

If, having made the intention – *niyyat* – and started the *Asr* prayer, one realizes that *duhr* has mistakenly been missed, one should instantly transfer one's intention from offering *Asr* to offering *Duhr*, and continue the prayer as *Duhr*. The *Asr* prayer must be offered afterwards.

Rulings related to deficiencies during prayer –Salat

Deliberate major or minor omissions, additions or changes to the obligatory acts of *Salat* render such *salat* invalid.

If one comes to realize, during or after *salat*, that one's *wudhu'* or *ghusl* is no longer valid, one must

abandon that prayer until *wudhu'* or *ghusl* is again valid. If that prayer's *fadilat al-waqt* has passed, the prayer should still be offered unless the specified time for the next prayer has come. If that is the case, the surrogatory prayer – *qada* – must be offered.

If it is realized, during or after *ruku*, that a prostration – *sujud* – of the preceding *rakaat* has been omitted, then that *salat* is invalid and must be offered correctly. If this is realized prior to *ruku*, *sujud* should immediately be made, followed by all the obligatory actions of *salat*, from that stage of the prayer onwards. When an error has been corrected during *salat* it is recommended that two additional *sujuds* be made immediately after that prayer – *Sujud al-sahw* – to correct that oversight.

If it is realized before the salutation that a *sujud* of the final *rakaah* has been omitted, this should be then made and *tashahud* repeated before the salutation.

If, before the *salam* at the end of the prayer, it is realized that something has been omitted, it should be performed prior to the *salam*.

Conditions to be fulfilled during prayer

Six conditions apply to where prayer may be offered

1. To use a place for prayer it must either be owned, rented, or have the permission of the owner or leaseholder to be used for that purpose. Clearly, mosques and prayer facilities in public places such as universities, hospitals and airports have been provided for people to pray in. One may not knowingly use any thing or place without the legal right to do so.
2. Prayer must be offered in surroundings where it will not be disrupted.
3. There must be sufficient space in which to stand upright, bow and prostrate comfortably.
4. The place must be free of impurities and dry – so that body and clothes are not rendered impure.
5. The point where women place their forehead during prostration should be behind the men. In restricted spaces this may be as far forward as a point just behind the line of the men's knees during prostration.
6. During prostration, the point where the forehead is placed should not be more than the breadth of four fingers above that of the hands, knees and toes.

Islam places great emphasis on *salat* being offered in mosques. Considered foremost of these are, in the following order:

- The Holy Mosque in *Makkah*
- The Holy Mosque in *Madinah*

- The Holy Mosque in *Kufa*
- The Holy Mosque in Jerusalem – *Masjid al-Aqsa*

These four mosques are followed in preference by the central – *jami* – mosque of the city, the local mosque and the street market or borough mosque.

Six conditions apply to clothes that are worn during salat

1. They should not be contaminated by anything that is 'impure in itself – *Najis al-'Ayn*.
2. They must be permissible for use during prayer, i.e. not stolen or unlawfully obtained.
3. They must not be made of any material from creatures that have not been slaughtered in accordance with Islamic law. Hence leather belts and jackets that may have been made from such materials are removed prior to prayer.
4. They must not be made of material from creatures whose flesh is unlawful to consume, such as carnivores or reptiles.
5. For males – they must not be made of material that includes any silk.
6. For males – they must not be embroidered with gold thread.

Covering of private parts – awrah

- While male pudenda must always remain concealed, this is especially true for *salat*. It is strongly recommended also to cover the body between navel and knee.
- With the exception of faces and hands, women's bodies and limbs are required to be covered during *salat*. This clearly requires that clothes should not be, or become, 'see through' in varying lighting conditions.

Acts that invalidate prayer

Prayer is invalidated in twelve circumstances:

1. When realization dawns that an essential requirement of prayer has not been satisfied.
2. When, by accident or intention, *wudhu'* is invalidated.
3. If, while standing upright, palms are deliberately removed from the thighs in order to fold the arms. Neither the Prophet(S) nor the Muslims at the time of the first Caliph folded their arms during *salat*. This innovation of the second Caliph was prohibited by Imam Sadiq (a.s.) when he declared it to be a Magian but not Muslim practice.

4. When *Amin*¹ is uttered after *Surat al-Fatiha*. The Prophet (S) taught Muslims how to pray and ordered them to 'copy' him. He never uttered *Amin* after *Surat al-Fatiha* and the only narration that maintains that he did so is not regarded as authentic.

5. When a person voluntarily turns away from the *qiblah*.

6. While in prayer it is not legitimate to articulate words or phrases not included in the Qur'an or used for *dhikr*. If, however, someone greets those in prayer with the words Salamun Alaikum – a greeting that demands an obligatory response – it must be done using the phrase Salamun Alaikum – words included in the Qur'an in a variety of places.²⁷,

7. When one voluntarily laughs aloud. However, a smile or a small chuckle do not invalidate prayer.

8. The value of any prayer is directly linked to the quality of communication with the Creator. While tears or sobs of fear engendered by Allah's awesome Omnipotence and Omnipresence do not detract attention from Him, tears shed over the affairs of this world clearly indicate that thoughts and actions are no longer focused on Him – a situation that renders such prayer meaningless.

9. When untoward actions alter the prescribed form of the prayer. The form of prayer is clearly altered if a coat is removed, shirtsleeves rolled up or other such action not associated with prayer. However, small gestures which contribute to reducing a disturbance and promote concentration, for example one to silence a child or indicate that someone who is not praying should answer a knock at the door, are acceptable.

10. When one eats or drinks anything – other than during a recommended *salat* before *Fajr* – on a day that intention has been made to fast, and the time for fasting is due to commence prior to the prayer ending. In this specific circumstance – providing water is within reach and that all acts that invalidate prayer are avoided – water may be drunk.

11. When continuing doubts are entertained regarding the number of *rakaat* that have been offered during any prayer – because such doubt evidences the absence of concentration.

Doubts regarding the number of *rakaat* for *Fajr* and *Maghrib* prayers invalidate *salat*. However, doubts over the number of *rakaat* offered during *Duhr*, *Asr*, and *Isha*¹ are effaced by the offering of *Salat al-Ihtyat* – precautionary prayer – after the prayer has been completed.

12. If deliberate omissions/additions are made to any element of prayer.

Prayer itself

Adhan and iqamah

The history of the adhan

Although the *adhan* was amongst the very first practices of the Muslim community there are contradictory reports in the *ahadith* over how this custom came into being.

- Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi and Nissa'i narrate on the authority of Abdullah Ibn 'Umar that when Muslims in Madinah were gathering for *salat* they had no means to announce to others that the prayer was about to commence. Some suggested bells, as used in Christian churches, others a ram or ibex horn – *Shofar* – as used by the Jews. But Umar suggested that one member of the congregation call the others to prayer. At this point, the Prophet (S) said, 'O Bilal, go and call them to prayer.'²⁸

- Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud narrate on the authority that Abdullah ibn Zayd told them:

'I dreamed about a man with a bell just as the Prophet (S) was ordering a bell be used to call people to prayer. I asked him, "Will you sell me your bell?" He asked why I wanted it and I replied, "To call people to prayer". He then asked if I would like him to teach me a better way to do this. To my positive response he taught me the *Adhan* and *Iqamah*. In the morning I told the Prophet about my dream and he, delighted by it, said that it constituted clear guidance on what to do, and promptly ordered Bilal to undertake that task'. When Umar heard this story he too came to the Prophet (S) and said, 'By He who sent the truth with you, I had precisely the same dream as Abdullah ibn Zayd.' The Prophet (S) then praised Allah for such bountiful blessings.²⁹

- The Imamiyah and Zaydiyyah accept that the first *adhan* to be called was during the 'Night Journey' where the Prophet (S) learned its detail.

Al-Halabi reports that Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah told him that he was incensed by the nonsense spoken of the *adhan* and *iqamah* being inspired by anyone's dream. It is, he said, 'sheer fantasy that these could be based upon images, of real or imaginary characters, places or events, that happen to pass through the mind of a sleeping person. The *adhan* was taught to the Prophet during the Night Journey.'³⁰

Numerous authentic *ahadith* in the collections of *Al-Kafi*, *Bihar al-Anwar* and *Wasa'il al-Shiah* consistently report that the Prophet (S) learned the *adhan* and *iqamah* from Jibra'il during the Night Journey.

Prayer comprises:

Intention – Niyyat

The foremost intention and sole motive must be to fulfill obediently a specific injunction of The Creator, and to remain aware of this throughout the prayer. There is no need to enunciate the intention but if the mind drifts and concentration is lost, the prayer is rendered meaningless.

Announcing that prayer has commenced

The words '*Allahu Akbar*' – *Takbirat al-Iharam* – must be clearly and accurately pronounced in order to announce that prayer has commenced. This specific requirement must be fulfilled while steadily standing upright. Those who are physically unable to articulate these words must try to fulfill the requirement as best they can.

It is recommended when enunciating the words '*Allahu Akbar*' – at the commencement of prayer and also when they occur during the prayer – to signify surrender to the will of Allah Almighty by raising both hands parallel to the ears, with palms facing the *qiblah*.

The three main postures of *Salat* are: Standing upright, Bowing in deference and Prostration in humility. In profound theological discussion each is considered to reflect a different aspect of Islamic Belief in the Oneness of Allah – There is no Divinity other than Allah. Standing reflects Unity of Actions, Bowing Unity of Attributes and Prostration Unity of Essence.

Standing upright – Qiyam

When Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (a.s.) asked his father "Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) why he turned pale while standing upright in *salat*, he replied, 'By Allah, it is because I am conscious of whom I stand before'³¹. This *Hadith* reveals the awesome significance of *qiyam* in submission to the Might and Majesty of Allah. It is only achieved when the things of this world are completely overshadowed by consciousness of Allah. While thus aware and while still in this position to recite Qur'anic *ayat* before going into *ruku*.

Prayer

Those who are elderly or infirm are exempt from standing and may fulfill this aspect of the prayer while seated. However, if they are able to stand with the aid of a stick or chair they should do so.

Qur'anic recitation

This comprises the opening *surah* plus another short *surah* of the Qur'an – *Qiraah*. The first and second *rakaah* of every prayer must commence with the recitation of Qur'an 1:1-7 (*Surat al-Fatihah* also known as *Surat al-Hamd*) and be followed by the recitation of any other complete *surah*.³² A few of these are listed.

Al- Fatihah – The Opener – Qur'an 1

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ {1}

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ {2}

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds;

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ {3}

Most Gracious, Most Merciful;

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ {4}

Master of the Day of Judgment.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ {5}

Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek.

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ {6}

Show us the straight way,

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ {7}

The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray.

Al-Tawhid – Monotheism – Also Called Al-Ikhlās – Sincerity – Qur’an 112

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ {1}

Say: He is Allah, the One and Only;

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ {2}

Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ {3}

He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ {4}

And there is none like unto Him.

Bowing in deference – Ruku

Recitation – *qirat* – is followed by the intention to bow in deference, i.e. bend directly forwards from the waist, to the extent that fingertips rest upon the knees. When the body is steady in that position, to pronounce three times in Arabic, I glorify Allah – *Subhana Allah*. If one prefers, this may be extended to, I glorify my Lord, who is Supremely Glorious and I praise Him – *Subhana Rabbi al-Azim wa bi hamdih*.

- *Ruku* should convey absolute faith and submission to the Lord without regard for how He might treat you.
- After completing the above one stands upright and enunciates, Allah hears those who praise Him – *Sami Allahu Limon Hamidah*. When steady in that position, intention is made to prostrate oneself in humility and this is immediately thereafter done.

- (Those for whom it is not possible to bend directly forwards from the waist, should indicate their intention with their head. They may find it easier to pray while sitting on a chair.)

Prostration – Sujud

Two prostrations – *sajdah* – follow *ruku* in every *salat*.³³

The intention should be to express utter humility with forehead, palms, knees and big toes touching the earth. When stable in that position to enunciate three times, I glorify Allah – *Subhana Allah*. If one prefers, this may be extended to, I glorify my Lord the Most High and praise Him – *Subhana Rabbi al-Ala wa bi Hamdih*.

- This is done because, when ‘Glorify your Lord who is Supremely Glorious’ was revealed in Qur’an 56:74, the Prophet said, include this in *dhikr* for *ruku*¹ and when ‘Glorify your Lord who is Most High’ was revealed in Qur’an 87:1 the Prophet(S) said, include this in the *dhikr* for *sujud*.¹
- After the first *sajdah* one sits upon the legs with feet crossed and, when stable in this position, enunciates *Allahu Akbar* before going into the prostration of the second *sajdah*.
- After the second *sajdah* one stands up for the *qiyam* of a second and identical *rakaah*.

Offering (the invocation) – qunut

It is recommended that *qunut* be recited while standing upright – *qiyam* – just before the *ruku* of the second *rakaah* of every *salah*. To do this, open hands are held before the face, fingers together, palms uppermost, and with eyes focused on them the *dhikr* of *qunut* is enunciated (except for congregational prayers, in which this is done by the Imam). *Qunut* may consist of any invocation such as,

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ {201}

'Rabbana iitina fid dunya Hasanah, wafil Akherati Hasanah, wa Qina 'athab an Naar'

'O Lord, grant us all that is good in this world and the world to come, and save us from chastisement by fire' (Qur'an 2:201).³⁴

Bearing witness – tashahud

In the second *rakaah* of every *salah* as well as in the last *rakaah* of every *salah*

- while sitting on the left thigh with the upper part of the right foot rested on the sole of the left foot and with hands on thighs – one must enunciate:

Phonetic transliteration

Al-hamdu li-Llah, ashadu an la ilaha il-alliih wahdahu la sharika lah Wa ashadu anna Muhammadan abduhu wa Rasuluh

Alliihuma salli ala Muhammadin wa ali Muhammad,

Wa taqabbal shafa atahu warfa darajatah

Translation

All praise is for Allah and I testify that there is no Divinity other than Allah, the One who is without partner,

And I testify that Muhammad(S) is His Servant and Messenger, O Allah, send Your blessing to Muhammad (S) and his progeny, Accept his intercession, and elevate his rank.

Ending the prayer -Salam

Once the affirmation – *tashahud* – is completed in the final *rakaah* of a prayer, the closing act is to enunciate:

Phonetic transliteration

Assalamu ‘alaykaayyuhan Nabi wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh Assalamu alayna wa ala ibadillahi Salihin.

Assalamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.

Translation

O Prophet, Allah's peace, blessings and grace be upon you,

Also Allah's peace be on us and upon all pious servants of Allah. Allah's peace and blessings be on you all.

Special circumstances

There are circumstances in which flexibility is appropriate, namely:

Prayer whilst travelling

Prayers of four *rakaat* – cycles of standing upright, bowing and prostration – are shortened to only two *rakaat* during travel, regardless of the purpose of the journey. This ruling is based upon the ayah:

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ
يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا... {101}

'There is no blame on you for shortening your prayers during journeys, if fearful that disbelievers might harry you'.. (Qur'an 4: 101).

- Muslim reports in his *Sahih* that Umar asked the Prophet (S) the meaning of the phrase, 'there is no blame upon you' and he replied, 'This is a concession that Allah has granted, so accept it and be grateful.' Both Bukhari and Muslim record that Anas ibn Malik reported, 'We travelled from Madinah to Makkah with the Prophet (S) and throughout the journey he (S) only offered two *rakaat* until we returned to Madinah.' This referred specifically to the *Duhr*, *Asr* and *Isha'* prayers.
- Thus, this concession applies to return journeys of 44 km/28 miles or more, but not to shorter distances.
- A traveler's intention, when setting off, must have been to undertake a return journey of 44 km/28 miles or more.
- The distance of 44 km/28 miles is calculated from one's town of residence regardless of where a journey may have started.
- It goes without saying that the purpose of the journey has to be lawful to benefit from Allah's concession.
- People whose livelihoods involve long-distance travel do not qualify for this concession.
- The benefit commences immediately after the outer reaches of the town of residence have been passed.

Effects of the prayer being shortened

- Those who start their journey prior to noon – during the month of Ramadhan or during any other fast – break their fast and shorten their prayers. However, those who start their journeys after midday do not break their fast despite their prayer being shortened.
- Those who travel for six months of the year, or for three days or more each week, do not meet the criteria for prayers to be shortened.
- Travellers who stay the minimum of ten days or more in a town are considered temporary residents and thus do not meet the criteria for prayers to be shortened.

Prayer at the time of solar and lunar eclipse and at times of disasters that are secularly described as 'Acts of God'

There are differences between the events referred to in the items above.

- Solar and lunar eclipses are regular, predictable events observable from a wide variety of places throughout the world; 'Acts of God' are local incidents within specific regions.
- Prayers offered at times of solar or lunar eclipse are obligatory, regardless of people fearing such events or not.
- Prayers after uncontrollable events caused by natural forces, for example earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados or other disaster are only obligatory when the safety of the majority of people in a region is threatened by such an event, or its immediate consequences.

Such prayers were taught by the Prophet Muhammad(S), whose religious guidance Muslims observe, and have nothing whatever to do with superstitious belief.

How to offer such prayers

These prayers consist of two *rakaat*. In each of them the opening surah and another short *surah* of the Qur'an is recited five times, followed each time by a *ruku*, prior to the first *sajdah*. The same procedure is repeated in the second *rakaah*.

Id Prayer

All Muslims celebrate two special days each lunar year, namely *Id al-Fitr*, to celebrate the completion of one month of fasting, and *Eid al-Adha*, to commemorate the sacrifice offered by the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.). In the *ahadith* related by the error-free Imams, followers of Ahl al-Bayt are recommended to celebrate also *Eid al-Ghadir*. This *Id* commemorates the event at *Ghadir Kumm* where Imam Ali was appointed to be the successor to the Prophet – A congregational *Id* prayer is only offered at *Fitr* and *Adha*.

How to offer Id prayers

The *Id* prayer consists of two *rakaat*. It is highly recommended that in the first of these, the Imam recite the Opening suraah (*Al-Fatihah*) and Surah 87 (*Al-Ala*) – followed by five *qunuts* before the *ruku* of the first *raka'ah*. And for the second *rakaah*, the Opening *surah* (*Al-Fatihah*) and Surah 91 (*Al-Shams*) – followed by four *qunuts*.

Al-'Ala –The Most High – Qur'an 87

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى {1}

Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord Most High,

الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى {2}

Who hath created, and further, given order and proportion;

وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى {3}

Who hath ordained laws. And granted guidance;

وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَى {4}

And Who bringeth out the (green and luscious) pasture,

فَجَعَلَهُ غُثَاءً أَحْوَى {5}

And then doth make it (but) swarthy stubble.

سَنُقَرِّبُكَ فَلَا تَنْسَى {6}

By degrees shall We teach thee to declare (the Message), so thou shalt not forget,

إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ وَمَا يَخْفَى {7}

Except as Allah wills: For He knoweth what is manifest and what is hidden.

وَنُيَسِّرُكَ لِلْيُسْرَى {8}

And We will make it easy for thee (to follow) the simple (Path).

فَذَكِّرْ إِن نَّفَعَتِ الذِّكْرَى {9}

Therefore give admonition in case the admonition profits (the hearer).

سَيَذَكَّرُ مَن يَخْشَى {10}

The admonition will be received by those who fear (Allah):

وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا الْأَشْقَى {11}

But it will be avoided by those most unfortunate ones,

الَّذِي يَصِلَى النَّارَ الْكُبْرَى {12}

Who will enter the Great Fire,

ثُمَّ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَى {13}

In which they will then neither die nor live.

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى {14}

But those will prosper who purify themselves,

وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى {15}

And glorify the name of their Guardian-Lord, and (lift their hearts) in prayer.

بَلْ تُؤْتِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا {16}

Day (behold), ye prefer the life of this world;

وَالْآخِرَةَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى {17}

But the Hereafter is better and more enduring.

إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى {18}

And this is in the Books of the earliest (Revelation),-

صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى {19}

The Books of Abraham and Moses.

Al-Shams - The Sun - Qur'an 91

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا {1}

By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour;

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَّهَا {2}

By the Moon as she follows him;

وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّهَا {3}

By the Day as it shows up (the Sun's) glory;

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا {4}

By the Night as it conceals it;

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا {5}

By the Firmament and its (wonderful) structure;

وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا {6}

By the Earth and its (wide) expanse:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا {7}

By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;

فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا {8}

And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;-

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا {9}

Truly he succeeds that purifies it,

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا {10}

And he fails that corrupts it!

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا {11}

The Thamud (people) rejected (their prophet) through their inordinate wrong-doing,

إِذِ انبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا {12}

Behold, the most wicked man among them was deputed (for impiety).

فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا {13}

But the Messenger of Allah said to them: "It is a She-camel of Allah! And (bar her not from) having her drink!"

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا {14}

Then they rejected him (as a false prophet), and they hamstrung her. So their Lord, on account of

their crime, obliterated their traces and made them equal (in destruction, high and low)!

وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا {15}

And for Him is no fear of its consequences.

Then, a specific *dua* is recited during *qunut* namely:

اللَّهُمَّ أَهْلَ الْكِبْرِيَاءِ وَالْعِزَّةِ، وَأَهْلَ الْجُودِ وَالْجَبْرُوتِ، وَأَهْلَ الْعَفْوِ وَالرَّحْمَةِ،
وَأَهْلَ

التَّقْوَى وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ، أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ هَذَا الْيَوْمِ الَّذِي جَعَلْتَهُ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ عِيداً، وَلِمُحَمَّدٍ
صَلَّى

اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ نُحْرًا وَمَزِيداً ، أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ ، وَأَنْ تُدْخِلَنِي فِي
كُلِّ

خَيْرٍ أَدْخَلْتَ فِيهِ مُحَمَّدًا وَآلَ مُحَمَّدٍ ، وَأَنْ تُخْرِجَنِي مِنْ كُلِّ سُوءٍ أَخْرَجْتَ مِنْهُ

مُحَمَّدًا وَآلَ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَوَاتُكَ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَيْهِمْ - اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ خَيْرَ مَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادُكَ

الصَّالِحُونَ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِمَّا اسْتَعَاذَ مِنْهُ عِبَادُكَ الصَّالِحُونَ

Allahumma ahl al-Kibriya' wal 'Azamah, wa ahl al-Judi wal Jabarut wa ahl al-'Afwi wal Rahmah, wa ahl al-Taqwa wal Maghtirah, asa'luka bihaqqi hatha alyawm allathi ja 'altahu lil Muslimina 'idan wa li-

Muhammadin thukhran wa maizda an tusallia ala Muhammadin wa ali Muhammad wa an tudkhillani fi kulli khairin adkhalta fihi Muhammadan wa ala Muhammad wa an tukhrejani min kulli su' akhrajta minhu Muhammadan wa ala Muhammad. Allahumma inni asaluka khaira ma salaka minhu 'ibaduka alSalihun wa authu bika mima ista'atha minhu 'ibaduka alsalihun.

O Lord of Grandeur and Might, Lord of Generosity and Omnipotence, Lord of Pardon and Mercy, Lord of Righteousness and Forgiveness, I beseech you on this auspicious day you have made celebratory for the Muslim community, for You to grant Your Mercy and Blessing to the Prophet Muhammad (S) and his progeny and bestow upon me every goodness that You bestowed upon the Prophet Muhammad (S) and his progeny and safeguard me from every misfortune that You safeguarded the Prophet Muhammad (S) and his progeny from. O Allah, I ask you for the best of what Your most pious and devout servants asked, and seek the same protection that Your most pious and devout servants sought.

After the *id* prayer, the Imam delivers two sermons with a short pause in between the first and the second.

- In the first he details the significance of the fast or the pilgrimage and the value of spiritual purification. The second is to emphasize the importance of the Muslim *ummah* remaining united and responsive to the needs of those less fortunate than themselves.
- There is no *adhan* or *iqamah* called for *id* prayers. Repetition of the words '*as-Salah*' three times suffices. The time for *id* prayer is from sunrise to midday and there is no *qada* offered for a missed *id* prayer once its time has passed.

Congregational prayers

Muslims are encouraged to offer prayer in congregation and it is considered that the larger the congregation, the greater the blessing of the prayer will be. Authentic *ahadith* record that congregational prayer has 25 times greater benefit than prayer not offered in congregation. Indeed, it is not considered appropriate for anyone to abandon congregational prayer without justifiable excuse. Even if one has already offered a specific prayer, it is highly recommended to join a congregation about to offer it. Those who frequently entertain doubts concerning the correctness of their prayers are required to alleviate such doubts by offering their prayers in congregation.

The qualifications required by those who lead congregational prayer

To lead congregational prayer the Imam must be adult, sane, *Ithna Ashari Shiah* and *Adil* – righteous. Further, the Imam needs to be well acquainted with rulings that relate to prayers in general and, in particular, those that relate to congregational prayer. A male may lead both genders but a woman may only lead other women. Those not able to stand, bow or prostrate may not lead congregational prayers.

- While the Imam delivers the opening *surah* and second short *surah* of the Qur'an – in the first and

second *rakaat* – those who follow must remain silent. However, members of the congregation are required to participate in a soft voice, so as not to be overheard – ‘sotto-voce’ – in the recitation of all the other passages the Imam recites.

- Those who join congregational prayer – prior to the Imam raising his head from *ruku* in the first *rakaah* – utter *Takbir al-Ihram*, follow the Imam and are considered to have started the prayer together with the congregation. Those who join later than this must wait until the Imam stands for the next *rakaah*.

Making up for missed prayers

When any obligatory prayer is missed, whatever the reason, it must be made up for. It is highly recommended for this to be done as soon as is possible. However, if one is not absolutely clear about the precise number of prayers that need to be compensated for, to be on the safe side, one should adopt the maximum that one is certain will fulfill these missed obligations.

Missed prayers are to be compensated for in the form that they were missed, e.g. those shortened during travel should be offered in shortened form. One has to specify in the *niyyah* that the prayer to be offered is in compensation.

The prayer for the departing soul (Salat al-Janazah)

Salat al-Janazah should be offered as soon as possible after the deceased's body has been bathed, shrouded and anointed with camphor. The *Salat al Janazah* may take place at home, in a mosque, graveyard or elsewhere in the open. Although women may not enter a mosque during periods of menstruation – *hiad* – they may enter Islamic centers not designated as mosques. A building is only officially recognized as a mosque after the owner, donor or charity – *waqf* – committee in charge of it, announces the intention for it to be designated as such. Although the state of ritual purity – *wudhu'* – is a requirement of *Salah*, in circumstances in which the making of *wudhu'* is likely to result in the *Salat al-Janazah* being missed, it may be offered even if one is not in the state of *wudhu'*. This applies equally to women in *hayd*, absolved from the duties of *salah*, who may join at one side of the congregation.

- This is a manifestation of Allah's mercy for, no matter what their circum stance, all may participate in prayer for a departed soul. *Salat al-Janazah* is the only *salah* for which no *adhan* or *iqamah* is called. The only time both *adhan* and *iqamah* are called and not followed by *Salah*, is after the birth of a baby, when the *adhan* is called softly in its right ear and the *iqamah* in its left.
- Congregational *Salat al-Janazah* is offered standing facing the direction of the qiblah. The deceased's shrouded body, lying on its back, is laid on a bier or in a coffin, in front of the congregation. It is placed with the head to the right of the congregation and the feet to its left. The Imam positions himself in front of the chest area of a woman and the navel of a man. The congregation stands in lines behind the Imam, makes the intention to offer *Salat al-Janazah* for the deceased's soul, raise their hands to their ears to pronounce *Allahu Akbar – takbir* – and follow the Imam in reciting the prayer in a low voice.

Those unable to stand may of course sit while doing this.

How to offer Salat al-Janazah

According to *Imamiyah fiqh*, both Imam and congregation pronounce five *takbirs* and between each, the Imam recites either the shorter or the longer passages aloud, with the congregation doing so silently. Imam Jafar asSadiq (a.s.) said, 'Allah made five prayers obligatory, and appointed one *takbir* for the deceased in the place of each prayer.' He also referred to the Prophet (S) offering five *takbirs* for all the deceased, other than hypocrites, for whom he only offered four. However, the four Sunni schools of law only consider four *takbirs* to be necessary.

Salat al-Janazah becomes obligatory once a deceased Muslim is six years or over.

1st Takbir

Allahu Akbar

Then either:

I bear witness that there is no Divinity but Allah and that Muhammad (S) is Allah's Messenger.

Phonetic transliteration

Ashhadu an la ilaha ilallah, wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan Rasulallah.

or:

I bear witness that there is no Divinity but Allah the One, who has no associates. And I bear witness that Muhammad (S) is His Servant and Messenger, sent to convey Truth, and give warnings and good tidings before the Day of Judgement.

Phonetic transliteration

Ashhadu an la ilaha illallahu wahdahu la sharika lah. Wa Ashadu anna Muhammadan abdahu wa Rasuluh, arsalahu bil haqqi bashiran wa nathiran bayna yaday is sa'ah.

2nd Takbir

Allahu Akbar

Then either:

O Lord! Bestow peace and blessings upon Muhammad (S) and his progeny.

Phonetic transliteration

Alla humma salli ala Muhammadin wa aali Muhammad.

or:

O Lord! Bestow peace upon Muhammad (S) and his progeny and bless Muhammad (S) and his progeny and send Your Mercy upon Muhammad (S) and his progeny as the best of Your peace, blessing and mercy was bestowed upon Ibrahim and his progeny. You are The Praised and The All-Glorious. Bestow peace upon all the Prophets, Messengers and martyrs.

Phonetic transliteration

Alla humma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa aali Muhammad wa barik 'ala Muhammadin wa aali Muhammad warham Muhammadan wa ala Muhammadin ka afzali ma sallayta wa barakata wa tarahamta 'ala Ibrahima wa aali Ibrahima innaka Hamidun Majid wa salli ala jami il anbiya' wal mursalin, was-shuhada was-siddiqin wa jamri 'ibadilla his-salihin.

3rd Takbir

Allahu Akbar

Then either:

O Lord! Forgive all believing men and women.

Phonetic transliteration

Allah hummaghfir lil mu'minina wal mu'minat.

or:

O Lord! Forgive all believing men and women and all Muslim men and women, alive or dead; join us with them by good deeds. You are the Listener of prayers The All Powerful.

Phonetic transliteration

Allahumma ghfir lil mu'minina wal mu'minat wal muslimina wal muslimat. alahya 'l minhum wal amwat tabi baynana wa baynahum bil khayrati innaka mujibud-dawat innak ala kulli shay'in Qadir.

4th Takbir

Allahu Akbar

Then either:

O Lord! Forgive this dead person.

Phonetic transliteration

(For a male) – *Allahumma ghfir li hazal mayyit.*

(For a female) – *Allahumma ghfir li hazihil mayyit.*

or:

O Lord, this is Your servant the son/daughter of Your servants, Your guest and You are the best of Hosts. O Lord, we know him/her by his/her good conduct but You know him/her better than we do. O Lord, if he/she was a doer of good, increase their good for them. If on the other hand he/she was a doer of evil, forgive him/her. O Lord, lift him/her to the highest level and console the bereaved. You are the All Merciful.

Phonetic transliteration

(For a male) – *Alla humma inna haza abduka wabnu abdika wabnu amatika nazala bika wa anta khayru manzulin bihi Alla humma inna la nalamu minhu ilia khayra wa anta aalamu bihi minna. Alla humma in kana mohsinan fa zid fi ihsanihi wa in kana musii'an fatajawaz anhu waghfir lahu. Allahumma j'alhu indaka fi a'la 'illiyin wakhluf ala ahlihi fil ghabirin warhamhu bi-rahmatika ya ar hamar Rahimin.*

(For a female) – *Alla humma inna hazihi amatuka wabnatu abdika wabnatu amatika nazalalat bika wa anta khayra manzulin bihi Allahumma inna la na'lamu minha ilia khayra wa anta a'alamu biha minna. Allahumma in kanat mohsinatan fa zid fi ihsaniha wa in kanat musii'atan fatajawaz 'anha waghfir laha. Allahumma j'al ha 'indaka fi a'la 'illiyin wakhluf 'ala ahliha fil ghabirin warhamha bi-rahmatika ya ar hamar Rahimin.*

5th Takbir

Allahu Akbar

9.6 Voluntary prayers

In section 9.5 we discussed the obligatory – *fard* – prayers that constitute a 'pillar' of the Islamic religion. However, as constant communication with the Creator is highly recommended, additional prayers, over and above the obligatory, are commonly offered. Some additional prayers – *nafilah* (pl. *nawafil*) – are customarily appended to *fard* prayers, others are not.

Voluntary *raka'at* are invariably offered in pairs, i.e. four *raka'at* being made up of two sets of two *raka'at*.

Voluntary prayers that are appended are:

- Two *raka'at* prior to the *Fajr* prayer
- Eight *raka'at* prior to the *Duhr* prayer
- Eight *raka'at* prior to the *'Asr* prayer
- Four *raka'at* after the *Maghrib* prayer
- Two *rak'aat* after the *'Isha'* prayer while sitting – despite this being considered to equate to only a single *rakacah* performed while standing.
- Eleven *rak'aat* for the midnight prayer

A total of 34 *raka'at*

Thus, the *raka'at* offered in any one day – 17 *fard* + 34 *nawafil*: total 51.

Voluntary prayers include the following.

The prayer related to Jafar, son of Abu Talib

Numerous authentic reports refer to its outstanding effectiveness as an expression of contrition in seeking forgiveness for major sin. The most appropriate time to offer this four-*rakaat* prayer is thought to be a half hour after sunrise on a Friday morning.

The first pair: In the first *raka'ah*, *Surah 99 – Al-Zilzal* – is recited after *Al-Fatihah*, and in the second *raka'ah*, *Surah 100 –Al-Adiyat* – is recited after *Al-Fatihah*.

Al-Zilzal – The Earthquake – Qur'an 99

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا {1}

When the earth is shaken to her (utmost) convulsion,

وَأُخْرِجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَنْقَالَهَا {2}

And the earth throws up her burdens (from within),

وَقَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا {3}

And man cries (distressed): 'What is the matter with her?'

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا {4}

On that Day will she declare her tidings:

بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا {5}

For that thy Lord will have given her inspiration.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصُدُّرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ {6}

On that Day will men proceed in companies sorted out, to be shown the deeds that they (had done).

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ {7}

Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it!

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ {8}

And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

وَالْعٰدِیَاتِ ضَبْحًا {1}

By the (Steeds) that run, with panting (breath),

فَالْمُورِیَاتِ قَدْحًا {2}

And strike sparks of fire,

فَالْمُغِیْرَاتِ صُبْحًا {3}

And push home the charge in the morning,

فَأَثْرُنَ بِهٖ نَقْعًا {4}

And raise the dust in clouds the while,

فَوَسَطْنَ بِهٖ جَمْعًا {5}

And penetrate forthwith into the midst (of the foe) en masse;-

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهٖ لَكَنُودٌ {6}

Truly man is, to his Lord, ungrateful;

وَإِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ {7}

And to that (fact) he bears witness (by his deeds);

وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ {8}

And violent is he in his love of wealth.

أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ {9}

Does he not know, when that which is in the graves is scattered abroad

وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ {10}

And that which is (locked up) in (human) breasts is made manifest-

إِنَّ رَبَّهُم بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّخَبِيرٌ {11}

That their Lord had been Well-acquainted with them, (even to) that Day?

The second pair: In the first raka'ah, Surah 110 – *Al-Nasr* – is recited after *Al-Fatihah* and in the second raka'ah, Surah 112 – *Al-Ikhlās* – is recited after *Al-Fatihah*.

Al-Nasr – Victory – Qur'an 110

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ {1}

When comes the Help of Allah, and Victory,

وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا {2}

And thou dost see the people enter Allah's Religion in crowds,

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا {3}

Celebrate the praises of thy Lord, and pray for His Forgiveness: For He is Oft-Returning (in Grace and Mercy).

Al-Tawhid - Monotheism - Also Called Al-Ikhlās - Sincerity - Qur'an 112

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ {1}

Say: He is Allah, the One and Only;

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ {2}

Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ {3}

He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ {4}

And there is none like unto Him.

In both pairs of *raka'at* the following is repeated – as outlined below: Translation

Allah is glorified and praised, there is no Divinity but Him, He is The Most Great.

Phonetic transliteration

'Subbana Allahi wal Hamdu lilahi wa La ilaha ilia Alahu wa Alluhu Akbar'.

15 times after recitation of the two *surahs*,

10 times during each *ruku*,

10 times while standing after *ruku*,

10 times during each *sajdah*,

10 times while sitting between the two *sajdahs*,

and,

10 times while sitting after the second *sajdah*.

The above glorification – *tasbih* – is thus recited 75 times in each *raka'ah*

– taking the total number in this prayer to 300.

- Shaykh Kolehini reports, on the authority of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq that he taught one of his companions to recite the following supplication in the last *sajdah* of the fourth *raka'ah*, immediately after the completion of the ten *tasbih*.

صلاة الجعفر الطيار

سُبْحَانَ مَنْ لَبَسَ الْعِزَّ وَالْوَقَارَ، سُبْحَانَ مَنْ تَعَطَّفَ بِالْمَجْدِ وَتَكَرَّمَ بِهِ، سُبْحَانَ مَنْ
لَا

يَنْبَغِي التَّسْبِيحُ إِلَّا لَهُ، سُبْحَانَ مَنْ أَحْصَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمُهُ، سُبْحَانَ ذِي الْمَنِّ
وَالنَّعَمِ،

سُبْحَانَ ذِي الْقُدْرَةِ وَالْكَرَمِ، اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِمَعَاقِدِ الْعِزِّ مِنْ عَرْشِكَ، وَمُنْتَهَى

الرَّحْمَةِ مِنْ كِتَابِكَ، وَأَسْمِكَ الْأَعْظَمِ، وَكَلِمَاتِكَ الْتَامَّةِ، الَّتِي تَمَّتْ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا،

صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ

Subhana man labisa alizza wal waqar, Subhana man tac'tafa bil majdi wa takarama bih, Subhana man la yanbaghi al tasbihu ilia lah, Subhana man ahsa kulla shayin 'ilmuh, Subhana thil manni wal niyam, Subhana thil qudrati wal karam. Allahuma ini asaluka bi ma'aqid etizz min 'arshika wa muntaha al rahmati min kitabika, wa ismikal 'azam wa kalimatik al tammah al-lati tamat sidqan wa adlan salli ala Muhammadin wa ahli baytihi waf'al bi ...

Glorified is the One of Honour and Dignity, Glorified is the Sole source of every bounty, Glorified is the One to whom glorification exclusively belongs, Glorified is the Omniscient One who encompasses all, Glorified is the Sole source of Power and Generosity. O Allah, I ask by the elements of Glory that uphold Your Throne, by Your abundant Mercy and Your Greatest Name to bestow Your Mercy and Blessing upon Muhammad (S) and his progeny and grant me ... [mention your individual wishes].

It is considered to be particularly meritorious to recite the above prayer in the Holy Shrine of Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) – Alamah Majlisi quotes from Shaykh Husayn ibn Abdul Samad through his teachers that, if a visitor to the shrine of Imam Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) or other Imams recites the above prayer, there will be recorded for him many great rewards.

Mafitih-ul-Jinan, Keys of Heavens, translated by Murtaza Lakha, p. 520

The prayer for protection offered after Jumuah or Dhurr on a Friday

Shaykh Tusi reported from Imam Sadiq (a.s.), that if a person recites two *raka'at* on a Friday, after *Dhurr*, and in each, after *Al-Fatihah* recites Surah 112 – *Al-Ikhlās* – seven times, followed by the supplication below, protection from all afflictions is granted for the coming week, and that Allah will ensure they remain in the company of Muhammad (S) and Ibrahim (a.s.)

أعمال يوم الجمعة

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي حَشُوها الْبَرَكَةُ وَعُمَارُها الْمَلَائِكَةُ مَعَ نَبِيِّنا
مُحَمَّدٍ

صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَأَبِينَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

Alliihuma ij alni min ahl aljannah al lati hashwuha al-barakah wa 'ummaruha al-malaikah ma'a nabiyina Muhammadin (S) wa abina Ibrahim (a.s.)

O Allah please place me in paradise that overflows with Your mercy and in the company of our Prophet Muhammad (S) and his forefather Ibrahim (a.s.).

Prayer offered to implore the Lord for rain

Although people do not need such prayers in those parts of the world in which there is seldom any shortage of water, many areas do suffer water shortage and drought.

The Prophet (S) taught us how we may implore the Lord for rainfall and recommended that several acts be associated with this two-raka'at prayer that is followed by an address.

- It is offered in the outskirts of cities, except in Makkah, where it is offered in *Masjid Al-Haram*.
- According to *ahadith* reported from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) it is better if Muslims fast for three days and offer this prayer on the third.
- When he offered this prayer, the Prophet put his cloak on 'inside-out', so that its right shoulder rested upon his left shoulder and vice-versa. When asked why this was so he said that it was to symbolize drought being overcome by abundance.
- It is recommended that the Imam face the *qiblah* and repeat '*Allahu Akbar*' 100 times, that he then turn his head to the right and repeat '*Subhana Allah*' 100 times and then to the left, to repeat '*La ilaha ilia Allah*' 100 times prior to facing the congregation and repeating the phrase '*Al Hamdu lilahi*' 100 times.

Thereafter, the Imam leads the prayer and delivers his address.

History records that during a time of severe drought, Imam Ali (a.s.) left the city in order to offer this

prayer and deliver the following sermon:

Be aware, the earth that bears you and the sky that covers you are obedient to their Sustainer (Allah). They do not bestow their blessing out of pity for you or for any good from you, but do so because that is what they have been commanded to do and they merely obey that command.

Allah tries His creatures with regard to their evil deeds by decreasing fruits, holding back blessings and sealing treasures, so that those who wish to repent may, and those who were negligent may develop awareness. Allah Almighty has made the seeking of His forgiveness a means for pouring livelihoods and mercy upon people,

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا وَيُمْدِدْكُمْ
بِأَمْوَالٍ وَيَنْبِيئٍ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا

'Seek the forgiveness of your Lord, truly He is the Oft-forgiving, He will send down upon you clouds of abundant rainfall and will provide help for your wealth and offspring' (Qur'an 71: 10–12).

'May Allah shower mercy upon those who repent and forsake sin. O Allah, we come from the shelters we have built while our children and beasts cry out for Your mercy, hope for the generosity of Your bounty and remain in fear of Your chastisement and retribution. Oh Allah, let us drink from your rainfall, do not forsake us and let the drought take our lives, do not punish us for what the foolish amongst us have committed.'³⁵

Oh Allah, we have come to complain about something that is not hidden from You. Severe troubles have forced us, famine has driven us, distress and need have reduced us to helplessness. Oh Allah, we beseech You not to send us back disappointed, not to make us return with downcast eyes and not to treat us according to our own deeds.

Oh Allah, please pour Your mercy, blessing and sustenance down upon us and let us enjoy rain: to quench our thirst; to produce green herbage and bring to life again that which has withered; to bring about the benefits of freshness, plenitude and ripened fruits. With rain our rivers may flow again, our fields will be irrigated, our plants will regain foliage and the price of food will plummet. You certainly have power over whatever You will.³⁶

Prayer offered during each of the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah

Once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Makkah is obligatory for those who can afford it. However, those unable to go, and those who have already been but nevertheless yearn for the merits of pilgrimage, are recommended to offer two *raka'at* – between the *Maghrib* and '*Isha*' prayers – during the first ten nights

of *Dhul-Hijjah*. In both *raka'at*, after reading *Surah Al-Fatihah* and *Surah Al-Ikhlās* the following ayah is recited:

We called Musa into Our presence for 30 nights and kept him with Us a further 10 after that to make his stay total 40 nights. Musa said to his brother Harun,

....اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

'...Take my place among my people, act appropriately and be cautious not to let mischief-maker influence you.' (*Qur'an 7:142*).

Prayers offered during the nights of the Holy Month of Ramadhan

It is highly recommended to combine the fast of Ramadhan with nightly prayer. According to authentic *ahadith* one should offer 1,000 voluntary *raka'at* over this month in the following manner:

Over the first 20 days offer 20 *raka'at* each night – eight after *Maghrib* and 12 after '*Isha*'.

Over the last ten days, offer 30 *raka'at* each night – 12 after *Maghrib* and 18 after '*Isha*'.

On the 19th, 21st, and 23rd offer 100 *raka'at* each night.

Important note:

The Prophet (S) only stipulated that 'obligatory' prayers be offered in congregation. The custom that was followed during his lifetime was for the voluntary prayers of the nights of Ramadhan to be offered alone by each individual – not in congregation. This practice was continued during Abu Bakr's period in office and, for the first year of his caliphate, 'Umar fasted over Ramadhan and offered his prayers in the same manner as the Prophet (S) and Abu Bakr had done before him.

However, in the 14th year of the Hijra, 'Umar and some of his companions entered the mosque in Madinah while those present were offering voluntary prayer – some bowing, some in prostration, some standing and others sitting. He felt displeased by the apparent disorder and was moved to stipulate that all those present offer voluntary prayers in congregation. He further demanded that this be done in all the mosques throughout his dominion. Such congregational prayers came to be known as *Tarawih*.

However, the error-free Imams of Ahl al-Bayt continue to follow the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S) and decline this, and all other innovation.

Prayer of greeting offered after entering any mosque

It is recommended to offer two *raka'at* each time one enters a mosque but there are no references to any particular surahs being recited. Abu Dar reports that he entered the mosque while the Prophet (S) was there and he said,

'O Abu Dar, there is a greeting to be offered to the mosque'; when I asked him (S) what that was he (S) replied, 'To offer two raka'at.'³⁷

Prayer offered on the first night after a burial (Salat al-Wahshah)

On the first night after burial, fellow Muslims are recommended to offer two *raka'at* to comfort the soul of the deceased in its new surroundings.

The first *raka'ah*: *ayat* 2:255-7 – *Al-Kursi* – is recited after *Al-Fatihah*.

The second *raka'ah*: *Surah* 97 – *Al-Qadr* – is recited 10 times after *Al-Fatihah*.

After this, the request is made, 'O Lord, please bless the Prophet Muhammad (S) and his progeny (a.s.) and refer the benefit of this prayer to the grave of 'so and so' [the name of the deceased and her/his father].

Al-Baqarah – Qur'an 2- Verses 255-257

The frequently recited *ayat* – 255-257 – are jointly referred to as: 'Throne Ayat' – '*Ayat ul-Kursi*'

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۚ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ {255}

Allah! There is no god but He, -the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or

after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feelth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ
بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ {256}

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ
الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ {257}

Allah is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light. Of those who reject faith the patrons are the evil ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness. They will be companions of the fire, to dwell therein (For ever).

Al-Qadr – Qur'an 97

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ {1}

We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power:

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ {2}

And what will explain to thee what the night of power is?

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ {3}

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.

تَنْزَلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ {4}

Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand:

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطَلَعِ الْفَجْرِ {5}

Peace!... This until the rise of morn!

Prayer of ghufailah

The name *ghufailah* is derived from the Arabic word for heedlessness – *ghaflah* – which implies that most people are not aware of its merits.

It comprises two *raka'at* offered between the *Maghrib* and '*Isha'* prayers. In the first *raka'ah* after *al-Fatihah*: the ayat 21:87–88 are recited. It is evident that the recitation of these ayat is to relieve believers of their woes.³⁸

Al-Anbiya – The Prophets – Qur'an 21- Verses 87–88

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ {87}

And remember Zun-nun, when he departed in wrath: He imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness, "There is no god but thou: glory to thee: I was indeed wrong!"

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنَجِّي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ {88}

So We listened to him: and delivered him from distress: and thus do We deliver those who have faith.

In the second *raka'ah* after *al-Fatihah*: Qur'an 6:59 *Al-An'am*:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۚ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ {59}

With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knoweth but He. He knoweth whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf doth fall but with His knowledge: there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a record clear (to those who can read).

After this, the hands are raised in *qunut* and the following is recited:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِمَفَاتِحِ الْغَيْبِ الَّتِي لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا أَنْتَ أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدًا وَآلِهِ
وَ أَنْ ---

Allahuma inni as'aluka bi mafatih al ghaib al-lati la ya lamuha illa ant an tusaliya 'ala Muhammadin wa alihi wa an ...

O Allah, I beseech you by your Keys to the treasures unseen, to bless Muhammad (S) and his progeny

and to grant me..[After stating one's desires one continues] O Allah, You are my Guardian and Provider and know my desires, so I beseech you, in the names of Muhammad (S) and his progeny, to grant my request.

Prayer on the first day of each month

It is recommended to offer the following two rakaciit prayers at the start of each month.

The first *raka'ah*: Surah 112 –*Al-Tawhid* – is recited 30 times after *Al-Fatihah*.

The second *raka'ah*: Surah 97 – *Al-Qadr* – is recited 30 times after *Al-Fatihah*.

Al-Tawhid - Monotheism - Also Called Al-Ikhlās - Sincerity - Qur'an 112

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ {1}

Say: He is Allah, the One and Only;

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ {2}

Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ {3}

He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ {4}

And there is none like unto Him.

Al-Qadr – Qur'an 97

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ {1}

We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power:

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ {2}

And what will explain to thee what the night of power is?

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ {3}

The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.

تَنْزَلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ {4}

Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand:

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطَلَعِ الْفَجْرِ {5}

Peace!... This until the rise of morn!

In a narration from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) this offers excellent monthly protection.

Prayer offered on Id Al-Ghadir

'Id Al-Ghadir falls on the 18th of Dhul-Hijjah, the day that the Prophet Muhammad (S) announced that Allah had appointed 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) to be his successor and the first Imam.

It is recommended to offer two *raka'at* half an hour prior to noon and to recite in each *raka'ah*: *Surah Al-Ikhlās* 10 times, *Ayat Al-Kursi* 10 times, and *Surah Al-Qadr* 10 times after the recital of *Surah Al-Fatihah*. It is reported from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that the merit of this prayer equates to the benefits of going on thousands of major and minor pilgrimages and that our desires for this world, or that of the world to come, will be granted.

Prayer for the fulfillment of specific desires

Despite Islamic guidance that every person is responsible for her/his own physical and worldly needs, Muslims are advised also to seek the Lord's help. Here are a few suggestions outlined by the Imams-

- To offer two *raka'at* in the great mosque in Kufa and in each *raka'ah*, to recite *Surah* 113, *Surah* 114, *Surah* 112, *Surah* 109, *Surah* 110, *Surah* 97 and *Surah* 87 – after *Surah Al-Fatihah*. Thereafter to recite the tasbeeh of Lady Fatimah (a.s.) – '*Allahu Akbar* 34 times, '*Al Hamdu li'l'lah*' 33 times and '*Subhana Allah*' 33 times – before asking for one's requests to be granted.
- Imam Ali (a.s.) ibn Al-Husayn advised a frail and financially straitened person to offer two *raka'at* – to follow that with Allah's praise and sending the Prophet (S) and his progeny blessings – after which to recite the last three ayat of *Surah* 59, the first six ayat of *Surah* 57, and ayat 26 and 27 of *Surah* 3.39

Ayat 22-23- 24 of Surah 59 - Al-Hashr

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۚ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ {22}

Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god;- Who knows (all things) both secret and open; He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيَّمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ

الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ {23}

Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god;- the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme: Glory to Allah! (High is He) above the partners they attribute to Him.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ ۚ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ {24}

He is Allah, the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms (or Colours). To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names: whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare His Praises and Glory: and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

Ayat 1-6 of Surah 57 – Al-Hadid

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ {1}

Whatever is in the heavens and on earth,- let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah: for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ {2}

To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: It is He Who gives Life and Death; and He has Power over all things.

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ {3}

He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ يُعَلِّمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۗ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ {4}

He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in Six Days, and is moreover firmly established on the Throne (of Authority). He knows what enters within the earth and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wheresoever ye may be. And Allah sees well all that ye do.

لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ {5}

To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: and all affairs are referred back to Allah.

يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ ۗ وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ {6}

He merges Night into Day, and He merges Day into Night; and He has full knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts.

Ayat 26 -27 of Surah 3 - Ali-Imran

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful.

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ {26}

Say: "O Allah! Lord of Power (And Rule), Thou givest power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off power from whom Thou pleasest: Thou enduest with honour whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest: In Thy hand is all good. Verily, over all things Thou hast power.

تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ ۚ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ
الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ۚ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ {27}

"Thou causest the night to gain on the day, and thou causest the day to gain on the night; Thou bringest the Living out of the dead, and Thou bringest the dead out of the Living; and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest, without measure."

Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) said that after reciting the above, Allah will grant your desires for this world and for the world to come.

It is reported from Imam Ali (a.s.) that a four-rakat it prayer should be offered to invoke Allah to grant desires

In the first raka'ah after Al-Fatihah, to recite Qur'an 3:173 (Al-Imran) seven times – **'Allah is sufficient for us, He who protects us is Most Excellent.'**

الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدِ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَآخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا
حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ {173}

Men said to them: "A great army is gathering against you": And frightened them: But it (only) increased their Faith: They said: "For us Allah sufficeth, and He is the best disposer of affairs."

In the second raka'ah after Al-Fatihah, to recite the following ayah of Al-Kahf seven times,

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ تَرَنَّا أَقَلَّ مِنْكَ مَالًا
وَوَلَدًا {39}

"Why didst thou not, as thou wentest into thy garden, say: 'Allah's will (be done)! There is no power but with Allah!' If thou dost see me less than thee in wealth and sons.. (Qur'an 18:39).

In the third rak'ah after *Al-Fatihah*, to recite the following ayah seven times,

...أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ {87}

'There is no Divinity other than You – limitless Glory beyond imperfection. Truly I was among the unjust ..' (Qur'an 21:87).

In the fourth raka'ah after *Al-Fatihah*, to recite the following ayah seven times,

وَأُفَوِّضُ أَمْرِي إِلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ {44}

'I entrust my affairs to Allah, truly Allah watches over His servants' (Qur'an 40:44).

He said that after reciting the above, Allah will grant your desires for this world and for the world to come.

Prayer for istikhirah

The word *istikharah* – to petition Allah for guidance to all that is good – is derived from the Arabic root word *khair* – good. Human beings, created with intelligence and the ability to reason, are well equipped to evaluate the benefits and disadvantages of actions and make informed decisions. However, at moments of stress, or when obliged to make decisions crucial to their future success, believers are advised to seek the guidance of Allah – Knower of All that is Hidden and Manifest – to direct them to the 'best' solution via *istikharah*.

- Scholars have dedicated chapters, even volumes, to this subject. The most famous work is the book of Al-Sayyid ibn Tawus (d. 664 AH) *'Fath al-Abwab'* (Opening the Doors) in which he records 20 different approaches to the seeking of *istikharah*.⁴⁰

- Shaykh Saduq refers to Imam Sadiq (a.s.) saying, 'When one wishes to consult Allah, pray two raka'at, praise Allah, send blessings to the Prophet and his progeny and then say, "O Allah if this action is beneficial in terms of religion or worldly matters, please make it easy for me to undertake; if it is not, please erase it from my thoughts.'" The narrator asked the Imam which *surahs* should be recited in the raka'at and was told that both *Surah Al-Ikhlās* Qur'an 112 and *Surah Al-Kafirun* Qur'an 109 should be recited in the knowledge that the Prophet (S) said that the recitation of *Al-Ikhlās* is equal to the recitation of one-third of the Qur'an.⁴¹

2. Maxim 136.
3. Wasa'ilal-Shi'ah, Vol.4, p.32.
4. Wasa'ilal-Shiah,Vol. 4, p.32.
5. Wasa'ilal-Shiah,Vol. 4, p.33.
6. R. A. Nicholson, Rumi Poet and Mystic, redrafted by A. J. Arbeny, Unwin Paperbacks 1978.
7. Sunan of Abu Dawud; Khasa'is of Nisa'i, p.30; Sahih of Muslim, Vol. 7, p.122 ; Sunan of Tirmidhi, Part 2, p.307; Mustadrak of Hakim,Vol.3, pp. 109 & 148; Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal,Vol.3, pp. 14–17;Vol.4,pp.26 & 59; and Vol.5,pp.182 & 189.
8. Al-Hakim's Al-Mustadrak, Vol. 3, p.26.
9. Sunan Ibn Majah,Vol.1, Number 119.
10. Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 1, Number 145.
11. Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 1, Number 143.
12. Al-Amini's Al-Ghadir, Vol.1, pp.14–18.
13. Al-Tafsir al-Kabir, Al-Razi, Vol. 27, p.166.
14. Ghurar al-Hikam.
15. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 93, p.160.
16. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 77, p.199.
17. Ghurar al-Hikam.
18. Kanz al-Ummal, Tradition 1751.
19. Nahjul Balaghahh, Sermon No. 2.
20. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. n.p.290.
21. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. n,p. 74.
22. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 84. p.260.
23. Al-Kafi, Vol. 3, pp.310–363
24. We may deduce that this was on the grounds that it would incur unnecessary water usage and encourage people to doubt that they had carried it out properly.
25. Prior to the availability of soaps, readily available leaves of the Lote tree were used as a detergent with camphor being employed to preserve the deceased from decay. Despite contemporary soaps and shampoos being equally efficient, in order to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (S) the consensus of jurists is to retain the use of these substances. This has the secondary benefit of helping those who lack funds or live in remote areas.
26. ...eat and drink until dawn when the whiteness of day becomes distinct from the blackness of night. (Qur'an 2:187).
27. For example Qur'an 16:32.
28. Sahih al Bukhari,Vol1, p.306; Sahih al Muslim, Vol1, p.285; Sunan al-Tirmidhi,Vol1, p.362; Sunan al-Nissai,Vol 2, p.2; Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol 2, p.148.
29. Sunan al-Tirmidhi,Vol. 1,p.358; Sunan abi Dawud, Vol. 1, p.135.
30. Al-Sirah al-Halabiyah,Vol. 2, p.300.
31. Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Vol. 4, p.685.
32. According to the ahadith of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.), Surah number 93 known as Al-Duha and Surah number 94 known as Al-Inshirah) are regarded, for the purposes of salat, to be a single surah. This too applies to Surahs 105 and 106.
33. The only prayers that do not include either ruku or sujud are those offered for the dead – Salat al-Janazah.
34. It is recommended for the qunut of Salat al-Witr, which is one single raka'ah of the voluntary midnight prayer, to ask Allah forgiveness for forty believers.
35. This is in reference to Qur'an 7:155 in which the Prophet Musa selected 70 men of his people to be appointed by the Lord,who in their supplication said,'Will you destroy us for what the foolish amongst us have done?'
36. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 143.
37. Wasa'il al Shi'ah, Vol. 5, p.248.
38. When Yunus became angry that his people did not respond to his teaching, Allah tested his fidelity within the whale. When engulfed, he cried out to the Lord to confess that he should not have become angry andleft his people despite their

waywardness.

39. Many of Allah's Most Beautiful Names appear in these three groups of ayat. For a deeper understanding of these and the others refer to pp. 175–246, *The Source of Islamic Spirituality*, Islam in English Press 2004.

40. It is reported in a hadith of the Holy Prophet (S) that the paths to Allah Almighty are equivalent to the 'breath of all creatures'. This illustrates that there are a never-ending variety of ways in which to communicate with one's Lord.

41. *Wasa'il al-Shiah*, Vol. 8, p. 66.

'Abaya/Chador – full-body cloaks sometimes with a smaller headscarf beneath them.

'Adil – righteous.

Ahadith – see *hadith*.

Ahl al-Bayt – household of the Prophet Muhammad (S).

Al-Haqq – The Ultimate Truth (One of Allah's Most Beautiful Names)

Allahu Akbar – Allah is the Most Great.

Amin – trustworthy

Al-salamu alaykum – May Allah grant you peace.

Al-Yasa' (a.s.) – Elisha.

Ahmad – commendable or laudable.

Ahwal – level of attainment of a spiritual journey.

'Ash'arite school of Islamic theology that supports tradition over reason.

Asr, Salat al-Asr – afternoon prayer.

Adhan – call to prayer.

Ayah (pl. *ayat*) – lit. a sign. In Qur'anic terminology, a verse.

Ayub (a.s.) – Job.

Bayt al-Mal – treasury.

Chador – see *'Abaya*

Chingiz-Khan – Genghis Khan.

Dawud (a.s.) – David.

Dhikr – remembrance.

Dhikr Allah – remembrance of Allah

Du'a – prayer or supplication.

Fadilat al-Waqt – the preferred time for offering each prayer.

Fajr al-Kathib – false dawn.

Fajr al-Sadiq – true dawn.

Fajr, Salat al-Fajr – dawn, the prayer offered at dawn.

Fard– obligatory.

Fatwa (pl. *fatawa*) – independent legal opinion/s.

Fiqh – jurisprudence.

fitrah – innate. Pure nature of human beings.

Gharar – risk, lack of information.

Ghufailah – two voluntary raka'at offered between *Maghrib* and '*Isha*'.

Ghusl – to bathe the whole body, also known as the greater ablution.

Hadith (pl. *ahadith*) report or saying of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and the error-free Imams (a.s.).

Hajj – pilgrimage.

Halal – lawful.

Haqiqah – complete truth.

Haram – unlawful.

Harun (a.s.) – Aaron.

Hasanah – good deed.

Haya' – modest behaviour.

Hayd' – menstruation and its period.

Hijab (lit. complete protection) – women's modest dress and head covering.

Husn – beauty or goodness.

Ibrahim (a.s.) – Abraham.

'Id – celebration

Ih'san – doing good.

Ijtihad – to deduce rulings from their sources, that is the Qur'an and *ahadith*.

Ilyas (a.s.) – Elijah.

Imamiyah Shiah. Those who defer to the Imams (a.s.) from the Prophet's (S) progeny.

Injil – the Bible.

Insh'a-Allah – God willing.

Iqamah – call to stand up for prayer.

Ismah – being free from error or sin.

Isa (a.s.)– Jesus.

Isha', Saatal-Isha' – evening prayer, which may be offered until midnight.

Ishaq (a.s.) – Isaac.

Ismail (a.s.) – Ishmael.

Isnad – 'chain' of those who are known to have narrated a *hadith*.

Isra'il – Israel.

Istihadah – non-menstrual bleeding.

Istihsan – preference of one kind of analogy over another.

Istikharah – to petition Allah to guide one to all that is good.

Jami – central mosque of a city.

Janabah – religious impurity that is the result of sexual intercourse.

Jibra'il – Gabriel.

Juhd – strive.

Ka·bah – 'house of God' in Makkah.

Kalam – Islamic theology, speech.

Khair – good

Khidr – a renowned person who is traditionally acknowledged to have received the Divine gift of great wisdom.

Khimar – a long capelike veil – from the head to just above the waist – that completely covers the hair, neck and shoulders leaving the face clear.

Lut (a.s.) – Lot.

Madinah – City, Islamically used for the city where the Prophet lived and died.

Maghrib, Salat al-Maghrib – The prayer offered after sunset when dusk falls and the sky darkens.

Mahabbah – Love.

Mahram – A person with whom marriage is not lawful, e.g. brother, sister, mother, father, aunt, uncle etc.

Makkah – the holiest city in Islam where the Prophets Ibrahim (a.s.) and Isma'il (a.s.) built the Kaabah. The birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad and place of pilgrimage for Muslims.

Makkan – relating to Makkah.

Malakut – Celestial realm.

Maqamat – spiritual position.

Maryam (a.s.) – Mary.

Mathhab – School of law.

Mawla – guardian, being in charge, and master, as in Ali (a.s.) is mawla.

Mawt – death.

Mihrab – niche in the wall of a mosque to indicate the qiblah.

Mi'raj – the Prophet Muhammad's journey to 'the heavens' and back.

Mizan – beam–balance scale.

Mujtahid – jurist.

Mu'min (pl. *mu'minin*) – true believers.

Musa (a.s.) – Moses.

Murtazilite in Islamic theology – supporter of reason.

Nafilah (pl. *Nawafil*) – voluntary prayers.

Najis al-'Ayn – impure in itself.

Nifas – childbirth.

Niqab – a veil to cover a woman's face leaving only the area around the eyes

Niyyah – intention.

Nuh (a.s.) – Noah.

Qada – to make up for missed duties.

Qarabah – kinship.

Qiblah – the direction (of the Kab'ah in Makkah) that Muslims face when they pray.

Qiraah – recitation

Qiyam – standing upright.

Qiyas – analogy.

Qunut – humble invocation.

Quraish – a famous Arabian clan.

Raka'ah (pl. *raka'at*) – cycles for standing, bowing and prostrating during prayer.

Ruku – to bow before the Lord. A position during prayer.

Sahabah – companion.

Sajdah (pl. *sujud*) – to prostrate. A position during prayer.

Sajdah al-Sahw – a prostration made for any mistake during prayer.

Salah (pl. *Salat*) – the canonical form of Islamic prayer.

Salam – greetings of peace.

Salit al-Ihtyat – precautionary prayer.

Sayyi'ah – bad deed.

Shari – legal.

Shariah – Islamic law.

Shaytan – Satan.

Shiah – those who followed the Islamic teaching of Ali (a.s.) after the Prophet (S)

Sidr – Leaves of the 'Lote Tree'.

Silsilah – lit. chain, chronological list of teachers or guides.

Subhana Allah – Allah is glorified.

Sujud see *Sajdah*.

Sulayman (a.s.) – Solomon.

Sulh – amicable treaty or agreement.

Sunnah (lit. practice) – in Hadith terminology, the Prophet's (a.s.) tradition, sayings and way of life.

Sunni – those who follow the caliphs after the Prophet (S)

Surah – a division of the Qur'an.

Surat al-Fatiha – the opening surah of the Qur'an.

Tabiun – the generation that succeeded the companions.

Takbir – to state that 'Allah is Most Great' – Allahu Akbar.

Tariqah (pl. *turuq*) – way, path.

Tasbih – glorification.

Tashahud – declaration of faith.

Tawhid – belief in the Divine Unity of Allah, Oneness.

Tayammum – to perform ablution without water.

Tazahum – table of priorities.

Tazkyah – purification.

Thaqalain – the Qur'an and the progeny of the Prophet (S)

Ummah – the Muslim nation.

Umrah – minor pilgrimage.

Ut properly oud, – a musical instrument used by Arabs.

Waliy– guardian.

Waqf – charity or endowment.

Wila (see Wilayah)

Wilayah – authority, assistance, love, guardianship.

Wudu – 'ablution in preparation for prayer.

Yabya (a.s.) – John.

Yakub (a.s.)– Jacob.

Yunus (a.s.) – Jonah.

Yusuf (a.s.) – Joseph.

Zakah (pl. *zakat*) an Islamic religious annual welfare tax due on specific commodities.

Zakaria (a.s.) – Zacharias.

Zina – adultery.

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