



Muslim World League

The Global Center for
Introducing The Messenger

Mercy for The Worlds Series



The Universal Mercy of the Prophet Muhammad's Mission

(may the salutations of Allah's praise, prayers,
peace and blessings be upon him and his family
and those who faithfully follow after them)



Allah the Almighty and Exalted Lord of
the Universe said in the Majestic Qur'an :

(وما أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ)

"And We have not sent you except
as a mercy for the worlds"

(Noble Qur'an | 21:107)

Preparation and Presentation by

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(may the salutations of Allah's praise, prayers, peace and blessings be upon him and his family and those who faithfully follow after them)

Allah the Almighty and Exalted Lord of the Universe said in the Majestic Qur'an:

“And We have not sent you except as a mercy for the universe”

The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“... وإنما بعثت رحمة”

“... and verily I was only sent as a mercy.”

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Abu Salman Deya ud-Deen Eberle

جمع وتقديم
أبو سلمان ضياء الدين ابرلي

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الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على رسوله المصطفى الأمين وآله وصحبه ومن
اتبعهم بإحسان إلى يوم الدين

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent in Mercy, the Most
Merciful

All praise is for Allah the Exalted and may the peace and blessings
of Allah be upon His Messenger Muhammad and his family and
companions and all those who follow them
(and their way) until the Day of Resurrection

Introduction

The Prophet Muhammad was sent by Allah as a mercy for all the
worlds, and this is one of the many reasons for which Muslims
invoke the salutation upon him with the words “may the
salutations, praises, prayers, peace and blessings of Allah be upon
him” or as we say in the Arabic language, (),
SALL ALLAHU ALAIHI WA SALLAM (often shortened to:
peace and blessings be upon him)

The scriptural basis for the belief that the Prophet Muhammad was
sent as a mercy, peace and blessings be upon him, is in the revealed
Book of Allah, the Holy Qur'an, when the Almighty and Exalted
said in Surat al-Anbiya`a (Chapter of the Prophets: 21):

“And We have written in the Psalms after the remembrance that the land is inherited by My righteous servants. * Verily in this (Quran) is a notification for a people that worship (Allah). And We have not sent you except as a mercy to the universe. * Say ‘Indeed it is revealed to me that your god is only one God, so will you be Muslims in submission to Him?’* But if they turn away then say, ‘I have announced to all equally, and I do not know whether what you are promised is near or far away. * Indeed, He knows what is openly declared and He knows what you conceal. * I do not know but perhaps this a trial for you, and a mere (respite of) enjoyment for a time.’ * He (the Prophet) said, O My Lord judge in truth, and our Lord is the Most Beneficent in Mercy, and He is the One whose aid is sought against that which you describe (in blasphemy).”

The crucial verse for our subject is the saying of Allah, ‘And We have not sent you except as a mercy to the universe.’ This qualifies the entire mission as a mercy intended to all people. The context is also important since this declaration came to us in the general context of calling to Islam, to wholehearted submission to Allah, to pure monotheism, and to righteous acts of sincere worship before the coming of the promised Day of Resurrection. Thus we have three aspects of this mercy: the sender of mercy, the messenger of mercy, and the message of mercy. The mercy can only be fully activated by our full acceptance of the God of Mercy and his Prophet of Mercy, and by our being truly merciful to others and to ourselves by following the teachings of the message of mercy.

This book before you will explain the concept of mercy, that Allah is the Most Merciful in the general sense and in the special sense,

that mercy permeates the teachings and message of Islam, and that mercy is the dominant characteristic of the Prophet's personality and his mission as the Messenger of Allah to the various worlds of the universe. This thread of inquiry will carry us through our entire investigation. We will direct the line of search and present our understanding and our elucidation, but will let the presentation of many clear scriptures of revelation in Islam from the Qur'an and the Sunnah speak directly to prove these points with minimal explanation, by the will and aid of Allah Almighty.

Before we initiate this journey we must give some terminology and the authenticated sources of reliable knowledge about Islam in a preliminary manner to keep the investigation on proper course since misconceptions are often derived from misconceptions about definitions and misinformation from unreliable sources.

The author,
(a humble slave who continually seeks the mercy of his Lord,
Allah, the Most Great and Majestic)

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Importance of basic terminology and authentication of sources

Without verification of terminology and rigorous crosschecking of source information, a researcher always confronts the possibility of falling into grave misconceptions. Faulty information leads to false premises and consequent wrong inferences, and subsequently the entire edifice will fall because it is based on weak structures that do not stand up to scrutiny. It is necessary therefore to mention here some of the most basic terminologies for any discussion about Islamic concepts and the authentic sources of knowledge in Islam. In the polemical atmosphere of today's confrontational mood and manners between Muslims and those of other faiths and ideologies, we do not wish to add to the preconceived misunderstandings by additional misconceptions, rather correct them by presenting what is the best and most authentic.

Allah, The One God, (الله)

The very first term we must discuss for the reader is the word for the Majestic and Exalted God, "Allah." Unfortunately there are some antagonists that wish to propagate that this word means other than the One God of the Prophets, as if the word refers to some idol or moon god.¹ In Arabic the generic word for deity and god is "ilah" (إله) with the dual as Ilahain (إلهين) and the plural as Aalihah (إلهات). The word Ilah in Arabic means "that which is worshiped" whether rightfully or in folly, thus meaning respectively the One True God, or god as in false gods. In the plural of Arabic Aalihah (إلهات) is always for the false gods and idols. To give some examples of usage we can say, for instance for the One True God, in

¹ This outrageous claim is prevalent nowadays on the internet especially among Christian evangelicals who wish to malign Islam falsely. One African friend informed me that as a child the Christian missionaries in his land of Zimbabwe (called Rhodesia at the time) told him that Muslims worship the moon and that is why the crescent is a symbol of Islam on flags and so forth.

constructions with pronouns like my God “Ilahi,” and your God “Ilahukum,” and with proper nouns like the God of Abraham “Ilahi Ibraheem.” In the following verse we find “God of your fathers” as Ilaha aba`ika and “One God” as “Ilahan Wahidan” (

ل)

“Were you witnesses when death approached Jacob and he said to his sons, ‘What will you worship after me?’ They said, ‘We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, one God. And we are Muslims (in submission) to Him.’ [2:133]

Allah relates the amazement of the Arab polytheists at the claim of monotheism by the Messenger Muhammad, and what they said to him:

“And they are amazed that there has come to one to warn from among themselves, and the disbelievers say, ‘This is a sorcerer, a liar.’ * Has he made the gods one God? Indeed, this is an incredible thing.”[38: 4-5]

The word “Allah” is the proper name of The One God. Literally it is made up of the letters “al” which is the definite article “the,” and “ilah” the word for god or God (according to context as above). Thus the word “Allah” is “al-ilah” and literally “The God,” as in the Arabic phonetic construction (+ =). Of course the meaning is the One and Only God and the One Lord and Creator and Sovereign of the creation.

In the other Semitic languages the word for God is closely related to what we have mentioned about Arabic. The Aramaic word for God is “alah.” In Hebrew the word for God or god is (אל) (el) and “Elah,” (or Eloh) and the plural form is (אלוהים) (elohím). In Semitic languages there is a plural of number, and a plural of majesty and royalty to show honor and respect. The root is “alef-lamed-heh” and is related to the older root, “el” which means God, deity, power, strength, etc. The word “el” in Hebrew is attached as suffix to many names like Gabriel, (Strong God), Ishmael (the one who hears God), and Israel (the one who wrestles with God, or one who struggles with God). It may be a prefix in names like in Elihu (My God is He), Elisha (God is Salvation), and Eleazar (God has helped), etc. El is mentioned in the New Testament when Jesus, peace be upon him and may he be cleansed of all falsehoods attributed to him, cried out as in the Gospel: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” [Matthew 27:46] ¹

YHWH is a tetragrammaton (four vowels for four words), which in Hebrew uses the letters י (yodh) ה (heh) ו (vav) ה (heh) or יהוה (reading right to left = YHVH, or with the Biblical Hebrew pronunciation, YHWH) called Yahweh (and written and read from right to left as in other Semitic languages Arabic and Aramaic). This unique word is a specific way used by the Jews of expressing the sacred personal name of God without writing or uttering the actual word which may debase it by too frequent or improper usage, in fear being a form of blasphemy, for as it is written, “⁷Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD (YHWH) thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” KJV: Exodus 20:7] The meaning of the word is according to some scholars in the third person “He Is” or “He Exists” (the first

¹ See “alef-lamed-heh” (ALH) in the “Milon Ben-Y'hudaah, Ivri-Angli” (Ben Yehuda's Hebrew-English Dictionary), and various reputable online dictionary and encyclopedias

person would be “I Am”) and said to mean “He who causes to be” and describes the being who is the self-existing one giving others existence. To avoid mentioning YHWH in respect they substituted saying Adonai or Adonay translated as “the Lord.” Some Christian scholars introduced the name Jehovah for YHWH.

In a very important passage we find: ¹“And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I *am* the LORD: ³And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them.... ¹³And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them? ¹⁴And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. ¹⁵And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this *is* my name for ever, and this *is* my memorial unto all generations. [KJV: Exodus 6:2-3,13-15]

This passage is reminiscent of the Qur'anic passages that mention Allah's Names “al-Hayy al-Qayyum” () The Ever-Living, and the Self Existing who gives others their existence. Another of the Sacred Names of Allah is “as-Samad” () which has many meanings including the Absolute, the Eternal, the Eternally Existent who gives others existence, the one to whom all seek and all supplicate and upon whom all depend. These names indicate by their inherent comprehensive meaning and absoluteness all the other Names and Attributes of Allah the Exalted, and they are

¹ See “alef-lamed-heh” (ALH) in the “Milon Ben-Y'hudaah, Ivri-Angli” (Ben Yehuda's Hebrew-English Dictionary), and various reputable online dictionary and encyclopedias.

mentioned as the “Greatest Name” () for Allah in some verified narrations.¹

Of course Allah has many Beautiful Names and Exalted Attributes, for as He says:

“And to Allah belong the Best (Most Beautiful) Names, so supplicate Him by them. And leave those who deviate concerning His Names (by blasphemy or denial). They will be recompensed for what they used to do.” (7:180) And Allah the Exalted said:

“Say, ‘Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Beneficent in Mercy (ar-Rahman): whichever you call, to Him belong the Best Names...” (17:110)

Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, known for his vast knowledge in language and the Quran, and an eminent companion of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, defined the word Allah saying:

“Allah is the one of supreme Divinity and of worship incumbent upon the entire creation.”²

English belongs to the family of languages that has been designated as “Indo-European” because the Indian dialects and the European dialects descend from the prehistoric proto-Indo-European language of pastoral Aryans of Central Asia about 4500 B.C. Concerning the word -G O D- the Catholic Encyclopedia mentions that the English word god and God is the “(Anglo-Saxon *God*;

¹ In narrations reported in the Sunan literature and verified by Sheikh al-Albani as in his Sahih al-Jame'as-Sagheer # 979, 980, 982, and as-Silsalah as-Sahihah # 746 and other books, and Sheikh al-Arna'ut in his verification of Musnad Ahmad # 12226 and Hussein Asad in his verification of Sunan ad-Darami #3389.

² Reported by Ibn Jareer at-Tabari and Ibn Abi Haatim, and mentioned by many with confirmation.

German *Gott*; akin to Persian *kehoda*; Hindu *kehooda*). The root-meaning of the name (from Gothic root *gheu*; Sanskrit *hub* or *emu*, "to invoke or to sacrifice to") is either "the one invoked" or "the one sacrificed to." ¹ The Oxford English Dictionary gives a detailed etymology and says: "The word God is derived from the old Teutonic form *gudo* which means that which is invoked (or worshipped) by sacrifice ... The ulterior etymology is disputed. ... There are two Aryan roots of the required form ... one meaning 'to invoke' (Skr. *hū*), the other 'to pour, to offer sacrifice' ... Either of these conjectures is fairly plausible, as they both yield a sense practically coincident with the most obvious definition deducible from the actual use of the word, 'an object of worship.'" ² Thus the generic word "god" in English and "ilah" in Arabic both basically denote an object of worship, and God with the capital "G" and Allah are for the One Who is worshipped rightfully since He is the God, the One and only Creator.

It is instructive to note that the Arab Christians say as their Trinitarian creed dictates that their savior Jesus is "Ibn Allah" and this is how their scholars have translated the Bible into Arabic. This literally means the "son of Allah," with Allah being God the "Father" of the trinity. Of course Muslims and Jews consider this statement and the Trinitarian creed erroneous and blasphemy. Even some Christians reject trinity. This is not our line of investigation since the point here is only to show that the word "Allah" means "The God" and not some idol or pagan deity as some have absurdly tried to propagate maliciously. The Arabic translation of Bible uses the name "Allah" to refer to God in Genesis 1:1: "Fee al-badi' khalaqa Allahu as-Samaawaat wa al-Ard..." In the Hebrew the word in Genesis 1:1 is "elohim."

Of course we Muslims along with the Jews and Christians who claim to be monotheists say that all these false gods and idols of the polytheists are mere figments of imagination. All creatures are

¹ http://www.catholicity.com/encyclopedia/g/god,etymology_of_word.html

² Oxford English Universal Dictionary, article on "God."

exactly as Allah created them and thus are not worthy of worship as God. Allah said informing us about the words of the Prophet Yusuf (Josef), son of Yaqub (Jacob), may peace be upon them, to some polytheists:

“You do not worship besides Him (God, Allah) anything except mere names that you have designated, you and your fathers, for which Allah has not sent down any authority. The legislation and rule is only for Allah. He has commanded that you worship no one except Him. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.”

And Allah said addressing the pagan Arabs and their idols:

“They are not anything except mere names that you have named designated, you and your forefathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. They do not follow anything except assumption and what their souls desire, and there has already come to them from their Lord guidance.” (53:23) This verse identifies false assumptions and wicked desires as the basis of all sins and evil actions.

When we translate the creed of Islam, the testimony of faith, which says, LA ILAHA ILL-A-LLAH, (or la ilaaha illallah) we usually translate it as, “There is no god except Allah” or with the more explanatory phrase considering the intended meaning, “there is nothing worthy of worship except Allah.” All monotheists no matter what language they speak say, there is only One God and that all so called gods with a small ‘g’ and other deities don’t exist, and, therefore, all worship rendered to these gods is false and useless idol worship. We find numerous statements in the Bible similar to the creed of Islam, for instance, the saying of Moses, peace be upon him, “The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall

love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy 6:4), and the saying of Jesus peace be upon him, “The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,” (Mark 12:28-30 and Matthew 22:37), and the statement, “There is no God but One.” [1 Corinthians 8:4].

Islam, Submission, (الإسلام)

The second word that needs definition before we proceed is the word Islam,

() since it is in the real sense the religion of all the Prophets of God, and it is not, as many believe, merely the religion invented and initiated by the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The Arabic root "s-l-m" from which the word “Islam” is derived implies peace, safety, salutation, protection, blamelessness, wholesomeness, submission, acceptance, surrender, and salvation. Therefore Islam specifically means being in the state of submission to Allah, worshipping Him alone, and reverently accepting and obeying His Law, and consequently it implies the peace (Salaam), security, and wholesome well-being and salvation which follow upon continually practicing and dying in the state of Islam.

Islam has a general universal meaning, submission to Allah at all times and a more specific meaning, submission to Allah by the revelation and law of the Quran (revealed recitation) and the Sunnah (revealed way) of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him. The universal general Islam is the name of the religion and ‘way of life’ which Allah has revealed and which was practiced by all of the Prophets and Messengers of Allah whom He sent to mankind. The same essential and eternal message was sent saying, O mankind, submit whole-heartedly to the command and law of Allah, the one and only God and your only Creator and Sovereign and Sustainer, and worship Him and Him alone by the manner of the Prophets and Messengers I sent to you. For this

reason, we state that Islam is not a new religion, but is the same divinely revealed Ultimate Truth that Allah has revealed to all Prophets and Messengers of Allah, including Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus and the Messenger Muhammad, peace be upon all of them. Note that this meaning of 'Islam' stands out unique among religions in that it means a state of being, which any human can achieve by choice, and does not refer to any particular person like Christianity, Buddhism or Zoroastrianism, or tribe like Judaism, or group like Hinduism.

Islam in its more specific sense stands for the religion and 'way of life' that the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, peace be upon him, brought for this era of humanity in all the details of the forms of worship and the teachings and laws. It includes revelations of the Quran and Sunnah and the five pillars of Islam upon which Islam was built as in the famous narration on the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, when he said:

:

“Islam is built on five (pillars): the Shahadah (testimony) that LA ILAAHA ILL-ALLAH (there is no god except Allah, or, none has the right to be worshipped except Allah) and that MUHAMMAD RASULALLAH (Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah); to establish Salat (the obligatory prayers); to pay the Zakat (obligatory charity); and to perform the Saum (fast) of Ramadan; and to perform the Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah).”¹

This Islam also encompasses the articles of Iman (faith) and Aqeedah (creed) and all that is in the complete code of Sharee'ah (law) derived from the revealed scripture of the Quran (recitation and book that was revealed to the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, peace be upon him) and the Sunnah (the teachings in word and deed of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, peace be upon him).

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

A Muslim or Muslimah (male or female) is the person in the state of Islam whether completely or with some of his or her imperfections and shortcomings which do not nullify being called a "Muslim" and identifying with Islam. Sins, ignorance, and wrongdoings all weaken someone's Islam and Iman proportionally, whereas the greater Shirk (idolatry) and the greater Kufr (disbelief) and outright Ilhad (blasphemy) nullify and destroy Islam completely.

Islam as the religion of Allah for all men and the entire universe, is in the verse when He the Majestic said:

"Truly the religion before Allah is 'al-Islam.'" [3:19] And He the Almighty and Majestic said:

"And Whoever seeks a religion other than 'al-Islam' it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers." [3:85] And as He said to His Messenger and his followers:

"This day I have perfected your religion for you, and completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you 'al-Islam' as your religion." [5:30] And about the people of the Book, the Jews and Christians, Allah the Most Exalted said:

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"And the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) did not differ until after there came to them clear evidence. And they were not commanded except that they should worship Allah making their religion sincere for Him and worshiping none except Him Alone, and establish regular prayer and give charity and that is the right (straight and best) religion." [98:5] As above, these are of the foremost fundamentals of both the general and the specific Islam.

Islam is the religion of all the prophets and means submission to Allah alone. Whoever submits to Allah alone and worships and obeys him sincerely is a Muslim. Whoever submits to Allah and to others is a polytheist. Whoever refuses to submit to Allah is arrogant. Both the polytheist and arrogant are infidel disbelievers.

The religion of all the prophets in the general sense is one in that they all worship Allah sincerely and in basic creed and faith and universal maxims. Yet there is some diversity in the specific revealed forms of worship and laws since Allah in His Wisdom legislated some things to suit an era and people and then some other things for another era and people, and then finalized His Revelation and Universal Law to man with the message of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

All of the Prophets in the general sense were Muslims and their religion from God was Islam. Allah the Exalted said about Noah, peace be upon him:

“ And if you turn away I have not asked you from you any reward, for my reward is only with Allah, and I am commanded to be of those who are Muslims (submit to Allah).” (10:72) And Allah said about Abraham and those after him, may the peace of Allah be upon them:

“And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House, (they said) ‘Our Lord, accept (this deed) from us. Indeed You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. * Our Lord, and make us Muslims in submission to You, and from our descendants a Muslim nation in submission to You. And (O Lord) show us our ways of worship and accept our repentance. Indeed You are the Acceptor of Repentance, the Most Merciful. * Our Lord, and send among them a Messenger from among themselves who will recite to them Your revealed verses and teach them the Book and the Wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Almighty, the All-Wise.’ * And who would forsake the religion of Abraham except the person who debases himself with stupidity. We chose him in this world and he is indeed among the righteous in the Hereafter, * When his Lord said to him, ‘Submit’ (Islam: “be a Muslim”) he said, ‘I submit entirely to the Lord of the worlds.’ * Abraham instructed his sons with this, and Jacob (also saying), ‘O my sons, indeed Allah has chosen for you this religion (Islam) so do not die except while you are in submission (Muslims).’ * Were you witnesses when death approached Jacob and he said to his sons, ‘What will you worship after me?’ They said, ‘We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, one God. And we are Muslims (in submission) to Him.’ (2: 127-133) And Allah said about Moses:

“And Moses said, ‘O my people, if you have believed in Allah, then rely upon Him, if you are those that submit (Muslims).’ (10:84) And Allah said about Jesus’ disciples:

“And (remember) when I inspired to the disciples, ‘Believe in Me and in My Messenger (here meaning Jesus). They said, We have believed, so bear witness that indeed we submit (are Muslims).’” (5:111) And Allah the Exalted said in a general verse about the prophets and followers:

And strive for Allah with earnest endeavor that is His right. He has chosen you and He has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty: (it is) the religion of your father, Abraham. He (Allah) named you "Muslims" before (in the former scriptures) and in this (revelation of the Qur'an) so that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people. So establish obligatory prayer and give obligatory charity and hold fast to Allah. He is your Ally and Protector, and He is an excellent Protector, and He is an excellent Helper." [Surat-al-Hajj 22:78] And Islam is the religion of all creation as Allah the Almighty said:

"Do they desire other than the religion of Allah they desire while to Him have submitted (Aslam, from Islam) all those within the heavens and earth, willingly or by obligation, and to Him they will be returned?" (3:83) And as some of the jinn ¹ said to the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him,

"And among us are Muslims (in submission to Allah) and among us are some who are the unjust. And whoever has become Muslim, indeed those have sought to find out the right course. But as for the unjust, they will be (fuel like) firewood for Hellfire." (72: 14-15)

¹ Jinn are creatures of Allah just as the angels and the animals are creatures of Allah, yet they have a different constitution and abilities than that of man, as the Prophet said, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

خَلَقَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةَ مِنْ نُورٍ وَ خَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِنْ مَارِجٍ مِنْ نَارٍ وَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ مِنْ طِينٍ وَ صَفَّ لَكُمْ

"The angels were created from light and the jinn created from fire and Adam was created from what has been described to you." Meaning clay. Reported by Imam Muslim and Imam Ahmad and others. There are believers and disbelievers among the jinn just as among men, and like man they have limited free will to choose to obey or disobey Allah.

Deen, Religion ()

This leads us to the necessity of explaining the meaning of the word “religion” since in our day wherein secularism has come to dominate many nations and modern lifestyles, often perceptions about religion and that which is “religious” action are extremely bias or limited. The Arabic word “Deen” (الدين) means religion and way of life and significantly it is derived from the root word which indicates mastery, controlling, obedience and debt. An in-depth study would take us some distance so we will quote from the eminent Dr. Abdullah Darraz who studied this word linguistically in depth and then said:

“In summary we can say from these lingual meanings that the word ad-Deen for the Arabs indicates two parts or parties, one party gives greatness and reverence to the other party and submits to it. If you speak about the description from the angle of first party it is submission and being guided. If you describe the other party it is commandment, control, mastery and rule and obligation. If you look at the relationship and attachment between the two it is a legal constitution that regulates and organizes the relationship or the expression of the relationship. Thus we can say that this meaning revolves around obligation and allowing oneself to be guided. The first usage of ad-Deen is for making obligation to be lead by the guidance, and the second usage is submitting to this obligation to

follow the guidance, and the third usage is the legal ideology which one obligates upon oneself to follow and by which he is guided.”¹

Upon this basis we can say that, for better comprehension, a religion can be classified into three major sectors or sections 1) That which is revered, worshiped and obeyed in his commands; 2) The worshippers who worship and obey the commands; 3) the code of worship and commandments which the worshiped commands and the worshippers obey. In other words:

- (1) Ad-Deen al-Fitri bil-Ibaadah - religion as the natural disposition of man to worship something. He may worship the One true God, or multiple gods or himself, but he must worship something since worship is innate.
- (2) Ad-Deen al-Milli - religion as identification and allegiance to the community and nation. This means affiliation with the community religion and ideology, and consequently, the political organizations as tribe, nation and/or state, protecting the individuals, community, and its religion.
- (3). Ad-Deen ash-Shar'e - religion as legislation of codes of conduct and laws about worships and all other affairs including political, economic and social interactions, punishments for crime, business transactions, marriage, etc. The lawgiver is invariably seen as wise and compassionate.

There are abundant proofs for this classification but I will just mention one that is apparent for its eloquent clarity and brevity, when the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said in his supplication asking Allah:

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“...and I ask You (O Allah) love of You, and love of those that love You, and love of that which brings me closer to Your love...”

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¹ Ad-Deen, p.3. For its importance we provided original Arabic text also.

Love of Allah is the basis of religion in worshipping Him, the Most Glorious and Majestic. The love of those that love Allah is love of the community of worshippers. The love of that which brings one closer to the love of Allah includes all the forms of worship and the laws and teachings which one obeys reverently to please Allah. What a concise summary in a prayer to the Lord of all men, the Most Gracious and Merciful!

In other words, religion consists of the worshiped, the worshippers, and the form of worship. It necessitates also a messenger and propagator who brings and propagates the message and the commands of the worshipped and is the first among the worshippers. A person's religion is answered upon the questions like, whom (or what) do you worship? How do you worship? With whom do you worship?

This is all clear in the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, for God is the worshiped who commands, the One and Only God of all who alone deserves worship and all other false gods are void. The prophets are foremost worshippers of God and the messengers of God, and all false prophets are void. God revealed His books and the prophet gives the explanation in word and deed and these comprise the details on how to worship, and all other false revelations and codes are void. Of course, men are the recipients of the message and are the community of worshipers who follows the example of the messengers who are the leading and foremost worshippers of God. In Islam the sender of the message is Allah the Exalted, the Almighty, the Most Merciful. The Message is Islam. Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, sent by Allah to convey that Message is the Prophet (Nabi) and Messenger (Rasul), who has been sent to all people of the world from his era until the coming of the Day of Judgment.

¹ Reported by at-Tirmidhi and verified as authentic by al-Albani in Sahih at-Tirmidhi # 2582.

Since man cannot live without these three aspects of life, all men have some kind of “religion” even if they deny it. The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was commanded to say to the polytheists and disbelievers:

“Say, ‘O disbelievers, * I do not worship what you worship. * Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. * I will never be a worshipper of what you worshiped. * Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. * For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.’” (109:1-6)

They have their false religions or false worship and idolatry to a false deity, whereas the Prophet and all prophets of God worship the One God and follow the religion of Islam. Allah the Exalted said:

“He has legislated of the religion that which He bequeathed to Noah, and that which We have revealed to you and bequeathed to Abraham and Moses and Jesus, to establish the religion and do not differ into sects about it. What you call them unto is difficult for the polytheists. Allah chooses those whom He will and guides those who return (to Him in repentance).” (42:13)

Al-Bukhari and Muslim report the crucial narration that explains that the fundamental religion of all the prophets is exactly the same, when the Prophet of Allah, may peace and blessing be upon him, said:

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“Of all the people I am the closest to Jesus son of Mary. The Prophets are like brothers, they have different mothers but their religion is one. There is no prophet between him (Jesus) and me ”

Ibadah, Worship (عبادة)

The concept of religious worship is very comprehensive in Islam and gives a Muslim a complete code of meaningful and purposeful living in all affairs. For the modern and secularized many of the acts are considered mundane, but for a Muslim any action done to please Allah according to the Islamic principles is worship, even cleaning oneself, working honestly for livelihood and judging justly. Thus it includes much more than actions that are traditionally associated with religion and worship like prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage. Even charity (Sadaqah) has a much greater scope than what many understand, for voluntary charity are of many types. Abu Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

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“Some of the companions of the Messenger of Allah said: "O Messenger of Allah, the affluent have gone ahead of us with the rewards: they pray as we pray they fast as we fast, and they give away in charity the surplus of their wealth." He said:" Has not Allah made things for you to give away in charity? Every Tasbihah (to say

“Subhan-Allah” – Glory be to Allah, or Allah is free from imperfection) is a charity, every Takbirah (to say “Allahu Akbar” – Allah is Great) is a charity, every Tahmidah (to say “Al-Hamdu-lillahi” – All praise is for Allah) is a charity, and every Tahlilah (to say “LA ILAAHA ILL-ALLAH” – there is no god except Allah) is a charity, to enjoin a good action is a charity, to forbid an evil action is a charity, and in the sexual act of each of you there is a charity.” They said: “O Messenger of Allah, when one of us fulfills his sexual desire, will he have some reward for that?” He said: “Do you not think that were he to act upon it unlawfully, he would be sinning? Likewise, if he has acted upon it lawfully, he will have a reward.”¹

Significantly these recitations of the remembrance of Allah and praises sung to Allah are called “mercy” as the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

“Pronounce often the Tasbeeh and the Tahleel (to say “LA ILAAHA ILL-ALLAH” there is no god except Allah) and the Taqdees (to glorify Allah as Holy) and use your fingers for counting, for they will be asked to speak (on your behalf on the Day of Judgment), and do not be neglectful and forget the mercy.”²

Even stopping oneself from evil action is a kind of “Sadaqah” as explained in the following tradition:

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¹ Reported by Muslim

² Reported by at-Tirmidhi and al-Hakim and declared good by al-Albnai in Sahih al-Jame'e #٤٠٨٧.

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The Prophet said, peace and blessing be upon him: "Every Muslim must give Sadaqah." They said: O Prophet of Allah, and if he doesn't find. He said: He should work and benefit himself and give Sadaqah. They said: And if he doesn't find." He said: Then you help a person in need. They said: And if he doesn't find. He said: then you do good and hold back from doing anything bad and that is your charity."¹

The concept of worship in Islam revolves around the idea that man should be a humble and obedient servant of Allah, the Almighty Master and Owner who is All-Wise, Beneficent and Loving. The word for worship in Arabic is, "Ibaadah," () and very significantly can indicate both the slave-master relationship and the worshiper-God relationship since the root word revolves around humbleness obedience and submission. The word "Abd" () is slave (thus "Abdullah" is the slave of Allah, or the servant of Allah) and the word "Abid" () is a worshiper and adorer. The idea that man is a slave and worshiper is crucial to understand man's role in respect to his Lord and God, and it distinguishes Islam from the misleading expressions used by the Jews and Christians when they made the father-son relationship the major expression of the relationship. In the Torah we find: "Ye are the children of the LORD your God." [Deuteronomy 14:1] And in the story of the escape from Egypt we find: "And thou [Moses] shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first born." [Exodus 4:22] We also find that: "He [Solomon] shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father and he shall be my son." [II Samuel 7:13-14] And also "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to

¹ Reported by Bukhari.

present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.” [Job 1:6] This and many other examples confirm that this expression was common among the Jews. Of course for the Jews this was an idiomatic and metaphorical expression of the love and respect and special bond but they did not mean it literally, but for the writers of the New Testament in Greek the Hebrew and Semitic languages meanings were transformed into a very real but special father son relationship. The New Testament quotes Jesus, peace be upon him, as saying: “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.” [Mathew 5:9] And also: "Jesus saith unto her, ...I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." [John 20:17] Both of these statements can be understood in the Hebrew sense. In the letters also we find: “Those who are led by God’s spirit are God’s sons.” [Romans 8:14] And: "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16). And “.... now are we the sons of God.” [1 John 3:1-2]

This became official Christian doctrine in the First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE when the church elders made it their creed saying: “We believe in one God the Father all powerful, maker of all things both seen and unseen. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten....” And in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 we find the canonical statement saying: “We confess one and the same our Lord Jesus Christ ... the same perfect in Godhead, the same in perfect manhood, truly God and truly man ... acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation - the difference of natures being by no means taken away because of the union, but rather the distinctive character of each nature being preserved, and combining into one person and hypostasis - not divided or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and only begotten God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ.” Of course we

Muslims find these statements about father and son being one and the same self-contradictory, incoherent, absurd, not to mention being extremely blasphemous. Allah rebukes them succinctly:

“The Jews and the Christians say, ‘We are the children of Allah and His beloved.’ Say, ‘Then why does He punish you for your sins?’ Rather (the truth is that) you are human beings from among those He has created. He forgives whom He wills and He punishes whom He wills, and to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, and to Him is the final destination.” (5:18)

And Allah says:

“And the Jews say: ‘Uzair (Ezra) is the son of Allah, and the Christians say the Messiah is the son of Allah. That is their saying with their mouths resembling the saying of those who disbelieved before. Allah’s curse be on them how they are deluded away from the truth!”(9:30) They only copy what many polytheists say about their gods and goddesses having sons and daughters and so forth, and this is the greatest travesty against the way of Adam and Noah and Abraham and those after them worshipping only One God.

In the very next verse Allah explains the reason for going astray in manifest deviancy when He the Almighty says:

“They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah and the Messiah, the son of Mary, yet they were not commanded to worship any except One God LA ILAHA ILLA HUA (there is no god except Him). Exalted is He high above whatever they associate with Him.” (9:31).

Every act of the Muslim the obedient slave and worshipper of Allah can be an act of worship when done with sincerity and conforming to Islamic principles as we will explain further in the note on knowledge and action.

Quran, Recitation (القرآن)

Now we will turn our attention to the meanings of al-Quran () and as-Sunnah (), the revealed scriptures of Islam. The undisputed sources of Islam are the revelations from Allah to His Prophet and Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in the Qur'an and in the authenticated, reliably reported Sunnah. These are absolutely truthful for the many internal and external proofs that prove that we can trust the integrity of their truthfulness. Anyone who speaks about Islam and Islamic principles without reference to these two sources is spreading ignorance and misinforming his or her audience about Islam, regardless of the claims of expertise and study. And yet how prevalent is this phenomenon in our day of electronic media, mass communication, and ideological confrontation.

The word Qur'an (or Quran for expediency in English) means the sacred Book of revelation of Allah the Exalted. The words of each verse (Ayah) and chapter (Surah) are the exact blessed words of Allah the Exalted transmitted by the Archangel Gabriel (Jibreel) to the Prophet and Messenger of Allah to mankind, Muhammad, may the salutations, praises, prayers, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him. Its explanation and exegesis is a special science called Tafseer. The Quran is a unique book in so many ways - its artistic eloquence, its harmonious sounds, its organization, its information, its prophecies, its inspirations, its legal maxims, its soul touching and heart softening spiritual messages, its healings - that I will not be able to mention them in detail here. Nevertheless we cannot help but note that it is untranslatable and immutable, and therefore, our attempts at translation are mere superficial efforts that do not

do justice to the miraculous words and profound meanings of the original. Any westerner who reads the Quran should remember that it is a book to be recited as formal worship with specific frame of mind and heart, etiquettes and mannerisms and contemplated for its many messages to gain benefit. Therefore one must prepare himself for aspects that may confuse the novice. One of the aspects that confound the uninitiated is that the organization and structure of its sentences, passages and chapters is not like other books with neatly arranged information and subject packages and under self contained chapter titles of common material. Rather it may jump from one subject to another for the sake of presenting a thread of an argument or is constructed in a manner that produces multiple meanings under the literal, or the deepest emotional feelings, all of which is not readily apparent to the casual reader.

The Sunnah (السنة)

The word Sunnah () has various meanings depending on the context. Sometimes it has a more general meaning of all that which was brought by Muhammad the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, of his words, deeds, practices and acknowledgements. The study of all available historical material to differentiate between the reliable and authentic as opposed to the unreliable and spurious is called the science of Hadeeth. Sometimes in discussions of Islamic law and jurisprudence the word Sunnah is used to mean the practices of the Prophet that are supererogatory and voluntary and not Rukn (essential pillar) nor Wajib (obligatory) and in this meaning of the word Sunnah becomes similar to other words to note this lesser degree of rewarded action, like Mustahab (beloved and desired), and Nafilah (voluntary, supererogatory).

The science of Prophetic narrations is a comprehensive system of interrelated sciences to determine the reliability and authenticity of various narrations and historical reports referring back to Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

Although the books are numerous, for our purposes, there are six major collections reporting these traditions, collectively called the “six books,” which are as follows:

1. Sahih al-Bukhari (authentic) [sometimes shortened to Imam Bukhari, b.194- d.256 Hijri corresponding to 809-869 CE].
2. Sahih Muslim (authentic) by Imam Muslim b. 204 - d. 261 Hijri corresponding to 819-874 CE.
3. Sunan Abu Da`ud (mixture of authentic, acceptable, and weak traditions) by Imam Abu Da`ud b.202 – d. 275 Hijri corresponding to 817-888 CE.
4. Sunan at-Tirmidhi (mixture) Imam at-Tirmidhi b. 210 – d. 279 Hijri corresponding to 825-892 CE.
5. Sunan an-Nasa`e (mixture) by Imam an-Nasa`e b. 215 – d.303 Hijri corresponding to 830-915 CE.
6. Sunan Ibn-Majah (mixture) by Imam Ibn-Majah b. 209 – d. 273 Hijri corresponding to 824-886 CE.

The first two are called the “Sahihain” the two books of reliable, sound and authentic narrations. If the narration is in both of these two books, it is “agreed upon”, meaning reported by both these two scholars in their respective books of authentic traditions. The four that follow after them are the four “Sunan” (plural of Sunnah), sometimes referred to by saying reported by “the four.” Although they contain many authentic and good traditions, they also may contain narrations that are weak and unreliable, which the collectors themselves are aware of and often note in their commentary about these narrations. Thus any narrations from these books need to be studied to verify and confirm their reliability. Added to these four above, is the book called the Musnad (reports attached to their narrators) by Imam Ahmad (b.164 – d. 241 H corresponding to 780-855 CE), which has numerous authentic traditions and a special status. When the scholars say reported by “the five” they mean the four plus this book. Some other books often referred to in discussions about Sunnah, Hadith, and Fiqh, include the Muwata’a of Imam Malik (b. 93 – d. 179 Hijri corresponding to 711-795 CE, the “Sahih” of Imam Ibn Habban b.270 – d.354 Hijri

corresponding to 883-965 CE., the "Sahih" of Ibn Khuzaimah, the "Sunan" of ad-Darami, the "Mustadrak" of al-Hakim, the "Sunan" al-Darqutni, the "Sunan of al-Baihaqi, the "Ma'ajam" at-Tabarani, and many others, that may be referred to in their respective places.

Historical reports and narrations (sometimes called "traditions") are "Hadith" and are classified as either (1) Sahih (2) Hasan (3) Da'eef, or (4) Maudu'u. The first two categories are acceptable and last two rejected, and the meanings are as follows:

1. Sahih (authentic, sound,)
2. Hasan (good, acceptable)

A narration is classified as Sahih when it conforms to the highest degree of reliability and accuracy in both the Sanad (chain of narrators) and all the "links" in the chain which are the narrators themselves. The narration must meet five criterion for soundness and authenticity and undergo intense scrutiny in these criteria, namely: an unbroken chain of narrators; each narrator in the linked chain must be of the highest degree of integrity and trustworthiness; each narrator in the chain must be of firm remembrance and retention of what he narrates; there are no discrepancies between this narration and other versions that may render it of less historical value; there is no anomaly in the narration. A narration is Hasan (good) when it is determined to be reliable and confirmed as acceptable although it does not reach up to the same epitome of authenticity and accuracy as the Sahih. These two are within the range to be used as acceptable proofs by a Muhaddith (Scholar of Prophetic traditions or "Hadith") or a Faqih (Scholar of Islamic Law and Jurisprudence) in scholarly discussion and Islamic legal research and examination. Two classifications of narrations are rejected and unacceptable. They are:

3. Da'eef (weak, non-acceptable)
4. Maudu'u (fabricated, a lie and a falsehood)

The weak Hadith is problematic and rejected since there is a break or defect in the chain of narrators, and/or one or more of the narrators are untrustworthy either in their exactness, their memory

or their trustworthiness. A fabricated tradition is often proven to be by a narrator or narrators who are extremely untrustworthy and who lie and fabricate narrations and chains of narrators to propagate their lies.

Our purpose in this book is to mention only those narrations that are Sahih or Hasan, meaning that they are generally confirmed or verified as reliable, since to mention the weak or fabricated narrations would amount to trusting upon the untrustworthy, and deriving results from unsubstantiated information. We will mention our sources and some clarifications and other additional information in the footnotes, often referring to Sheikh al-Arna'ut's verification of Musnad Imam Ahmad, and his verification of Ibn Habban, Sheikh Mutsafa Azthami's verification of Ibn Khuzaimah, Sheikh Hussain Saleem Asad's verification of ad-Darami and Abu Ya'la, and especially Sheikh al-Albani's widely circulated verification of the four Sunan and his other books of Hadeeth literature like his verification of Sahih al-Jame'as-Sagheer (sometimes abbreviated to SJ) and his extensive book as-Silsilah as-Sahihah (SS), and verification of Sahih at-Taghreeb wal-Tarheeb (ST) and other books of verification and authentication of the narrations of "Hadith." For some this may seem painstakingly tedious but certification and verification is of supreme importance since as Muhammad ibn Sireen one of the most noteworthy scholars of the Taba'een (followers), may Allah have mercy upon him, said in a famous statement reported by Imam Muslim in his introduction in the chapter about Isnad (chain of narrators) and taking only the narrations that are trustworthy:

"This knowledge is religion so see to from whom you take your religion." And he said as Muslim also reports:

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“They were not accustomed to ask about the Isnad (chain of narrators) but when civil strife took place they then said: “Name for us your men (from which you took this knowledge)”, and then they scrutinized, if they were from the people of Sunnah they took it and if they were of the people of innovation (Bid’ah) they did not take it.”

The eminent early scholar Abdullah ibn Mubarik, may Allah have mercy upon him, also said as Muslim reports:

“The chain of narration (Ishad) is of the Religion (Deen), and if it wasn’t for the Isnad anyone could say (in religion) as they wished.”

The eagerness of many early Muslims to hear reliable first hand information directly about the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, is illustrated by what the ‘Taba’ee (follower) Shu’ba said to the companion Fatimah bint Qais, may Allah be pleased with her:

Amru ibn Sharahil Shubi narrated that he asked about Fatimah bint (daughter of) Qais, the sister of ad-Dahhak ibn Qais, and she was the first amongst the emigrant women: “Tell me a narration you heard from the Messenger of Allah, may peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, and do not link any chain of narrators to anyone else (but narrate the words directly as you heard it by him). She said: If you want, I will. He said: Yes certainly! She said... and then she mentioned her lengthy story... “¹

The essential point is that we must always be vigilant and beware of liars and tricksters or the misinformed and those who pass on

¹ Reported by Muslim no. 2942.

falsehood even if it is done unintentionally, for the narration of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, explains that the Messenger, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

“At the end of times there will be great tricksters and falsifiers. They will bring to you narrations that you nor your fathers have ever heard, so beware of them so that they do not misguide you and tempt you.” ¹

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, warned against attributing lies and falsehood to him, and notified us that whoever did this crime will meet a dreadful punishment, when he said:

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“Whoever intentionally fabricates a lie upon me: then verily let him take his seat in the Hellfire.” ²

Even those who relate the falsehood knowingly without exposing it as falsehood are warned about the punishment, as the Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him:

“Whoever transmits a saying ascribing it to me and he knows that it is a lie, then he is one of the liars.” ³

All of these narrations support the idea that the highest standard for the criterion of truth and that narration of truth must be maintained to keep oneself upon the correct path of knowledge. For reason of maintaining this standard I have not included many narrations that would have supported my contentions because they are unreliable and weak, for instance, a narration that said that

¹ Reported by Muslim 1/12 no.6, 7 and others.

² Reported by al-Bukhari 1/4 , no.108 and Muslim 1/7, no. 2.

³ Reported by Imam Muslim, Ahmad, Ibn Majah and others.

when the angels came to cleanse the chest of Muhammad as a child, peace and blessings be upon him, they removed jealousy and rancor and filled it with kindness and mercy (). This would have been very forceful and useful for our purposes, yet it is a weak narration and is in discrepancy of the authentic narrations that mention that the angels filled his chest with wisdom and faith, (), and therefore, this narration and many unreliable narrations like it were not included in our presentation.¹

Importance of Reference to the Quran and the Sunnah

The Quran and authentic Sunnah are the first two principles and agreed upon fundamental basis of Islamic law, known as Share'ah. The third basis is Ijma'a, the consensus of the scholars of Islam about a particular issue. Qayas is the fourth basis and indicates logical analogy from a root source to an analytical branch. The Quran, Sunnah, Ijma'a, and Qayas, are the fundamental sources of Islamic jurisprudence, the science of understanding and deriving the exact interpretation of the laws from these four bases. The Quran and the Sunnah are the revelation from Allah whereas the Ijma'a and Qayas help us understand the laws derived from the revelation for application in legal rulings and maxims.

A crux Islamic maxim is that if any differences occur in any particular issue about Islam, then this issue must be referred back first to the Quran and Sunnah for an answer and solution, for Allah the Almighty and Majestic said:

¹ The weak narration is reported by Imam Ahmad # 21296 and verified as weak by Shu'ab al-Arna'ut and the reliable narration is reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim and many others.

“O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you, and if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best way and the best in result.” (4:59) And He said:

“And in anything over which you disagree, it's ruling is (referred) to Allah.” (42:10)

When we refer this issue back to Allah and His Prophet, there is no doubt that we will find the answer and solution, and we find that Allah commanded us to follow the Prophet specifically and take from him, as He the Most Majestic said:

“And whatever the Messenger has given you, take it, and whatever he has forbidden you, cease (from taking or doing it).” (59:7)

In the narration of Zaid ibn Arqam, may Allah be pleased with him, the Messenger, peace and blessing be upon him, said in a sermon:

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“Proceeding. O people, I am only a human being who may receive a messenger (the angel of death) from my Lord to whom I must respond. I am leaving among you two monumental things: the first is the Book of Allah, in it there is the right guidance and the light, [It is the strong rope of Allah, whoever holds it receives the guidance and whoever leaves it becomes misguided] hold firmly to

the Book of Allah and adhere to it. He then exhorted us about the Book of Allah and encouraged us about remaining fast to it...”¹

And the Prophet said, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

“I have left two things among you, which if you adhere to, you will not go astray: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet.”²

In the famous narration some of the companions of the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, asked one of the wives of the Prophet about his deeds in private (i.e. his private worships), and when they heard about it, they considered their own deeds to be insignificant. One said, ‘I will not marry women,’ and another said, ‘I will not sleep on a bed,’ and a third one said ‘I will fast and not break fast.’ When this was related to the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, he said:

“What is the matter with some people who say such and such? Because I make prayer and sleep. I fast and break the fast. And I marry women. Whoever is displeased with my Sunnah (way) is not of me.”³

It is also reported that Uthman ibn Ma'thun, may Allah be pleased with him, desired to castrate and seclude himself for the purpose of worship, but the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, forbade him and said:

¹ Reported by Muslim 4/1873, no.2408. This is a long narration, and the second thing to adhere to is the members of his family household wherein he reminded them of their responsibilities to them.

² Reported by Imam Malik, and this is his wording, al-Baihaqi, and al-Hakim, and al-Albani verified it as authentic in Sahih at-Targheeb #40.

³ Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim, an-Nasa'e, Ahmad and others.

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“O Uthman I have not been commanded with to be a celibate monk. Are you displeased with my Sunnah?” He said No! He said: “From my Sunnah is to pray and sleep, to fast and eat, to marry and divorce, and whoever is displeased with my Sunnah is not of me. O Uthman, your family has a right over you, and your self has a right over you.”¹

Since the Sunnah is the detailed explanation of the Quran and its practical application, it is essential to refer to it in any matter to properly understand any particular Islamic principle and law. If a person only relied on the Quran and his personal general understanding of Arabic lingual meanings of the Quran, he would only have a superficial and incomplete understanding and would go astray in many matters of creed and law. For this reason it is incumbent on any seeker of truth to ask the true scholars, for Allah the Exalted said:

“And We sent not before you (as Our Messengers) except men whom We inspired, (with revelation), So ask those who know if you do not know.” (16:43) Those who know literally means those who remember, meaning those who study and retain the texts of the Scriptures of the Quran and the Sunnah, and consequently know their correct meanings and interpretations and the verdicts of jurisprudence derived from them.

The Almighty and Majestic also said:

¹ Reported by ad-Darami, and see Sheikh al-Albani's Silsalah as-Sahihah # 394.

“Nay, but it (the Quran) is a clear revelation in the hearts of those who are endowed with knowledge, and none deny Our revelations save the wrongdoers (and unjust).” 29:49

And the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

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“Knowledge is only by learning, and patience in clemency is only by exerting oneself to be patient in clemency, and whoever strives earnestly to find the good, will be given it, and whoever strives earnestly to avoid evil, will be protected from it.” And in another similar narration:

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“O people, verily knowledge is only by learning, and (having) religious understanding is only by learning jurisprudence, and if Allah wants good from a person He will make him gain religious understanding (of jurisprudence), and

“Those who have the fear of Allah, from among His slaves, are only those who have knowledge.” [35/28] Or possibly translated as: “Only the knowledgeable fear Allah from among His slaves.” ¹

Both the Quran and the authenticated Sunnah are revelation from Allah

“Your companion (Muhammad) has not strayed, nor has he erred,
* Nor does he speak from mere desire. * It is not but a revelation

¹ Reported by al-Khateeb al-Baghdadi and declared good by al-Albani in his Silsalah as-Sahihah # ٣٣٢ and see also his Sahih at-Targheeb

revealed, * Taught to him by one mighty in strength (the arch-angel Gabriel sent by Allah).” (53-2-6)

The Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, explained that his Sunnah is similar to the revelation like the Quran when he said:

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“Verily I have been given the Qur`an and that which is similar to it along with it. Verily it may be that a man will be full and resting on his side and say: This Qur`an is for you what you find in it lawful take as lawful and what you find in it unlawful take as unlawful. What the Messenger makes unlawful is like what Allah makes unlawful...” And then he mentioned some specific prohibitions that are not mentioned in the Quran.¹

The issue of the Sunnah being the necessary explanation of the Quran, and the fact that if it is neglected, one will most definitely stray from the correct pathway, will be elucidated here further by the oft misunderstood issue of intercession. The companion Imran ibn al-Husayyin, may Allah be pleased with him, replied when a man said: Oh Aba Najeed (Imran), You relate to us narrations and we do not find its source and origins in the Quran.” At this Imran got angry and said to the man: “Did you read the Quran? He said yes. He said: ‘Do you find that the sunset prayer is three bows (Raka’at), and that the night prayer is four, the dawn prayer is two, and the midday and afternoon prayer are four? He said: No. He said: ‘From where did you get this affair? Didn’t you take this from us? And we took it from the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him. And did you find (in the Quran) that for every forty

¹ Reported by Ahmad # 17213 and Abu Da`ud, and verified by al-Arna`ut and al-Albani in his verification of Mishkat # 163.

Dinars you should (pay in Zakat) one Dinar? And did you find that for so many sheep and camels you should pay such and such? Did you find that in the Quran?' The man said: No. He said: "From where did you get this affair? We took it from the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him. Did you find in the Quran "...And circumambulate the Ancient House (the Ka'ba in Mecca" (Surat-al-Hajj 29], and did you find that you should go around (the Ka'ba) seven times, and then pray two bowings at the station of Abraham? Did you find that in the Quran? And on whom did you take this? Didn't you take it from us, and we took it from the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him? He said: 'Yes certainly (we did)! '....And did you hear that Allah said to people about the Quran;

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((“About the criminal evildoers (it will say to them): ‘What has caused you to enter Hell?’ They will say: ‘We were not of those who used to offer their prayers; nor we used to feed the poor; and we used to talk falsehood with vain talkers; and we used to belie the Day of Recompense. Until there came to us (the death) that is certain.’ So no intercession of intercessors will be of any use to them.”) [74:42-48] Habeeb said: ‘I heard Imran, may Allah be pleased with him, say: “The intercession is beneficial for everything except for what you hear here (in these verses).”’¹ The companion Imran, may Allah be pleased with him, clarifies here that the Quran cannot be understood or its commands practiced correctly without the explanation and example of the Messenger, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him. Since only the

¹ Reported by Abu Da'ud and al-Marwazi in "Tatheem Qadr-as-Salat" [The Aggrandizement of the Status of Prayer, p.1007 no. 1081 gives another, longer version on Habeeb ibn Abi al Malak. This is also reported by Tabarani, and al-Ajuri in his Saharee'ah, and by the combination of its many pathways, it is a good narration.

companions can report the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet, his words and actions, to those who come afterwards, it is essential for us to receive knowledge from them, and so on in the generations of followers afterwards. The Quran gives general commands but it is the Sunnah that crucially fills in the details and the exact meanings of the commands and shows us how the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, executed them in actual practice. All the “Fiqh” (proper understanding and jurisprudence) is only the intelligent and correct extraction of laws and principles from the combinations of the scriptures of the Quran and Sunnah, to derive from them the correct rules and regulations of Islamic law and jurisprudence.

On the Sahaabah (companions) and Khulafa`a (Caliphs), and others

The Sahaabah (companions of the Prophet) have a special status in that they were chosen for companionship and they personally knew and interacted and communicated with the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Thus their sayings and actions have two possibilities: sometimes their words are derived from him and not their own opinions but those from revelation from Allah's Messenger; sometimes their sayings constitute their own opinions and constitute their legal viewpoints on various issues. On both accounts they are rich source of authentic information about the rulings of Islam. Their great knowledge, noble characters, and exemplary manner of following Islam, all is an inspiration for those generations of Muslims after them. The saying of the Sahaabah and then the Taba'een (followers after them) and then the following generations of Ulama`a (scholars) and Fuqaha`a (jurist and scholars of jurisprudence) are not sources of law in and of themselves, but may help explain and elucidate the teachings and laws.

Allah Most Exalted said:

‘And the forerunners to embrace Islam of the Emigrants and the Helpers, and also those who followed them in good faith. Allah is well pleased with them, as they are well pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens (in Paradise) under which rivers flow to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success.’ (9:100)

And He Most Exalted said:

“Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they gave their pledge to you (O Muhammad) under the tree, He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down calmness and tranquility upon them, and He rewarded them with a near victory.” (48:18)

The companion Ibn Mas’ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

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“Allah did not send a Prophet to a nation (Ummah) before me except that there were disciples and companions from among his people who followed his ways (Sunnah) and obeyed his commands. Then there came (some) successors after them who said what they did not practice and practiced that which they were not commanded. So he who strives and fights against them with his hand is a believer and he who strives and fights against them with his tongue is a believer and he who strives and fights against them

with his heart is a believer, and beyond that there is no faith even to the extent of a mustard seed.”¹

The rightly guided Khulafa (Caliphs, leaders and followers of the Prophet) have a singular status since we are commanded to follow and obey them specifically, as in the famous narration of Irbaad ibn Sariyah, may Allah be pleased with him, when he said that the Messenger, peace and blessing be upon him, gave an eloquent sermon by which our hearts fluttered and tears flowed from our eyes, so we said to him, ‘O Messenger of Allah as if this is the final sermon so give us a final instruction.’ He said, peace and blessing be upon him:

“I instruct you to fear Allah, and hear and obey even if an Ethiopian slave becomes your leader, for indeed whoever among you lives will see much disagreement so adhere to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly guided, correctly directed Caliphs, adhering to it with the firm bite of your molar teeth, and beware of the invented things since every Bid’ah (innovation) is misguidance.”

² And in another narration he said as al-Urbad ibn Sariyah reported:

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¹ Reported by Muslim 1/70, no 50.

² Reported by Abu Da’ud, 4/201, no. 4707, at-Tirmidhi 5/44, no.2676 who said it is a good hadith, Ibn Majah1/15-16, no. 42- 4 and Ahmad 4/46-47, and verified as authentic by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame’as-Sagheer # 7819.

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"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessing be upon him, gave us an admonition which caused the eyes to shed tears and the hearts to tremble in fear, so we said, 'O Messenger of Allah, as if this is a farewell sermon, so with what do you counsel us?' He said: 'I have left you upon clear proof: its night is like its day, no one deviates from it except one who is destroyed. Whoever lives long from among you will see great controversy. So adhere to what you know from my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly-guided Caliphs and cling to that with your molar teeth, and adhere to obedience even if it is to (obey) an Abyssinian slave. Since verily the believer is like a submissive camel: wherever it is led, it follows.'" ¹

The Ulama`a (men of knowledge, scholars) in Islam have a special status, and of course the Caliphs and many of the Sahaabah were in the highest ranks of scholars, for the Prophet, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said about their legacy:

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"He who treads a path in search of knowledge, Allah will direct him to tread a path from the paths of Paradise, and the angels would welcome the seekers of knowledge. And all that is found in the heavens and the earth, even the fish in the depths of the water seek forgiveness for the scholar. The superiority of the scholar over

¹ Reported by Ahmad, Ibn Majah, al-Hakim and verified by al-Albani in as-Silsalah as-Sahihah # 937, and as-Sahih al-Jame'e # 4369.

the worshipper is like that of the full moon at night over the rest of the stars. Verily the scholars are heirs of the Prophets who leave behind neither Dinar nor Dirham, they only leave knowledge as their heritage (legacy and inheritance), so whoever acquires it has acquired a huge fortune.”¹

Seeking knowledge is always incumbent upon all Muslims for their entire lives as he said, peace and blessing be upon him:

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“Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim (i.e. both male and female).”²

And he also said, peace and blessing be upon him:

“Verily Allah, the angels, the ants and even the fish in the sea give salutations to the person who teaches the people goodness.”³

And Amr ibn al-‘Aas, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

“Allah does not take away the knowledge by taking it away from the people. He takes the religiously learned men in death and by this takes the knowledge that is with them, until there remains as the leaders of the people ignorant ones who, when consulted, give

¹ Reported by Abu Da’ood, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and others and verified by al-Albani in his confirmation of Mishkat #218.

² Reported by Ibn Majah and al-Baihaqi and verified by al-Albani in his Sahih-al-Jami # 6297.

³ Reported by at-Tabarani and Deya al-Maqdasi, and verified as authentic by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame’e as-Sagheer #1838, and see #5883. At-Tirmidhi reported similarly.

verdicts without knowledge, going astray themselves and leading the people astray.”¹

We know that the general way of the Caliphs, companions and righteous believers after them is correct, for Allah praises them, saying:

“And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers, We will give him accordingly and burn him in Hellfire, and it is an evil destination.” (٤: 115)

This leads us by necessity to another vital subject before we initiate the investigation of mercy.

Note on Knowledge and Action

The basis of all life revolves around knowledge and action. By instinctual and innate inclination and yearning, all living beings from birth seek the truth about the reality around them, and then affirm it one way or another and act towards that which benefits and brings pleasure and happiness. This is the positive impulsion for action and for love. The natural corollary to protect themselves is to negate falsehood and abstain, repel and hate that which is harmful and brings misery and pain. This affirmation and negation, symbolized by plus and minus, is the basic binary code of all life. They are the positive and negative impulses and charges of all knowledge and action: receiving perceptions and then reacting to various stimuli seeking to attain pleasure and avoid pain. As the highest form of life on earth, man by instinctual desire will search with his faculties to find the truth, the beneficial and what pleases him. Love instinctually is for the truth and the beneficial, whereas

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari 8/187, #7307, and Muslim, 4/2058, #3673.

hatred is instinctually for the falsehood and harmful, unless of course, he is corrupted by compound ignorance, and false and destructive desires. Thus correct knowledge and voluntary action is necessary to receive the truth and then to act accordingly to the desired beneficial goal. Ignorance, misinformation, and false and destructive desires only lead to misery and pain. The existence around us has material and spiritual realities, which can only be understood through attaining the knowledge about these realities, and then either to accept or reject them.

Knowledge is naturally developed stage by stage, as Allah the Exalted said:

“Allah brings you forth from the wombs of your mothers knowing nothing, and gives you hearing and sight and hearts that you might give thanks.” (16:78)

Knowledge has four degrees or levels as mentioned by the scholars. The beginning of knowledge is doubt (Shakk) since one is still ascertaining the truth or falsehood of something and is yet undecided until receiving the decisive evidences. Then it becomes a bit stronger as a conjecture and idea (Thann) which one takes to be correct even though it remains under scrutiny if new evidence appears (and accordingly, the assumption is divided into the overwhelmingly stronger assumption and the weaker assumption – respectively the Thann ar-Rajih or called Ghalabat ath-Thann and the Thann al- Marjuh). It then becomes firm knowledge (Ilm), meaning the recognition of a truth and a fact of reality. The highest degree of knowledge is an exact and unwavering certitude (Yaqeen). We find these four degrees all in one verse of the Qur'an, wherein Allah tells us what the Jews said about Messiah Jesus, peace be upon him:

“That they said (boastfully), ‘We killed Jesus Christ the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah’ but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but it was made to appear to them so. Those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but they only follow conjecture, for of a surety they killed him not.” (4:157).

Sometimes these terms are used loosely and interchangeably in their wider linguistic meanings like when the Prophet, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, mentioned about the story of Abraham, peace be upon him, referring to the verse:

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"We are more liable to be in doubt than Ibrahim (Abraham) when he said, "My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead." Allah said, 'Don't you believe' Ibrahim said, "Yes (I believe), but (I ask) in order to be stronger in faith."”¹ This is the story when Abraham asked to see how Allah resurrects the dead back to life, and as the scholars explain, the Prophet's statement means here, ‘we are more liable to seek to attain to certainty’ and it is not a doubt of Allah’s Omnipotence and ability to bring back to life. Abraham wanted to gain more knowledge and a higher degree, as the Messenger of Allah peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

“The (one who hears) news and information, is not like the one who sees (the actual reality for himself).”²

The Prophet himself, peace and blessings be upon him, only knew what he knew about the matters of the unseen and the hereafter by revelation from Allah as he was taught in incremental stages. If he

¹ Reported by Bukhari and Muslim.

² Reported by Ahmad, and verified by al-Arna`ut and al-Albani in SJ #٥٣٧٣.

did not know, he was commanded to say 'I do not know.' It is said proverbially that to say, "I don't know" is one half of knowledge since one may know that he knows, or know that he does not know, and even that is knowledge. The truly ignorant are those who do not know that they do not know and compound ignorance is to believe that you know when actually you do not.

For instance, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said

"I do not know whether 'Tuba'a was accursed or not, and I do not know whether Dhul-Qarnain was a prophet or not, and I do not know whether the legal punishments are expiation of the sins or not." ¹ The Prophet's statement, peace and blessing be upon him, means here that he was not sure at that time about these things and expressed this uncertainty. Later he received the revelation and gave further information, for in a narration he said:

"Do not curse Tuba'a, for indeed he accepted Islam." ²

And another narration explains that eventually it became known to him that punishment is expiation, for Ubadah ibn Samit, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him:

¹ Reported by Ibn Asakir verified as good by Sheikh al-Albani in his as-Silsalah as-Sahihah #2217

² Reported by Ahmad # 22931 and at-Tabarani and verified it as authentic verified by al-Arna'ut and by al-Albani in as-Silsalah as-Sahihah #٢٤٢٣.

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"Pledge to me that you will not associate partners with Allah in idolatry, neither steal, nor fornicate or kill your children, and will not bring a fabricated lie from between your hands or legs, and that you will not disobey in any commonly known good thing. And whoever fulfills this among you then his rewards is with Allah; and whoever commits one of these sins and he is punished in the life of this world then it absolves him in his sin, and whoever commits one of these sins and Allah keeps it hidden by covering its exposure in the life of this world, then Allah may, if He wills, punish him (in the hereafter) or if He wills, pardon him. " Ubadah ibn Samit, may Allah be pleased with him, said: We pledged our commitment to this. ¹

The affair of Dhul-Qarnain, whether he was a prophet or not, remains in the realm of that which we do not have definite proof of one way or another. It is an example of a piece of news that is not necessary for us to know about and so if we did receive knowledge, then fine, and if we did not, then this doesn't harm us since it is a lesser affair and detail and it is not concerned with the commands of actual practice which are of the utmost importance.

Man cannot know about the nature of some things except through direct observation and intuition or by being informed by a more knowledgeable authority. Knowledge of the unseen necessitates the revelation of God, the Creator, because the unseen realm is unfathomable to man, beyond his senses and ability to dissect empirically and to test by trial and experiment. He can only know about this realm by revelation and the Word of Allah through the Prophets and Messengers. As Allah says

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others.

“And they ask you about the soul. Say, ‘The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And you have not been given of knowledge except a little.’” (17:85)

Certainty (yaqeen) itself has three degrees as subdivisions, since Allah has mentioned in His Scripture: ilm-al-yaqeen (certainty of knowledge); ain al-yaqeen (certainty of seeing); and haqq-al-yaqeen (certainty of the actual truth and experiencing the reality). The scholars give an example of a traveler in the desert who knows that behind this particular stretch of sand dunes is an oasis with a gushing spring of water. The knowledge of this oasis is the first stage of certainty and is ‘ilm-al-yaqeen.’ When he surpasses the stretch of sand dunes and he sees the oasis and the water he has achieved ‘ain al-yaqeen.’ When he goes to drink and wash and swim in the water he actualizes its truth and reality: this is the ultimate ‘haqq-al-yaqeen.’ Another example is the knowledge of the fire, seeing of the fire, and experiencing its heat and burning in the fire - may Allah the Most Forgiving and Merciful save us from punishment.

Knowledge must be built on solid proofs and evidence, called “Burhan” in Arabic, whether physical and material or intellectual and rational, and not mere whims and unsubstantiated claims, for Allah the Sublime said:

“And they say, ‘None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian.’ These are merely their hopeful desires. Say: ‘Produce your proof if you are truthful.’” (2:111) And Allah the Exalted said:

“Who is it that originates creation and then recreates it (for resurrection), and Who is it that provides for you (sustenance) from

heaven and earth? Is there any god with Allah? Say, 'Bring forth your proofs, if you are truthful.'" (27:64) And Allah the Glorified said:

"Or have they taken other gods for worship besides Him? Say: "Bring your proof! This (the Qur'an) is the Reminder for those with me, and the Reminder for those before me, but most of them know not the Truth, so they turn away." (21: 24)

And yet Allah has made all of the major articles of faith dependent upon faith in the things that are unseen, like belief in Allah and the angels and the revealed books and Day of Resurrection and Judgment and the Paradise and Hellfire, so what are the proofs of these "other worldly" things that cannot be materially seen, heard, and touched in the life of this world? How can we believe in that which we cannot put under physical observation and experimentation? Here man must use his natural intelligence to discern the truth and falsehood of these men who call themselves Prophets of God and bring revelations from Allah. Can these really be from Allah or are they fabrications of wicked liars and tricksters? Here we look what are the evidences. If we live in their times we see their miracles, or hear of them from many reliable sources, but what when we come later and do not witness ourselves.

One example of the Quran guiding to the use of our innate intelligence as a proof may suffice here. By simple reason we may conclude in our belief in Allah, for example, by looking into the proofs in the creation. Allah the Exalted said:

“Or do they say, ‘He has made it up in fabrication?’ But they do not believe. * Then let them produce a statement like it, if they should be truthful. * Or were they created by nothing, or were they the creators (of themselves)? * Or did they create the heavens and the earth? But they are not certain. * Or do they have possession of the (bountiful) depositories (of provisions) of your Lord? And are they the controllers (and distributors of them)? * Or do they have a stairway (leading up into the heaven) by which they listen (to the revelation)? Then let their listener produce a clear authority (proving their truth). * Or does He have daughters while you have sons? * Or do you (O Muhammad) ask payments from them so they are burdened by debt? * Or do they have (knowledge of) the unseen, so that they can write it down? * Or do they intend a strategic plan (against us)? But those who disbelieve, they are the object of a plan (of ours against them). * Or do they have a deity (worthy of worship) other than Allah? Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him.” (at-Tur, 52:)

Look at the intensive succession of arguments posed as a series of questions. Reflect and answer each of these questions honestly and truthfully. If you say that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him fabricated the Quran, then simply produce a similar book, or some verses like it, but can you? If you say that you do not have any creator then were you created without some basic physical matter, or did you create yourselves in all these minute biological details, or did you create the awesome heavens and earth in their expansiveness? Do you not have certainty and a sense about the Creator? Do you provide for yourselves, or does your Lord Creator provide for you? Do you have a pathway to receive special knowledge of the unseen, or some partners who listen for you? What is your proof for us to see of this? Does the Messenger ask you for money for receiving the guidance from Allah so that you are burdened? Do you possess the unseen and can you write its

secrets? Can you oppose Allah in Allah's plan? Is there any god or deity that you can truly say with reason and intelligence is rightfully worthy of worship except Allah the Exalted? Just some few verses of the thousands of Allah's verses and signs, yet with profound questions for man to ponder.

As Jubair ibn Muta'am mentioned from his father, may Allah be pleased with him, when he was still a polytheist and was taken as a captive:

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كان يطير قلبي وقال وذلك أول ما وقر الإيمان في قلبي

"I heard the Messenger of Allah recite in the sunset recital of prayer the chapter of at-Tur (the Mountain) and when he reached this verse 'Or were they created by nothing, or were they the creators (of themselves)? * Or did they create the heavens and the earth? But they are not certain,' my heart was fluttering." And he said: "That was the first time that faith settled into my heart."¹

Certainty about any truth is ultimately a gift from Allah. It is said that ex USA President Ronald Reagan, a committed Christian evangelical believer, used to joke that he would like to have a splendid gourmet meal with an atheist and then say, 'Do you think this was made without a cook?' This is one form of a famous practical argument about God's existence, attuned to American fixation and infatuation for good food. They know intuitively that there cannot be a creation without a Creator.

Belief in the unseen is a test from Allah the All-Wise. Will man affirm or belie the truth of the Prophets and the Books of divine revelation that they bring as a message to man from God, their Creator? The companion Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari # ٤٨٥٤ and # ٤٠٢٣

“Allah has (among His angels) those angels who circulate around and have no other task (to attend to but) to be present at the assemblies of “Dthikr” (Remembrance of Allah). When they find such assemblies of Dthikr they sit in them and some of them surround the others with their wings till the space between them and the sky of this world is fully covered. When they disperse they go upward to the heaven and Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, asks them - although He is best informed about them – saying, where have you come from? They say, We come from Your servants upon the earth who had been glorifying You (saying Subhan-Allah), repeating praises of Your Greatness (saying Allahu-Akbar) and uttering the statement of Your Oneness (Saying LA ILAAHA ILLALLAH) and praising You (Saying al-Hamdu Lillah), and supplicating You. He says: What do they ask of Me? They say: They supplicate You asking Your Paradise. He (God) says: Have

they seen My Paradise? They say: No, our Lord. He says: (What it would be then) if they were to see My Paradise? They (the angels) say: They also seek Your protection and refuge in You. He (the Lord) says: Against what do they seek protection of Me? They (the angels) say: Our Lord, from the Hell-Fire. He (the Lord) says: Have they seen My Fire? They say: No. He (the Lord) says: What it would be if they were to see My Fire? They say: They ask of Your forgiveness. He says: I grant pardon to them, and confer upon them what they ask for, and I grant them protection against which they seek protection. They (the angels) say again: Our Lord, there is one among them, so and so, a simple servant who happened to pass by (that assembly) and sat along with them, but is not of them. He (the Lord) says: I also grant him pardon, for they are a people whose companions sitting with them are not unfortunate.”¹

This narration emphasizes some of the wisdom of keeping the unseen realm hidden from man. Another narration also emphasizes this wisdom in another way as the Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him:

“I see what you do not see, and I hear what you do not hear. The sky creaks (with the heavy weight), and it is right that it creaks since there is not a little handbreadth of space but an angel is prostrating there with his forehead. If you knew what I know you would laugh but a little and cry profusely and you would not be able to take pleasure with women on the beds, rather you would go out to the open places crying loudly (in pain) to Allah.”² Glory be to Allah, Lord of the Hosts.

¹ Reported by Muslim and others.

² Reported by Ahmad, at-Trimidhi, Ibn Majah and al-Hakim, and verified as good by al-Albani in SJ #٢٤٤٩.

Every being and even the masses of matter, pray in praise, glorification and salutation to Allah, their Creator and Lord, all the angels, animals and birds, each according to their unique makeup as Allah said:

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“Glorified, High and Exalted is He from (the great falsehood) that they say! The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein, glorify Him. There is not a thing but glorifies His Praise, but you understand not their glorification. Truly, He is Ever Forbearing, Oft-Forgiving.” (17:42-44)

And Allah the Exalted and Majestic said of the animals:

“Do you not see that it is Allah whom they glorify, whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, and the birds with wings out-spread (in their flight). Each one of them knows indeed his Salat (prayer) and his glorification, and Allah is All-Aware of what they do.” (24:41)

Even the masses of matter praise and glorify Allah, for the Exalted and Majestic said of the inanimate objects of creation:

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“And the thunder glorifies and praises Him, and so do the angels because of His Awe, He sends the thunderbolts, and therewith He strikes whom He wills, yet they dispute about Allah. And He is Mighty in strength and Severe in punishment. For Him (Alone) is the Word of Truth. And those whom they invoke, answer them no

more than one who stretches forth his hand with open palms for water to reach his mouth, but (after spilling out) it reaches him not, and the supplication of the disbelievers is nothing but an error. Unto Allah falls in prostration whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and so do their shadows in the mornings and in the afternoons.” (13:13-15)

And the Exalted said:

“And stars and the trees both prostrate (to Allah).” (55:6) And the Exalted said:

“Do you not see that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and moving living creatures, and many of mankind? And there are many (men) on whom the punishment is justified. And whomsoever Allah disgraces, none can honor him. Verily, Allah does what He wills.” (22:18)

Since our focus will be on mercy we cannot mention here the many authentically recorded physical miracles of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which are clear proofs of his prophet-hood. We will suffice to note that his greatest and everlasting proof is the amazingly eloquent and enlightening revelation of the Quran that he brought from his Lord. This proof remains alive and vibrant and all people can easily access the miracle, for it is there for anyone to read and reflect. This is a book the likes of which no man can produce by himself. A book that guides to every kind of proof, if only the people would read and understand and reflect. To enumerate the many aspects of the miraculous nature of the Quran is not our focus and we will just mention what the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said about the Quran:

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“There was no prophet but that he was given the signs by which the people believed in him, and I have been given revelation which Allah revealed to me, therefore I hope to be the prophet from among them that has the most followers on the day of resurrection.”¹

Allah gave all the Prophets many miracles, evidences and proofs as signs that testify to the truth of their message and to convince the people. These may be physical miracles or intellectual miracles. Indeed the greater of the two is that which is intellectual, for physical miracles occur and witnessed by a few and then the next generations only hear about them. Intellectual miracles can be witnessed by millions even billions and remain living forever, and they are more appropriate for the latter age when man is proud of his scientific and technological achievements which are based upon using intelligence and ingenuity to advantage.

Another important principle to remember is that we humans can only know so much and may not reach to the unseen or details even in these worldly affairs. All our judgments must therefore be based upon the open clear proofs and cannot be based upon some kind of claimed esoteric or hidden knowledge. All scientific advancements need open investigation for confirmation. All judicial verdicts need clear proofs. Allah will judge everyone with absolute knowledge and justice according to their open acts and their inner intentions. We humans cannot know the unseen and can only judge a case by its appearance, surmising some intentions by various actions that are indicators of intent, yet the inner heart is only known to Allah. Even the Prophet who was given divine revelations and prophecies about many matters of the unseen, did

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari #٤٩٨١ and Muslim # ١٥٢ and others.

not know the unseen without revelation, and he, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

" ... "

"...Verily I have not been sent to delve into the hearts of the people, not to rip open their bellies..."¹ This in itself is a legal maxim: that we only know the outward affairs and Allah the Sublime and Omniscient takes care of all the inner affairs, and unseen.

Allah the Most Exalted and Wise said in the Sacred Scripture of the Qur'an:

"And doesn't He know what He created? He is the Perfectly Sublime, the All- Acquainted" (67: 14) And Allah the Magnificent in Glory said:

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"... and nothing is neglected by Your Lord neither the weight of an atom in earth nor in the heaven and nothing smaller than that or larger than that but that it is (recorded) in a clear Book" (10:61)

The crucial point is that in order for us to learn knowledge, we must endeavor, seek and ask openly. There are many examples of this principle and one will suffice here, as one of the companions narrates:

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¹ Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others

“We set out on a journey, and one of us was wounded by a stone on his head. [When he slept] he had a wet dream and asked his companions, ‘Do you see any concession for me to perform tayammum (symbolic wiping with hands with dust on them instead of full ablution of wudu’)?’ They replied: ‘We do not see any concession since you are able to use water.’ Upon that he took bath and then he died. When we came back to Allah’s Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, he was informed of this occurrence. He said: ‘They killed him, may Allah kill them! Why didn’t they ask if they didn’t know? Indeed the only cure for ignorance is to ask. [It would have been enough for him to perform ‘tayammum’ or bandage his wound, wipe over the bandage and bathe the rest of his body.]”¹ The expression used here is one of disapproval and does not mean the actual verbatim words, a common idiomatic manner in the Arabic language.

And in the wise counsel, the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

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“Knowledge is only by learning, and patience is only by exerting oneself to be patient, and whoever strives earnestly to find the good, will be given it, and whoever strives earnestly to avoid evil, will be protected from it.” And in another reliable version of this narration he said:

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“O people, verily knowledge is only by learning, and (having) religious understanding is only by learning jurisprudence, and if Allah wants good from a person He will make him gain religious understanding (of jurisprudence), and ”Those who have the fear of

¹ Reported by Abu Da’ud and others, and confirmed as reliable by Sheikh al-Albani in Sahih-al-Jami no.4362, (except for the addition of what is in the brackets).

Allah, from among His (Allah's) slaves, are only those who have knowledge.” (35:28)¹

We can summarize here that the path of true faith includes seeking and gaining correct knowledge and correct deeds. In other words, it includes correct knowledge, confirmation of the knowledge with certitude and conviction, then loving that truth and following it by acting with sincere intentions according to the revealed law of the Quran and Sunnah. Those that deviate from this path deviate by incorrect knowledge or by incorrect intentions, or both.

Note on Deviancy and Sectarianism

The greatest deviance, the greatest injustice and the worst sin, as mentioned in all of Allah's books, the Torah, Psalms, Gospel, and the Quran is to associate partners with Allah in idolatry and take His name in blasphemy and disbelief. The reason is that idolatry stands in opposition and contradiction to the purpose of creation and the basis of all good in life as Allah our Lord and Creator, the Most Exalted in truth and justice, said:

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“And I have not created man and jinn except to worship Me (Alone). I do not seek any provision from them, nor do I ask that they should feed Me. Verily; Allah is the All-Provider, Owner of Power, the Most Strong. (51:56-58)

Worship of course is not mere rites and rituals, but all good deeds are worship when fulfilling the two conditions mentioned above.

¹ Reported by Al-Khateeb Baghdadi in his Book of History, and confirmed as hasan (good) by Sheikh al-Albani in Silsalah as-Sahaiyah 1/605 no. 332. The second narration is confirmed as good tradition by reference to other traditions by Sheikh al-Albani mentions in Sahih at-Targheeb of al-Muthari.

The purpose of any ultimate victory over those that would stop the worship of Allah and the glorification of His Name, the enemies of Allah and the enemies of the believers is to establish worship and the known goodness as Allah the Most Exalted said:

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“Verily Allah helps and gives victory to those one who help and give victory to Him. Lo! Allah is Strong, Almighty. Those who, if We give them power in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity and enjoin virtue and forbid evil. And with Allah is the sequel of events.” (22: 40-41)

The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, explained the purpose of all our wealth and possession in the words of a divine tradition (Hadith Qudsi), that they are to be used for worship, when he said:

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“Allah the Almighty and Majestic said: ‘I have made wealth to descend for the establishment of prayer and the paying of charity ...’”¹ This explains that our sustenance, and all that we are given of our wealth by Allah, should be utilized to fulfill our purpose in life, which is to worship Him and Him alone by offering prayer and thanks and glorification to Him, our Creator, and to give in charity gifts and assistance from ourselves and our wealth for the benefit of other creatures.

If someone worships Allah but also worships other idols along with Allah, he is a polytheist. Allah the Supreme said explaining that idolatry is the greatest sin and falsehood:

¹ Reported by Imam Ahmad and at-Tabrani, and authenticated by Sheikh al-Albani in JS ١٧٨١

“Allah does not forgive that partners should be set up with him in worship; but He forgives anything else to whom He pleases, and whoever associates partners with Allah has fabricated a great evil.” [4:48] And Allah the Almighty says:

“Truly, whosoever sets up partners with Allah, then Allah has forbidden Paradise for him, and the Fire will be his abode. And for the wrongdoers there are no helpers.” [5:72].

Idolatry is basically the result of ignorance, for Allah says:

“Say, is it other than Allah you order me to worship Oh you ignorant people? And indeed it has been revealed to you as it was to those before you (O Muhammad), that if you join others in worship with Allah in idolatry then surely all your deeds will be in vain, and you will certainly be among the losers.” (39:64-5)

The ignorance of the polytheists is explained in the words of the companion Abdullah ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him:

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Ibn Abbas may Allah be pleased with them, said: “These are the names of the idols that were in the time of Noah and then the Arabs afterwards. As for Wadd, he was idol for the tribe of “Kalb”, located at Doomata-al-Jandal; Suwa’a was for Hudthail; Yaghuth was for Murad at first then for Bani Ghutaif located at Jauf near

Saba'a; Ya'uq was for Hamdan; and Nasr was for Himyar, the children of Dthil-Kila'a. These are the names of some pious persons of the people of Noah. When they died the Satan inspired the people to set up statues of them in their meeting place and call them by their names. They did this but the statues were not worshipped yet. Then when the time lapsed and those people died and the knowledge of the affair was abrogated, they were worshipped."

Fabrication of lies about Allah is of those evils Allah has forbidden at all times:

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"Say: the things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and oppressive injustices (and trespasses against rights); assigning of partners to Allah for which He hath given no authority; and saying things about Allah of which ye have no knowledge." (7:33)

In relation to this verse the scholars explain that Allah has forbidden the above mentioned acts upon all of the communities of faithful of all prophets since Adam, may Allah's peace be upon him. The prohibitions mentioned are graded from the personal sins, to the greater sins or violations against one's self and others, to the greater crimes of aggression and oppression, to associating partners with Allah in idolatry, and then the most severe sin is saying something about Allah of which one has no knowledge. The reason this is the gravest sin is that this kind of ignorance, along with its supreme arrogance, is the basis of all idolatry and all falsehood, from which all the sins emanate along with evil desires.

Even if man does worship and prostrates to Allah sometimes, if at any other times he worships and prostrates to another besides Allah, he has fallen into idolatry and polytheism. If he denies Allah outrightly and refuses to worship Him, he is an atheist or an

arrogant renegade. Arrogance was the sin of Iblees (Lucifer, Satan) as Allah the Almighty and Sublime said:

“And when We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate to Adam’ so they all prostrated except for Iblees (Satan): he refused, was arrogant, and was of the disbelievers.” (2:34) And if man follows him in arrogance he is like him, for as Allah said:

“Only those believe in Our signs and revelations who, when they are reminded of them, fall down prostrate, and glorify the Praises of their Lord, and they are not proud.” [32:15]
And He said:

“And to Allah prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, of creatures and the angels, and they are not arrogant.” (16:49)

This means that they do not refuse to prostrate arrogantly, as Iblees did, for Abu Hurairah narrates that the Prophet said, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

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“If the son of Adam reads as-Sajdah [(Surat of the Quran 32] the Shaitan (Satan) cries and says: ‘Woe to me from Adam, He was ordered to prostrate and prostrated and he gets Paradise, and I was ordered to prostrate and I refused so I get the Hellfire.’”¹

After idolatry, the next greatest kind of sin is innovation in religion since by this one fabricates and makes things up about what Allah likes and dislikes and legislates various forms of worships and laws

¹ Reported by Muslim

from whims and misunderstandings. If a person thinks he is doing good deeds how will he ever realize his mistake and repent? Allah the Exalted said:

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“It is He who has sent down to you the Book within which are verses clear and precise: they are the foundation of the Book; and others are less clear and specific. As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow the less clear ones seeking discord and seeking an interpretation. And no one knows its interpretation except Allah. But those who are firm in knowledge say, We believe in it. All is from our Lord. And no one will be reminded except those of understanding.” (3:7) The Prophet explained this verse, peace and blessings be upon him:

“If you see those who follow the less clear of it then these are the ones about whom Allah has indicated, so beware of them.”¹

And Allah the Glorious and Majestic said:

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“And this is My straight path so follow it and do not follow other ways, for you will be scattered from His way. He has instructed you so that you may become God fearing.” (6: 153) Abdullah ibn Mas’ud may Allah be pleased with him, said, that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him, drew a line with his hand and said: “This is Allah’s Straight Path.” Then he drew many lines to the right and left of that line and said: “And these paths, each one of them has a Satan on it inviting (the people to trod it). Then he recited (the verse): “And verily this is My

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

straight path so follow it and do not follow other ways for you will be scattered from His way.” (6:153) ¹

The straight path is the way of Allah to which He has called the people, and it is the Sunnah of the Prophet, peace be upon him. The other ways are the ways of the people of dissention and deviation who are the innovators and those who deviate into the sectarianism

The companion Auf ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

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“The Jews split into seventy-one sects, one will enter Paradise and seventy will enter Hellfire. The Christians split into seventy-two sects, seventy-one will enter Hellfire and one will enter Paradise. By Him in Whose hand is my soul, my community (Ummah) will split into seventy three sects, one will enter Paradise and seventy-two will enter Hellfire. Someone asked, O Messenger of Allah who are they? He replied: Al-Jamaa’ah (the Unified Group).” And in another version of Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr, may Allah be pleased with him, the wording ends as follows:

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“They asked, ‘Who are they O Messenger of Allah? He replied: Upon what I and my companions are.” ¹

¹ Imam Ahmed, an-Nasa’i, ad-Daarami, Ibn Abi Hatimi, and al-Haakim at-Tayaalasi, Ibn Waddah, Ibn Abi Aasim, Ibn Nasr, Ibn Jareer, Al-Ajuri have all reported these words on Ibn Mas’ud. And see ash-Shaatabi, in his book al-’Itisam 1/76 for an explanation of the importance of this principle.

These sects separate themselves from the unified group of believers and divide the religion according to their innovated notions and invented dogmas. For this reason we are commanded by Allah the Almighty, for our salvation from all deviation, to adhere strictly to Allah's Book and to the Sunnah of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Sunnah of the rightly guided leaders. Allah the Exalted said:

“And hold fast to the Rope of Allah altogether and do not become divided.” (3:103) And He said

“And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers, We will give him accordingly and burn him in Hellfire, and it is an evil destination.” (٤: 115)

This way is the way of the companions and faithful followers. It is appropriate here to mention some of the sayings of the companions and eminent scholars in this regard. For instance the companion and first Caliph Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

“O people I am only a follower and not an innovator, and thus if I do good then assist me and if I go astray, straighten me.”²

The companion and the second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

¹ Reported by Ibn Majah 2/13 no. 3992, and this is his wording, and Abu Da'ud 4/194, no. 4596. Al-Albani verified it as authentic in Sahih ibn Majah 2/364. Another version is of Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi.

² Ibn Sa'ad, at-Tabaqat 3/136.

“Beware of the people of opinion, for they are the enemies of the Sunan (plural of Sunnah). They are too weak and lazy to memorize the narrations (of the Prophet) and thus they speak by their opinions and go astray and lead others astray.”¹

The companion Abdullah bn Mas'ud said, may Allah be pleased with him:

“Follow and do not innovate for (the way) has been made sufficient for you: every innovation is misguidance.”²

The famous Umayyad Caliph considered of the rightly guided leaders Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz, may Allah's mercy be upon him: He wrote to a man saying: “Proceeding: I instruct you to fear Allah and have moderation in the command, and to adhere to the Sunnah of our Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, and to leave all that the people have innovated after his Sunnah has been established.”³

The follower Hasan al-Basri, may Allah's mercy be upon him, said: “The saying is not correct without right action, and the right action is not correct without right intention, and the right intention is not correct without (adherence to) the Sunnah.”⁴

¹ Al-Lalaka'e, Sharh Usool I'tiqaad Ahl-as-Sunnah 1/139, no.201, ad-Daarami 1/47 and Ibn Abdul Birr, Jame' Bayaan-al-'Ilm wa Fadhlilihi 2/1041. no. 2001, 2003, 2005.

² Reported by Ibn Waddah, Ma Ja'a fi Bid'ah p.43, no. 12. 14, and at-Tabarani, Mu'jam al-Kabeer 9/154, no. 8770, and al-Haithami said in Majma'a-az-Zawaa'id 1/181: the people in the chain of narrators are trustworthy. Reported also by al-Lalaka'e, Sharh Usool I'tiqaad Ahl-as-Sunnah 1/91, no.102, and for more on Ibn Mas'ud about innovations see Ibn Waddah, and al-Haithami.

³ Reported by Abu Da'ud, 4/203, no. 4612 and verified by al-Albani in Sahih Abi Da'ud 3/873.

⁴ Reported by al-Lalaka'e, Sharh Usool I'tiqaad Ahl-as-Sunnah 1/63, no.18.

And the eminent Imam in jurisprudence Malik, may Allah's mercy be upon him, said: "Whoever innovates an innovation in Islam and deems it good then he has claimed that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has not conveyed the message because Allah said, () (5:3) 'today I have completed your religion' therefore what was not the religion on that day is not the religion today." ¹

After disbelief and idolatry which is the greatest sin, and innovation in religion which is the next greatest, comes the generality of all sins of anger and passion and greed, like murder, aggression, stealing, cheating, fornicating, adultery, intoxication, slandering, lying etc, and Allah mentioned all of these as hateful to the believer in the comprehensive verse when He said:

"And know that among you is the Messenger of Allah: if he were to obey you in much of the affairs, you would certainly be in difficulty, but Allah has made it believed to you the faith, and has made it pleasing in your hearts, and He has made disbelief, defiance and disobedience hateful to you. Those are the rightly guided." (49:7)

Nature of Mercy

The word for mercy *Rahmah* (), is derived from the Arabic root R H M () and this lingual root word is the most general term of sentimental emotion of compassion and empathy including all forms of compassion, kindness, pardoning, clemency and forgiveness. Its usage is frequent in the Quran and Sunnah and here only some will be mentioned like the Beautiful Names of Allah in the Quran and authentic Sunnah, which give many of the ideas of

¹ See ash-Shaatabi, *al-I'tisam* 1/65.

mercy. Allah is ar-Rahman () the All-Comprehensive in Mercy, Beneficent, Benevolent; ar-Raheem () the Most Merciful; ar-Rafeeq () the Genteel, Companion, Friend; al-Kareem () the Generous, Gracious, Noble; al-'Afuwu () the Pardoner, the Effacer of Sins; al-Ghaffar () the Most Forgiving; al-Ghafur () the All Forgiving; ar-Ra`uuf () the Compassionate, the All Pitying; as-Sitteer () the Coverer (i.e. of faults); al-Haleem () the Forbearing, Relenting, Indulgent; at-Tawwab () the One Who Returns Often to Forgiveness, Ever Returning; al-Wadud () the Loving; as-Sabur () the Most Patient; al-Qareeb () the Close One; al-Majeeb () the Responder, the Answerer (of prayers). Glory be to Allah who is praiseworthy in all His Beautiful Names and Perfect Attributes and under all conditions!

Mercy was the first word that Adam heard from Allah and the first addition that he received from the angels of Allah. When Allah created Adam from mud and clay and the soul was breathed into him the first word he heard was “may Allah have mercy on you,” as it is confirmed in the following narration when the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

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“When the breath of the soul was breathed into Adam it moved and fluttered and went into his head and so he sneezed and said, ‘al-hamdu-lillah’ (all praise is for Allah), so Allah said: May Allah have mercy on you.”¹

¹ Reported by ibn Habban and al-Hakim and verified as authentic by al-Albani in SJ 5216

And Abu Hurairah reported, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah said, peace and blessings be upon him:

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“Allah the Exalted and Glorious created Adam in his own image (Adam's) with his length of sixty cubits and when He created him He said to him: Go over there and greet that group of angels sitting there and listen to the response that they give you, for it will be your greeting and that of your offspring. He then went and said: Peace be upon you! They (the angels) said: May there be peace upon you and the Mercy of Allah, and they made an addition of ‘Mercy of Allah.’ So whoever will enter into Paradise will be on the form of Adam with his length being sixty cubits. After him the people who followed him have continued to diminish in size up till now.”¹

Halleluah, Glory be to Allah! The first words are of mercy, and as we will see, the final words are of soothing mercy to those who are merciful on themselves and others and are of the obedient slaves of Allah.

Of course the ultimate and absolute place of Allah's Perfect Mercy is Paradise, for as Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

¹ This is the version of Imam Muslim of this famous narration reported by many including al-Bukhari.

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“Paradise and the Hellfire quarreled and the Hellfire said, ‘I have only been given the arrogant and the tyrants.’ Paradise said, ‘And what about me, for only the weak, low and the humble people enter me?’ So Allah said to Paradise. ‘You are My Mercy which I bestow on whomever I wish of my slaves.’ Then Allah said to the Hellfire, ‘You are My Punishment by which I punish whomever I wish of my slaves. And each of you will have its fill.’ As for the Hellfire it will not be filled till Allah puts His Foot over it whereupon it will say, enough, enough!’ Only at that time it will be filled, and its different parts will collapse and come closer to each other. Allah does not do any wrong whatsoever to any of His creatures. As for Paradise, Allah will create a new creation and creatures (by which he will fill it).”¹

The arrogant wicked ones and tyrants enter the Hellfire since they deserve it, yet Allah will decrease the size of the hellfire by squeezing it tight together and restricting the number of entrants. Allah’s greater and overwhelming mercy will expand the Paradise to admit droves of the righteous and even the repented sinners and many others by special intercession, and He will keep expanding it on and on to the extent that He will even create new people to fill the vast expanses. The least in Paradise will have the likes of ten earths in delights, and the delights of earth are nothing compared to those of Paradise in the hereafter.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

As for the painful punishment of hellfire, its description has been given to us in numerous traditions which are beyond our scope, and our imagination. Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

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“The fire of yours (you feel on earth) is only one-seventieth of the Fire of Hell. It was said: O messenger of Allah, even ordinary fire would have been enough (to burn the people). Thereupon he said: It is sixty-nine parts in excess of (the heat of) the fire in this world, each of them being equivalent to their heat.”¹

And one drop of the filth of the hellfire would pollute the entire world as it is mentioned in the tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him:

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“If only one drop of “az-Zuqqoom” (a horrible tree of the hellfire) were to drop on the residence of this world all their sustenance for living would be corrupted and polluted, so how about the one who has this as his food?”²

The description of Paradise will be given more in the following pages in the appropriate places and context for it is the final abode of those who have mercy on earth and aspire for mercy in heaven.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² Reported by Ahmad, an-Nisa'e, Ibn Majah and others, and verified by al-Albani JS 5250.

Allah the Most Compassionate and Merciful, sends His Prophet of Mercy, with the Message of Mercy

Allah the Most Merciful in all senses

One of the most prominent Names of Allah, the One God, is ar-Rahman (), meaning the All-Comprehensive in Mercy, the Most Beneficent and Benevolent in Mercy, the universally Compassionate. It is derived from the Arabic root R H M (), from which is derived the Arabic word Rahmah () which means mercy. Another of Allah's Names is ar-Raheem (), meaning Merciful, and when used as a Name for Allah it is usually translated as "The Most Merciful" to distinguish it from the trait of people's mercy. As a descriptive trait people can be "raheem," for example, a mother to her child, one person to another, and even an animal to another animal, but they can never be ar-Rahman for this is exclusively for Allah. The difference between the two Names of Allah is that although both are derived from the same attribute of mercy, Allah ar-Rahman () is the Merciful One to the entire creation as His eternal Attribute of Perfect Mercy, and Allah ar-Raheem () is the Merciful One to those whom He has chosen for His special mercy. Sometimes it is said that Allah ar-Rahman is merciful to all in the life of this world and the Hereafter, believers and even disbelievers, and He is ar-Raheem in the Hereafter only to the believers. Sometimes it is said that ar-Rahman is the name designating the eternal Attribute of Allah's Sacred Self and mercy to all, whereas ar-Raheem is the name designating His Attribute of mercy towards those whom he chooses.¹

¹ See Imam at-Tabari's exegesis in his Tafseer of Surat-al-Fatihah 1/78, and other exegesis of the Quran.

This word ar-Rahman () is only used for Allah and no person can ever correctly be called Rahman because only Allah's mercy can be universal to all the creation. The phrase "in the name of ar-Rahman, ar-Raheem" preludes every chapter (Surah) of the Qur'an because this revelation is from Allah and is the expression of His universal mercy to mankind, and because these are of His two most prominent attributes.

The universal mercy of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, is an extension and expression of the one who sent the messenger, that is, Allah's comprehensive and perfect mercy that encompasses all His creation and all His creatures. Wherever man turns his attention he will see the impressions of Allah's bounty and mercy in His Creation, as Allah the Most Merciful says:

"And if you count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, Allah is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful." (16:18) ¹

And Allah said after giving a powerful description of the rain cloud formation and dispersal of rain:

"So observe the imprints of the mercy of Allah, how He gives life to the earth after its death: indeed, (like) this (He) will give life to the dead, and He is capable over all things." [30:50]

Allah is al-Haqq: the Truth and the Reality. He is al-Adl: The Just. He has given His Promised Word and fulfills His Sacred Promise. Allah states and re-emphasizes that His promise -His sacred word-

¹ This is a good example of the intimacies of translation because the Arabic word Ni'mah (blessing) is singular but since the meaning is plural it must be translated for the readers as plural, and they would not notice the fineness of original expression. Similar subtleties continually present themselves before the translator for his attempt to convey the meanings to the reader. .

will never be broken or altered and is immutable. Allah the Exalted said:

“Say, ‘To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and earth?’ Say, ‘To Allah.’ He has written upon Himself mercy. He will surely assemble you for the Day of Resurrection, about which there is no doubt. Those who will lose themselves do not believe.” [6:12]

The fact that He has “written” mercy on Himself, means that He in His Infinite Comprehensive Mercy has made Mercy the right and obligation on His Blessed Self.

This is explained more in a well-known narration wherein the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

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“Indeed before He created the creation Allah wrote, ‘My mercy overcomes my anger’ and this remains written with Him above the Throne.”¹

The corollary to this is that Allah made cruelty and injustice prohibited on His Divine Self, as in the famous narration wherein the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, informs us of the words of Allah the Majestic:

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¹ Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim and others.

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“Allah the Exalted said: ‘O My servants, I have forbidden oppression (and injustice) for Myself, and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress and be just one to another. O My servants, all of you are astray except for those I have guided, so seek guidance from Me and I shall guide you. O My servants, all of you are hungry except for those I have fed, so seek food from Me and I shall feed you. O My servants, all of you are naked except for those I have clothed, so seek clothing from Me and I shall clothe you. O My servants, you sin by night and by day, and I forgive all sins, so seek forgiveness from Me and I shall forgive you. O My servants, you will not be able to harm Me and you will not be able to benefit Me. O my servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human being of you and the jinn of you, to become as pious as the most pious heart of any one person of you, that would not increase My kingdom in anything. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human being of you and the jinn of you to be as wicked as the most wicked heart of any one person of you, that would not decrease My kingdom in anything. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you, to stand up in one arena and make a request of Me, and I gave everyone what he requested, that would not decrease what I have more than a needle decreases the sea if put into it. O My servants, it is only your own deeds that I account

upon you and then recompense you for, so let the person who finds good, praise Allah, and let the person who finds other than that blame no one except himself.”¹

Allah's mercy encompasses all as He says:

“The (angels) carry the Throne and those around it exalt (Allah) with praise of glorification to their Lord, and believe in Him, and ask forgiveness for those who have believed, (saying), ‘Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who have repented and followed Your way and protect them from the punishment of Hellfire.’ (40:7) And Allah the Almighty and All-Majestic says:

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“...and My Mercy embraces all things. That (Mercy) I shall ordain for those who are the pious and give charity (Zakat) and those who believe in Our proofs.” [7:156]

Any description about this all-encompassing infinite mercy of Allah is an approximation since His mercy is greater than all that we can comprehend about the idea of mercy. Allah's mercy is greater than that innate mercy of the mother for the suckling baby - the paradigm of altruistic human mercy of the most intense and tender kind -for as Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, narrates:

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¹ Reported by Muslim.

“Some captives were brought to the Prophet and a nursing woman among them was exerting herself and she would find an infant child of captives and embrace it and nurse it so the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said to us, “Do you think she would throw her child in the Fire? We said: No, if she was able to not allow that to happen.” He said: “Allah is more merciful to His servants than this (woman) is to her infant child.”¹

The mother's innate mercy and compassion and tenderness for her suckling infant is the most merciful kind of mercy that we humans can understand, and yet this similitude is given to us as just another expression of “Allahu-Akbar (Allah is Greater). The Prophet illuminated us further about the unfathomable expansiveness of Allah's mercy, peace and blessing be upon him, when he said:

“Allah has one hundred kinds of mercy. Out of these He has sent down one kind of mercy upon the jinn and human beings and the animals and insects, and from this one part they love one another, show mercy to one another, and by this one part even the wild beast is affectionate to its young child. And Allah has reserved ninety-nine parts of mercy with which He will be merciful to His servants on the Day of Resurrection.”²

One hundred types, of which we only witness and can understand one type in this life! Glory be to Allah! How perfect and absolutely beautiful is He! High above our imperfections He remains in His absolute Perfection!

Faith in the greatness of Allah in all things and in His mercy is an essential part of faith, and for this reason suicide is not allowed, for

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim

² Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim and many others.

Allah has strictly forbidden anyone to kill oneself in despair and lack of hope in receiving Allah's aid and mercy, as He the Almighty said:

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"...and do not kill yourselves, verily Allah is Most Merciful to you."
[4:29]

Thus Allah has forbidden harming oneself in any manner leading to self-destruction, as Allah the Greatest said:

"And expend in the way of Allah and do not throw yourselves by your own hands to destruction, and do good, for Allah loves those who do good." [2:195]

Suicide is often the ultimate result of prolonged despair and depression, when one thinks of oneself as beyond hope and repair and repentance. Even the beginning of these notions is prohibited in Islam since Allah is the Most Merciful as explained above. Therefore one must never despair of Allah's mercy and relief and aid when in dire need. Allah said mentioning the words of the angels to Abraham, peace be upon him, and his reply:

"They said, 'We have given you good tidings in truth, so do not be of those that despair. He said, 'And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord except for those astray?'" (15:55-56)

Prophet Jacob (Yaqub), peace be upon him, said in his sincere advice to his sons who had been treacherous to Joseph (Yousuf) and Benjamin (Bin Yameen), peace be upon them, mentioning as special kind of soothing mercy of Allah after affliction called "Rauhillah (رَوْحُ اللَّهِ).

“O my sons, go and find out about Joseph and his brother, and do not despair from the relief of Allah (in soothing mercy). Indeed, no one despairs of relief of Allah except the disbelieving people.” (12:87)

And Allah the Almighty said:

“And the ones who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and the meeting with Him, those are they who have despaired of My mercy and for them is a painful punishment.” (29:3)

And Allah the Exalted said:

“Say, ‘O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the Mercy of Allah, for indeed Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, He is the Most-Forgiving, the Most-Merciful.’” (39:53)

In the Prophetic Sunnah this is explained further, narrated by Abdullah ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them, who said that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, was asked about the greatest sins whereupon he said:

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“Associating partners with Allah, and despairing from the soothing mercy and relief of Allah, and hopelessness from the mercy of Allah.”¹

And in the most authentic narrations the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

¹ Reported by Bazzar with good chain of narrators as mentioned by al-al-Albani in SJ #٤٦٠٣ and SS #2051.

“Verily the day Allah created mercy He created it in one hundred parts. He withheld with Himself ninety-nine parts, and had one part descend to all His creatures. If the disbeliever knew about the Mercy which is with Allah he would not lose hope of Paradise, and if the believer knew of all the punishment which is with Allah he would never consider himself safe and secure from the Hellfire.”¹

A believer remains hopeful about Allah at all times and has a good opinion about His greatness, magnanimity and extensive mercy, for the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said three days before he died:

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“Do not die except that you have a good opinion of Allah.”² This means the idea about Allah’s overwhelming mercy. And he said, peace and blessing be upon him:

“Verily Allah says, I am according to the way my servant thinks about me, and I am with him if he calls on Me.” In another narration he said:

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“Allah says: I am as the servant thinks of Me and I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in his self I remember him in My Self and when he mentions Me openly in a group I mention him in a group better than that group.”³

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² Reported by al- Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Da`ud, Ibn Majah and others

³ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

To despair and lose all hope is thinking an evil thought about Allah. Only an evil-minded disbeliever thinks evil thoughts and has a low opinion about Allah's Majesty and Greatness and Glory, and places a restriction on the absoluteness and expansiveness of His Power and Mercy and Bounty. Allah mentioned this trait as a trait of hypocrisy when He said:

“And He will punish the hypocrite men and hypocrite women who continually think about Allah with evil thoughts. On them is an evil turning, and the anger of Allah, and His curse, and he has prepared for them Hellfire and what an evil destination.” (48:6)

We will return to the subject of hope and despair in the final chapter on mercy, repentance and seeking forgiveness.

Revelation as Mercy from Allah

Allah is merciful in His Lordship and Divinity as Creator, Provider and Sustainer, and He is merciful as the One God who sends his material mercy for sustenance like the rain to nourish the plants and let all the living being drink the pure water. He also provides man with the greater spiritual mercy by sending His Books of Guidance with the Prophets and Messengers with the spiritual mercy. Revelation and guidance is from the mercy of Allah. Allah's revelation to mankind in the Torah, Psalms, Gospel and the Qur'an, is called a mercy, an illumination, a down pouring, and a spirit from Allah, since it comes from above to nourish man and guide him to the pathway of the wholesome blessings and mercy of the life of this world and the everlasting greater blessings and mercy of the Hereafter.

This is how it is described in the Book of Allah, the Quran, for Noah, peace be upon him, the first great Messenger of Allah to man, said as Allah informs us:

“He said, “O my people, have you considered that if I am upon clear evidence from my Lord, and that He has given me mercy from Himself, but it has been made imperceptible to you to understand, would we force it upon you while you hated it? * And O my people, I do not ask of you for it any wealth: my reward only from Allah. I am not one to drive away any of those who have believed. Indeed, they will meet their Lord, but I see that you are an ignorant people. * And O my people, who would protect me from Allah if I were to expel them? Will you not be reminded? * And I do not tell you that I have the stores (of bounties) of Allah, nor that I know the unseen, nor do I tell you that I am an angel, nor do I say of those upon whom your eyes look down in contempt that Allah will never grant them any good. Allah is most knowing of what is within their souls. Indeed, I would then be among the oppressive wrongdoers.” (11:28-31)

And Allah said after telling of the story of Moses, peace be upon him:

“And We gave Moses the Scripture, after We had destroyed the former generations, as enlightenment for the people and guidance and mercy that they might be reminded. * And you, (O Muhammad) were not on the western side (of the Mount Sinai) when We revealed to Moses the command, and you were not among the witnesses. * But We produced generations (after Moses) and prolonged their duration. And you were not a resident among the people of Madyan, reciting to them Our verses, but We were senders (of this message). * And you were not at the side of the mount when We called (to Moses) but (you were sent) as a mercy from your Lord to warn a people to whom no warner had come before you, that perhaps they might be reminded.” (28:43-46)

In these verses both the Torah and the Quran are mentioned as a mercy. About the Quran Allah said:

“Ha, Meem. * And the Clear Book, * Indeed, We sent it down during a blessed night (in Ramadan), indeed, We were the Warners (to warn all mankind). Therein every precise matter is made distinct, * Every affair (and command proceeding) from Us. Indeed, We were the Senders (sending the messenger) * As mercy from your Lord for verily He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. * The Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you would be certain. * There is no god except Him; He gives life and causes death: your Lord and the Lord of your first forefathers.” (44:1-8)

The Quran has been described in a manner that makes the believers rejoice in jubilation; that Allah loves them and sent them His moral

instruction as healing, guidance and mercy. Allah the Glorified and Exalted said:

“O mankind, there has to come to you moral instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers. * Say ‘In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy: in that let them joyfully rejoice, for this is better than what they accumulate.’” (10: 57-58)

In a chapter (Surah) of the Quran called ar-Rahman Allah said:

“The Most Beneficent in Mercy, * (who) taught the Qur`an, * (who) created man, * (who) taught him (speech with) eloquence.” (55:1-

By His Name and Attribute as the Most Merciful He blessed man with these mercies and bounties of the Quran, the creation and the faculty of speech.

Does Allah's punishment contradict Mercy?

A natural question arises about Allah's mercy. How can we say that it is universal and perfect when some people are to be dammed to Hellfire and will eventually suffer His eternal anger and punishment?

Allah's mercy encompasses all creation in their beautiful and perfectly balanced construction, generous sustenance and guidance to the way of fulfillment. Yet we must remember that all other creatures worship Allah by nature, and Allah created man and jinn to give Him special worship with their limited free will to choose to worship and be obedient (worship being the comprehensive word for all good deeds), as we mentioned before from the verse of Allah, our Lord and Creator, when He said:

“And I have not created man and jinn except to worship Me (Alone). (51:56)

He created the creation in all its variance to bring forth from it those choice ones whom He will bless with His Special Mercy, and this is the ultimate end and result as Allah the Exalted said:

“So remain straight on a right course as you have been commanded, you and those who have repented with you, and do not transgress the bounds. Indeed, He is All-Seeing of what you do. * And do not incline toward those oppressors who do wrong, lest you to be touched by the Fire, and you would not have any other protectors besides Allah; then you would not be helped. * And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night. Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds. That is a reminder for those who remember. * And be patient, for indeed, Allah does not allow the reward of those who do good to be lost. * And there not among the generations before you those of stability (in goodness) forbidding corruption on earth, except a few of those whom We saved from among them. But the wrongdoers pursued luxuries they were given to them therein, and they were criminals. * And your Lord would not have destroyed the cities unjustly while their people were reformers. * And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; and they will not cease to differ, * Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that

He has created them. And the word of your Lord is to be fulfilled that, "I will surely fill Hell with jinn and men all together." (11: 112-119)

The crucial verse for our investigation says "...and they will not cease to differ, * Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He has created them..." which signifies that He the Almighty and All-Wise created them for mercy, and to that end He sent His many blessings and bounties, but those who refused the mercy and were ungrateful about the bounties, differed and quarreled and schismatically broke away from the community of faithful. They proceeded on the course of disobedience and their eventual doom by the works of their own hands and by rejecting the mercy sent to them. Allah, the Almighty, the Omniscient of course knew from eternity that this would happen to some of His creatures in His creation, but His will, which He wills, will be done.

The similitude here is of the farmer who sows the seed to plant the field and after long nutriment and irrigation then harvests to separates the chaff from the seed and burns the chaff and saves the precious fruit and seeds, and to Allah is the highest similitude, as Allah said:

"For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is the descriptive similitude of evil and for Allah is the highest descriptive similitude. And He is the Almighty, the All-Wise." (16:60)

Allah the Exalted also said:

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“Verily We offered al-Amaanah (the sacred trust or willfully worshipping Allah) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it. But man bore it. Verily, he was unjust and ignorant. * So that Allah may punish the hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the men and women who associate others with Him in idolatry and that Allah may accept repentance from the believing men and believing women. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.” (al-Ahzab 33:72-73)

In the long narration of the story of Moses and description of Paradise, which al-Mughirah ibn Shu’bah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated, he said that the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessing be upon him, said:

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Moses asked his Lord: Who of the inhabitants of Paradise is the lowest in rank? He (Allah) said: It would be said to the person who would be admitted into Paradise last of all among those deserving of Paradise who are admitted to it: Enter Paradise. He would say: O my Lord, how can I enter it while all the people have settled in their places and taken their portions? It would be said to him: Would you

be pleased if there is for you a place like the kingdom of a king of the kings of the world? He will say: I am pleased my Lord. He (Allah) would say: For you is that, and like of that, and the like of that, and like of that, and of that. He would say at the fifth (point): I am well pleased. My Lord. He (Allah) would say: It is for you and ten times like it, and for you is what your self desires and your eyes enjoy. He would say: I am well pleased, my Lord. He (Moses) said: Who are the highest in rank of the inhabitants of Paradise? He (Allah) said: They are those whom I wanted. I have planted their honor with My own hand and then set a seal over it. (They will have) that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human mind has conceived.”¹

This narration tells us that Allah the Almighty and Majestic, the Great and Magnificent, “wanted” these special people, and in order to produce them He created the creation, as He willed. This narration is the explanation of the verse of Allah:

“So no soul knows what delight of the eye is hidden for them; a reward for what they did.” (32:17).

Furthermore Allah created Satan who does evil and tempts, and He created the armies of disbelievers, rebels and criminals all in order to test the believers. Unless the believers struggle and endure against the evilness of their souls and the evil of others and Satan and his armies, how could they become those chosen people, the “elected,” who worshipped Allah with their humble willfulness, who loved Allah and endeavored sincerely to overcome all obstacles to come close to Allah by doing the good and all that which is right, true and just.

¹ Reported by Muslim. no.364.

Along the way some amount of sins is the necessary consequence of human imperfection and struggle, for the Prophet said, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

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“If you weren’t to commit sins, Allah would do away with you and come with other people who would commit sins and seek Allah’s forgiveness and He will forgive them.”¹

And a narration informs about the wisdom of the creation of Satan, for the Prophet said, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

“If Allah willed not to be disobeyed he would not have created Lucifer (the Satan).”²

Only by having the possibility of disobedience and the temptation towards it by desires created as part of his physical and physiological constitution, and then by choosing willfully Allah and His Prophets and the way of the believers, can true faithful believers be separated from the infidels, hypocrites and hardened unrepentant criminals.

Another wisdom for decreeing that people do some amount of sins is to break down any conceit and self-righteousness that they may see in themselves, and let them be humble and submissive in acknowledging their faults and shortcomings, for in a narration the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

“If you did not sin I would have feared for you something even worse than that: conceit.”¹

¹ Reported by Muslim.

² Reported by al-Asfahani in Hilyah al-Auliya`a and verified by the combination of its pathways as authentic by al-Albani in as-Silsalah as-Sahihah #1642 and his in Sahih al-Jame’as-Sagheer #1812.

The truly evil people are those that are arrogant and “refuse,” to accept the truth. How can those that willfully and persistently refuse be worthy of the mercy? This persistent refusal disqualifies them for Paradise, for by their own refusal they mocked Allah and His mercy and chose Hellfire. Many are so ignorant that they don’t know that they don’t know, and moreover they are arrogant to those that attempt to mercifully help and inform them.

There are many kinds of disbelief and ungratefulness to Allah. One kind is being ignorant, and another kind is turning completely away and avoiding any reception. Allah the Exalted said:

“I have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is in between except for truth and a specified time, and those who disbelieve turn away from that which they are warned.” (46:3)

Even worse than this is enmity, denial and opposition since someone might avoid without confrontation and opposition, but only an avowed enemy takes his disbelief in Allah and His Prophets to a higher degree of arrogant enmity and warfare. Allah the Exalted said:

"For when it was said unto them LA ILAAHA ILLALLAH (there is no god except Allah) they were scornful." (37:35)

We also find the tradition of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, where he said:

¹ Reported by Bazzar and verified as having a good chain of narrators by al-Albani in Sahih at-Targheeb #2921, and As-Silsalah as-Sahihah # 658.

"All of my Ummah (nation) will enter Paradise except those who refuse. They asked, O Messenger of Allah, and who refuses? He said: Who obeys will enter Paradise, and who disobeys, has refused." ¹

The Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, drew another comparison with camels when he said:

"All of you will enter Paradise except the one who runs away like the camel running from its owners." ²

The similitude of this descending mercy is like rain from the sky, but not all benefit from it even though it is the mercy from Allah, as the Prophet illustrated, peace and blessings be upon him:

"The example of guidance and knowledge with which Allah has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil that absorbed rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. (And) another portion of it was hard and held the rainwater and Allah benefited the people with it and they utilized it for drinking, making their animals drink from it and for irrigation of the land for cultivation. (And) a portion of it

¹ Reported by Bukhari and Ahmad.

² Reported by Hakim and at-Tayalisi and verified by al-Albani JS # 4570.

These are the criminals that are described as breaking the covenant of their creation by the Creator. Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessing be upon him, said:

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Allah offers His mercy to all but He turns in forgiveness only to those who come to him in humility and repentance and seek His forgiveness

¹ Volume 1, Book 3, Number 98:

² Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others

of open disbelief. They are so deceitful that they will not admit their real faults and repent. Allah the Almighty said:

“Verily the hypocrites are in the lowest dregs of Hellfire and you will never find for them any Helpers.” (4:145)

These are the “bankrupt” people that the Messenger of Allah warned us about, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

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“The bankrupt among my Ummah is the one who comes on the Day of Resurrection with prayer, fasting and charity, and yet has abused this one, slandered that one, taken another’s money illegally, and shed someone’s blood, and beaten someone. Each of these people will be given of his good deeds (by way of compensation). If his good deeds finish before judgment is passed on him, some of their sins will be thrown on him, and he will then be cast into Hellfire.”¹

Also in the Sunnah the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, warned us about their criminal traits saying:

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“Whoever has four traits, is a pure hypocrite: if he speaks he lies; if he promises he doesn’t fulfill (his promise); if he enters a contract he does not honor it; if he argues he abuses and is wicked; and

¹ Reported by Muslim.

whoever has any trait of them has a trait of hypocrisy until he leaves it.”¹

Many lengthy traditions inform us about the hypocrites that they only profess Islam for the worldly benefits they derive from profession. For instance, the believer will answer the questions asked in the graves about who was their Lord, what was their religion, and who was their Prophet, correctly and positively, whereas the disbelievers and hypocrites will say, as one lengthy narration mentions of which we will mention only the concerned part:

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“...the disbeliever or hypocrite will be placed in his grave and two angles will come and will say, what did you worship, and he will say, I don’t know, and they will say to him, you didn’t know and you didn’t recite. They will ask him, what do you say about this man (who was sent among you), and he will say, I used to say what the people said, then they will hit him with an iron hammer between his ears and he will scream so that the creatures will hear him except men and jinn...”²

And Allah will forget this hypocrite as the hypocrite forgot Him and His sacred rights, as it is mentioned in the following lengthy tradition, of which I will mention only some part. The Prophet, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, asked his companions:

¹ Reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others.

² Reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others and this particular version is verified by al-Albani in ST # 3555

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“Do you have any problem seeing the sun when there are no clouds? They said: No. He asked: Do you have any problem seeing the full moon when there are no clouds? They said: No. He said: By the One in whose hand my soul is (Allah), you will have no problem seeing your Lord (Allah) like you see one of those two. The slave will meet his Lord and the Lord would say.....Didn't I honor you, make you a leader, have you get married, and made the camels and horses subject to your command? And didn't I leave you to be a leader and take forth (of tribute)? He will acknowledge and say: Yes you did! Then he will say: Did you think you would meet Me? He will say: No. He will say: Thus today I will forget you like you forgot my meeting. Then he will meet another and ask him and will be answered the same. Then he will meet another and ask him and he will say: I believed in You and Your Books and Your Messengers and I prayed and fasted and gave charity and he will try to praise himself as much as possible, and he will say to him, wait here. We will send our witnesses to give evidence about you. He

will think in himself who could be a witness? Then his mouth will be sealed and it will be said to his thighs and muscles and bones: Speak! His thighs and muscles and bones will then tell about his deeds. Thus it will be that the proof will be established (and there will be no excuse for injustice). That is the hypocrite. That is the one upon whom Allah's anger will descend.”¹

The testimony of faith and commitment of the hypocrite is worthless, for he is a liar to the people and to himself and to Allah, all of which is injustice. Another tradition mentions this reality in an even more explicit manner:

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“As I was walking with Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with them, I asked him, what did you hear from the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessing be upon him, about the private meeting (with Allah). He said: I heard the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, say: Verily Allah will bring the believer close to him and cover him with his special cover and say Do you acknowledge this sin, and do you acknowledge that sin, and he will say Yes I do O Lord, until he acknowledges all his sins, and he thinks we will be destroyed, Allah will say: As I concealed them in the world I will forgive you today. Then he will be given his book of good deeds. As for the disbeliever and

¹ Reported by Bukari Muslim and others and this version is verified by al-Albani in ST 3609

hypocrite, the witnesses will say: (As it says in the Quran) “ These are those who lied upon their Lord! Verily the curse is upon the unjust ones!”¹

These hypocrites are the people who forget Allah, so Allah forgets them. Allah the Almighty said:

“The hypocrites, men and women, are from one another: they enjoin wrongdoing and forbid from the rightful, and they close their hands (from doing good and spending). They have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them. Verily, the hypocrites, they are the disobedient.” [9:68]

Nabi ar-Rahmah, Prophet of Mercy

Allah the Most Merciful chose the most humanly perfect man as his last and final prophet and messenger to all mankind and jinn, and selected him as the paradigm of excellent character to follow. One of the most conspicuous traits of the Prophet was his overwhelming mercy towards others and his altruistic desire for every kind of goodness for them, may the salutations, praises, prayers, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

His companion Abu Dthar, may Allah be pleased with him, said of him:

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¹ Reported by Bukhari # 2441.

“When we left the Prophet (since he died before us), not even a bird would fly over but that we remembered by it some knowledge. And the Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him: ‘Nothing remains that brings you closer to Paradise or away from the Hellfire but has been explained to you.’”¹ And in a version close to this meaning Abdullah ibn Mas’ud, may Allah be pleased with him, who said that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“There is no action that brings you closer to Paradise but I have commanded it, and there is no action that brings you closer to Hellfire but I have prohibited it, so do not think that your sustenance is slow coming to you, for verily Gabriel inspired into my soul that none of you will go out of the life of this world until he totally completes his sustenance. O people fear Allah and seek beautifully in general way (without greed), even if any of you thinks that your sustenance is slow coming to you, do not seek it by disobedience to Allah, for Allah’s bounty is not gained through disobedience.”²

Thus the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him was most trustworthy in conveying the Message of His Lord clearly without leaving any detail of the pathway that leads to Paradise except that he guided us to it, and no detail of the pathway that leads to Hellfire but he warned us against it, as he said:

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¹ Reported by at-Tabarani and verified as reliable by al-Albani in SS #1803

² Reported by al-Hakim and al-Baihaqi and verified as good by al-Albani in ST #1700 and SS 2866

“Allah has not sent any Prophet except that it was obligatory on him to guide his nation to whatever he knew was good for them and to warn them to whatever he knew was evil for them.”¹

We will mention here some of the verses and narrations from the Quran and Sunnah that describe the Prophet's mercy without trying to include all of them which would take considerable time and space, our purpose being just to indicate some of the evidence in a comprehensive manner.

Prophet of Mercy in the Majestic Quran

The verse in the title of the book is the saying of Allah the Almighty and Exalted in the Majestic Qur'an:

“And We have not sent you except as a mercy for the universe”
(21:107)

His mission is a mercy in all aspects: its ultimate purpose; its manner of presentation; its message of mercy which includes wisdom, truth and justice that are essential for true mercy; its examples of conduct by the character of the Prophet, and its teachings that specify that only the merciful receive mercy and in order to receive mercy from Allah the Exalted, who is above all in heaven, one must show mercy to those on earth.

Allah the Almighty and Exalted said:

“There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. It grieves him that you suffer: he is full of anxious concern over you and full of compassionate kindness and mercy for the believers.”
(9:128)

¹ Reported by Muslim 2/1473 # 1844.

In the Quran Allah repeatedly uses His Beautiful Name ar-Raheem, the Most Merciful, for Himself, and only once does he describe someone of His creation as “raheem” (merciful) and that is the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, as mentioned above. The Prophet is anxious that the people believe and receive the blessings and mercy that He has brought by revelation from Allah his Lord, and any hardships they face makes him distraught. His kindness, compassion and mercy will be illustrated by examples from his life.

Allah said speaking to the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him:

“Thus by mercy from Allah you were gentle and lenient with them. If you had been crude and harsh in heart they would have dispersed from about you. Pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them in the affairs, and when you have come to a resolute decision, then trust upon Allah. Indeed Allah loves those who place their trust (upon Him).” (3: 159)

Allah created this softness in the Prophet's heart towards the believers to guide his actions in mercy and leniency and easiness in manner, and his exceptionally charming and appealing character was another factor that attracted the people to follow him.

Allah the Exalted said:

“The Prophet is more preferable to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers. And those of blood relationship are more entitled (to inheritance) in the decree of Allah

than the believers and the emigrants, except that you may do to your close associates a kindness (through gifts of bequest). That is inscribed in the Book.” (33:6)

The word here translated as ‘more preferable’ is “Aula” (أولاً), an Arabic word with multiple meanings, including more preferable, closer, more entitled, more rightful and more worthy for their love, loyalty and obedience. This is because only through him do they receive the revelation and the faith and the message and thus it is obligatory to prefer him to their own souls. This is also because obeying the Messenger of Allah is obedience to Allah most Glorified, as Allah the Exalted said:

“He who obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah, but he who turns away, then we have not sent you as their guardian.” (4:80)

The way to mercy is by following the God's Messenger as Allah says:

“Say, (O Muhammad to all mankind): If you love God, follow me; God will love you and forgive you your sins and God is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful. * Say, Obey Allah and the Messenger, and if you turn away then Allah does not love the disbelievers.” (3:31-32) The first verse succinctly gives the basis of Allah's religion, which is the love of Allah the Magnificent in the inner heart of man, plus the way to follow in religion which is the way of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the excellent result of this combination is that Allah will love you in this life and grant His forgiveness of sins and mercy in the hereafter, a reward to which all humans seek and aspire. The second verse succinctly

commands obedience and tells us that turning away from the call is the exact opposite of the love of Allah.

In the Bible the same idea is conveyed by the idiom that no one comes to the God “the Father” except by way of the messenger Jesus “the Son.” Of course we Muslims take offence with the idiom of expression but the idea is similar. In the Gospels we find: “I am the way the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” [John 14:6] And also “Jesus answered them and said, “My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. [John: 7:16] And we find that he said: “...and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me.” [John: 8:28]. And we find in the letters, “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” [1Timothy: 2:5]

The word “more preferable” also indicates that the Prophet is more concerned about their welfare than they are about their own selves because he came, like all prophets, to guide them to salvation by conveying to them glad tidings for faith in Allah and obedience and by warning them about Allah’s punishment for disbelief and disobedience. He did this service to them in the most earnest, steadfast, eloquent, kind and merciful manner possible, yet many disobey and avoid the truth as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

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My similitude with the people is like a man who lit fire and when the light was aglow, moths and insects began to fall into the fire, but I am there to hold them back, but they forced themselves plunging into it (despite my efforts)." And in another version, "(I

say) Stay away from the Fire! Stay away from the fire! And yet they force themselves into it.”¹ And in another similitude about this meaning he said:

“My similitude with what Allah has sent with me is like a man who comes to the people and says (warning them), I have seen the army coming, and I am the stark naked warner, so save yourselves, save yourselves! And a group obeyed him and were saved and a group disobeyed him and the army attacked them in the morning.”²

Another meaning is that he helps them more than they help themselves even in monetary matters, for the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“I am more closer to the believers than their own selves, so whoever of them dies while being in debt and leaves nothing for its repayment, then it is on me to pay his debts on his behalf, and if he dies leaving some property then that property is for his heirs.”³

And Allah the Exalted said:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² Reported by Muslim. The “stark naked warner” mentioned is an Arabic expression of the most sincere and frantic lookout who saw the army coming and came to tell the people whereupon he disrobed completely to make his warning all the more shocking so they would prepare for the danger in fight or flight.

³ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim and others.

“And Allah would never punish them while you were among them. And Allah would never punish them while as they seeking forgiveness.” (8:33)

Here in this verse we have two reasons that postpone Allah's punishment upon people. The first is the presence of the Prophet among them, himself continually repenting to Allah and calling them to repentance. The second reason is that they themselves are of the habit of seeking forgiveness and repentance. These are the people who follow his perfect example.

There are some instances in the Quran wherein Allah the Majestic reprimanded the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, for some of his mistakes. These reprimands became lessons for eternity for the Muslims. When we examine these stories we note that they all revolve around the aspect of the Prophet's innate nature towards mercy that propelled him to make some judgments that were a bit too merciful and lenient and indulgent for the situation. One of these is when early in the calling he frowned when a blind common man came with sincerity and zealousness interrupting him to ask some knowledge about the Quran and Islam, while he was engaged speaking to a notable and leading person of the Quraish tribe calling him to Islam. Allah reprimanded him saying:

“He frowned and turned away. * Because there came to him the blind man * But what would make you perceive that perhaps he might be purified. * Or be reminded and that this remembrance would benefit him? * As for he who thinks himself without need, * to him you give attention, * and it is not obligatory upon you if he will not be purified (by following the revelation). * But as for he

who came to you striving (for knowledge and purification), * with sincere fear (of Allah), * from him you are distracted.” (80 1-10)

All this for a mere frown! The Prophet's concern for his tribesmen, peace and blessings be upon him, and his enthusiasm to have the notable ones among them accept Islam so that they will influence others, was the compulsion for this spontaneous frown, yet Allah directed him to attend equally to all, no matter their rank and status and position, and give those that come fearing Allah with awe their due attention. Allah guides whom He wills.

Imam Muslim reports another incident as related by Abdullah ibn Abbas from Umar, may Allah be pleased with them:

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“When the captives of (the battle of) Badr were captured, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, asked Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khattaab, “what do you say about these captives? He said: O Prophet of Allah, they are our clansmen and relatives and I say that you take ransom from them which will give us strength against the disbelievers and perhaps Allah will guide them to Islam. Then the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, asked Umar, And what do you see O Son of Khattaab? He replied: I do not say as Abu Bakr says (to ransom them), but I think that you should allow us to execute them, and that you should let Ali take Aqeel (his relative) and let him execute him, and you should let Hamza take so and so of his brother and execute him, and allow me to take so and so -a relative of Umar- and let me execute him, so that Allah will know well that there is no indulgence and gentleness in our hearts concerning these polytheists, since these are the great leaders and commanders of disbelief. Then the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, desired the saying of Abu Bakr and did not desire my saying, so he let them pay the amount to ransom themselves. Then the next day I went to the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, and found that he and Abu Bakr were crying, so I said: What are you and your companion crying about, for if I find that it is worthy I will cry also, and no matter what I will still force myself to cry because you two are crying? The Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said: “I am crying for what has happened to your companions about taking the ransom, and I have been shown the punishment they will receive (for this), just like this tree” – a tree close by – and Allah revealed the verse of the Qur`an in this context: “It is not proper for a prophet to have captives until he inflicts a massacre in the land. You desire the commodities of this world, but Allah desires the Hereafter. And Allah is exalted in

Might and Wise. * If it were not for a decree from Allah that has preceded, you would have been stricken by a great punishment for what you took. So consume what you have taken of war booty, as it is (now) lawful and good, and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” (8:67-9) And Allah permitted them to take the war booty.”¹

Many of the leaders of disbelief who were ransomed only grew more arrogant in leading their people against the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and his mission from Allah Almighty.

Another example is when Abdullah ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “When Ubai ibn. Sallool (the ringleader of the treacherous hypocrites in Madinah) died, his son Abdullah ibn Ubai ibn. Sallool came to the Prophet, may peace and blessings be upon him, and asked him for his garment so that they could shroud his father with it. He then asked the Prophet, may peace and blessings be upon him, to pray the funeral prayer on him, and he got up to do so, but Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, grabbed the outer garment of the Prophet, may peace and blessings be upon him and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! Will you pray on him and Allah has forbidden you to do so (because he is a clear hypocrite)! The Messenger of Allah, may peace and blessings be upon him said: ‘Allah has given me the choice, for He says:

“Ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; even if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them; this is because they disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger, and Allah does not guide the transgressing people.﴾ (9:80) And I will ask for forgiveness for him more than seventy times.’ Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, then said: ‘He is a hypocrite!’ The Prophet, performed the prayer, and Allah revealed:

¹ Reported by Muslim.

“And never offer prayer for any one of them who dies and do not stand by his grave; surely they disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger, and they shall die in transgression.” (9:84) ¹

Here again he inclined towards clemency and hope for mercy and forgiveness even though the instructions were towards sternness in the affairs of those hypocrites who repeatedly act with deceit, treason and disloyalty. These examples and all the other examples of these reprimands show that the Prophet was exceedingly merciful to his people by nature, seeking for them every good thing and pathway of leniency, even when they were refusing arrogantly and fighting against him openly or in treachery behind his back. He made some judgments wherein the situations demanded a measure of sternness to enforce the greater good, and even though Allah reprimanded him, these examples become part of the complete human character of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, in that he humbly repented to Allah and boldly proclaimed the revelations openly publicizing them for all to hear and take lesson from.

Allah the Exalted commanded His Prophet saying:

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“... and lower your wing unto the believers.” (al-Hijr, 15:88), This idiom is one of tender care like the mother bird to its chick; and how elegant an expression of humble service, mercy, altruism and tenderness, some examples of which we will present below.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari #2400.

Prophet of Mercy in the Sunnah and the historical biography (Seerah)

The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was chosen by Allah as the choicest quintessence and finest among His creation, and since Allah revealed this to the Prophet to inform us as definite knowledge, without pride or conceit the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“Indeed, Allah chose Kinaanah from the sons of Isma`eel, and He chose Quraish from Kinaanah, and He chose Banu Haashim from Quraish, and from Bani Haashim and He chose me.”¹

Some of the Arabs, who considered themselves or other notable ones from the cities of Makkah and Ta`if more worthy of the honor of being a chosen prophet and messenger from Allah, challenged the choice of Muhammad ibn Abdullah as Prophet of Allah and His Messenger. Allah refuted them saying:

“And they said, Why was this Qu'ran not sent down upon an eminent man from one of the two cities? * Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and We have raised some of them above others in degrees that they may utilize one another for labor and service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate.” (43: 31-33)

Allah called the Quran and His choice of Muhammad “the mercy of your Lord” meaning of His mercy which He alone in His

¹ Reported by Muslim # 2276.

Wisdom will distribute, just as He alone distributes the sustenance among them, for Allah said:

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“Allah is most knowing of where He places His message.” (6:124). This indicates His Wisdom in who He chooses and entrusts to be His messenger.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, informed us that he is a “gift of mercy” sent from Allah for all mankind, when he said:

“Verily I am only a mercy gift”.¹ The two words in this statement of “mercy” () and given “gift” () mean that he was a gift of mercy given from Allah to man for the purpose of guiding them by faith to the way to Paradise which is the eternal place of mercy. He is a mercy for the disbelievers by providing them the guidance and mercy if they accept, and by postponing their punishment, so as to give them the longest possible chance and respite until they die and return to their Lord for the Great Accounting in the hereafter.

The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has many names that inform us about his outstanding traits, and of these we find the name “Prophet of Mercy” (Nabiyur-Rahmah) (), in the following narration:

¹ Reported by ad-Darimi, al-Hakim, al-Bazar, at-Tabrani, Ibn Abi Shaibah, al-Bahaiqi and others and confirmed as authentic by al-Haithami in Majmah az-Zawa'id 8/61, and al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame #235 and as-Sahihah # 90

“I am Muhammad, and Ahmad (the praised one), and ‘al-Muqaffi’ (the last and final Prophet); and I am ‘Hashir’ (one of resurrection); and the Prophet of Repentance, and the Prophet of Mercy.”¹

Allah the Exalted praised the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, for his grand and beautiful character when He said:

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“...No, by Allah! Allah will not ever disgrace you (in this affair). You keep good relations with your relatives, always say the truth, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests with generosity

¹ Reported by Muslim, and Ahmad. The meaning of ‘Hashir’ is that he will be the first one to be resurrected and thus all others will be resurrected after him so it is as if he is the cause for their resurrection.

² Reported by Imam Malik as something that was related without mentioning the chain of narrators, and others give the authentic chain like Imam Ahmad and al-Bukhari in Adab al-Mufrid and al-Hakim and others, and verified by al-Albani in SS # 10 and SJ # 2319, 2833, 1300

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And his wife Aishah said to describe his character:

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, was the paradigm of compassion and mercy, being the first and foremost to

⁴ Reported by Muslim, Ahmad and Abu Da'ud.

put into every day practice what he was commissioned to teach the people from his Lord. We have plentiful examples of his mercy to children, to youth, and to grown men and women even when they acted foolishly, and even to the animals. It will suffice us here to mention some narrations for their special commands to be merciful as a trait to indoctrinate within ourselves and in our common behavior.

For instance, Usamah ibn Zaid, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

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“One of the daughters of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, sent a person calling him to visit her and see her son who was on his deathbed, so he sent a person with salutation of peace and to tell her: ‘Truly to Allah belongs what He took, and what He has given, and He has given everything a set time. Command her to be patient and to seek the reward from Allah, the Exalted.’ His daughter, may Allah be pleased with her, sent the same person back again saying: ‘O Prophet of Allah! Your daughter took an oath that you should come.’ The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, stood up and Sa’d ibn Ubaadah and Mu’adth ibn Jabal accompanied him. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, sat with the child while he was on his deathbed. The child’s eyes had frozen in their places like stones. Upon seeing that, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, wept. Sa’d said to him, ‘What is this O Prophet of Allah?’ He said: ‘This is

a mercy that Allah places in the hearts of His slaves. Truly Allah is only merciful to those who are merciful towards others.”¹

Usamah ibn Zaid, may Allah be pleased with him, was a child born from the union of Zaid the beloved freed slave of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and Um Aiman the Ethiopian handmaiden of the Prophet's mother who remained in his household after his mother's death. Usamah ibn Zaid was beloved to the Prophet as he tells us :

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him used to take me on one thigh and place Hasan ibn Ali (his grandson) on the other thigh and then merge them and say: O Allah have mercy on them for verily I have mercy on them.”²

Anas ibn Malik narrated the story to us when he said:

“The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, kissed (his grandson) Hasan ibn Ali while al-Aqra'a ibn Habis at-Tameemi (a Bedouin) was there sitting, so Aqra'a said, I have ten children and I have never kissed any of them, so the Prophet looked at him and said: ‘Whoever is not merciful will not receive mercy.’” And in a version of this:

“Do I have any control if Allah has yanked the mercy from your heart.”³

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari #6942 and many others.

² Reported by al-Bukhari.

³ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim and by many others

Another time a harsh Bedouin came and as Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, recounts the story:

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The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, stood to pray and we prayed behind him and a Bedouin came and said in his prayer, 'O Allah have mercy on me and on Muhammad and do not have mercy on anyone else with us,' and when the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, made salutations finishing the prayer, he said to the Bedouin: "You have restricted the expansive." Abu Hurairah explained: meaning the Mercy of Allah.¹

And in a narration about the mean of removing the mercy from the heart of some people, he said, peace and blessings be upon him:

"Allah doesn't take mercy (from the heart) except from a wretched person." ² And in a narration he said, peace and blessings be upon him:

"The slave (of Allah) in whose heart Allah hasn't placed mercy for humans, is utterly ruined and in loss." ³ And in another narration he said, peace and blessings be upon him:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari Abu Da'ud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'e and others, and in the wording of Ibn Majah the Prophet laughed and said to him, (لقد احتظرت واسعا), you have restricted the expansive.

² Reported by Ahmad, Abu Da'ud, at-Tirmidhi and others and al-Albani declared it authentic in SJ #٧٤٦٧

³ Reported by ad-Aaulabi and Abu Nu'aim and al-Albani declared it authentic in SJ # 3205.

“Whoever is not merciful will not receive mercy, and whoever doesn’t forgive will not be forgiven, and whoever doesn’t repent will not be granted clemency.”¹

The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

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“By Him in whose Hand my soul is, Allah does not place His Mercy except upon a merciful one. We said: All of us are merciful. He said: It is not the mercy of one of you to his intimate companion, but general (universal) mercy on all the people.”²

All of these reliable narrations emphasize the point that in order to receive mercy, which naturally is the goal of everyone - to escape pain and feel pleasure - they must be merciful to others and their everyday character should include mercy as an integral part of it. The narration on universal mercy indicates that normal mercy to those close to you is not the type of mercy one must perform to receive Allah’s special mercy even though it is important and included. Most people -except the like of the harsh Bedouin as above - have some degree of mercy. The goal is towards a higher altruistic mercy that seeks good for the people and doesn’t seek material or immaterial reward from them in exchange since the reward sought is with Allah. This is reminiscent of the story of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of the Bible who was benevolent to the needy even outside his group.

The companion Anas Ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, mentioned the amazing extent of the quality of mercy when he said:

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¹ Reported by at-Tabarani and al-Albani declared it authentic in his SS # 483, and the first part is reliably reported by many others

² Reported by at-Tabarani and al-Baihaqi and confirmed as reliable by al-Albani in SS #167.

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I served the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, for ten years (voluntarily as a small boy) and by Allah he never said to me once ‘Why did you do this’ or ‘Why didn’t you do this.’”¹ How amazing is this in good manners and mercy to the young servant who naturally would make mistakes and mishaps. This remains an everlasting example of good character in kindness and mild manners to follow that few of us achieve in their manners since the simple statements of rebuke would come out spontaneously, yet we all can admire the extent of his merciful and kind nature and practice.

His innate mercy always made him lean towards forgiveness and repentance, for it is reported:

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“The people of Makkah asked him (that if he truly was a prophet) to make for them the mount of Safa into gold, so Gabriel came to him and said, Allah the Almighty and Majestic recites his salutations of peace upon you and says to you: “If you want I will make the mount of Safa into gold and whoever disbelieves after that I will punish with a punishment that I will not punish any others, and if you want I will open for them a door of repentance and mercy.” So he said, ‘Nay (but a) a door of repentance and mercy.’”²

¹ Reported by Muslim, # ۲۳۰۹.

² Reported by Ahmad # 2166 and al-Arna'ut declared it authentic, and al-Hakim 2/362 and at-Tabarai in his exegesis of the Quran others and Kamal al-Albani declared it authentic in his encyclopedia of the “Ahadeeth al-Qudsiyyah” (divine narrations) # 196, and al-Albani in Sahih as-Sirah #152.

One of his companions came to him from afar and as he related his story:

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“We came to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, while we were young men and stayed for about twenty days and nights, and the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, was merciful and kind hearted, so when he considered that we were homesick for our families he asked us what we had left behind of our families and we informed him. He said: Go back to your families and establish prayer among them and teach them and when the prayer time comes let one of you call the call to prayer and then let the elder among you lead the prayer.”¹

Even when people acted ignorant, uncouth and vile, he would be forgiving and easy mannered. We have the story of the ignorant Arab Bedouin who urinated in the Masjid, and the people rose to beat him but the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said to them:

دَعُوهُ وَهَرِيفُوا عَلَى بَوْلِهِ سَجَلًا مِنْ مَاءٍ أَوْ ذَنْوَبًا مِنْ مَاءٍ فَإِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُمْ مُيسِّرِينَ وَلَمْ تُبْعَثُوا مُعَسِّرِينَ

“Leave him (to finish) and pour a pail of water over the place where he urinated. Verily you have been sent to make things easy and not to make them harsh and difficult.”²

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari #٦٢٨ Muslim, #٦٧٤ and others.

² Reported by al-Bukhari.

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“Once I was walking with the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him while he was wearing a Najrani (Yemeni) cloak with a collar with rough edges. A Bedouin grabbed him strongly. I looked at the side of his neck and saw that the edge of the cloak left a mark on his neck. The Bedouin said: ‘O Muhammad! Give me of the wealth of Allah that you have.’ The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, turned to the Bedouin, laughed and ordered that he be given (from the charity).”¹

The mercy and compassion of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, encompassed animals also. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

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“Verily Allah has prescribed excellence and kindness for everything. So when you kill them, kill in a good and kind manner, and when slaughter (the animal for meat) then slaughter in a good and kind manner. And let each of you sharpen his blade and let him spare the animal he slaughters from suffering.”² Of course slaughtering takes a degree of forcefulness but the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, taught us that even in this we must proceed in the best manner humanly possible to alleviate the suffering of the animals as much as possible.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari # ٥٨٢٩ Muslim, # ١٠٥٧

² Reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“Whoever has mercy even while slaughtering a sparrow, Allah will have mercy upon him on the Day of Resurrection.”¹

The Messenger of Allah, most perfect salutations of peace and blessings be upon him, explained about an example of goodness to the animals: “While a man was on a trip in the wilderness he became extremely thirsty. He searched for water and found a well and managed to go to the bottom of the well to get to the water. Since he had nothing to reach the bottom where the water was, he suffered a great deal to reach down but eventually managed to quench his thirst and came out of the well. Upon reaching the surface he found a dog with his tongue stretched out from severe thirst. The man thought to himself: ‘This dog is certainly suffering from his severe thirst the same hardship I suffered.’ Therefore the man went down the well again, holding one of his shoes by his teeth, filled the shoe with water and brought it back up to the thirsty dog. The dog drank and went away. Allah, the Almighty, appreciated the action of this man and forgave his previous sins.” One of the audience, who heard the statement of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), inquired:

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“O Messenger of Allah! Would we be rewarded for (being kind and merciful to) animals? Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asserted: “Truly there is a (blessed) reward (for being kind and merciful) to every living creature that has a moist liver.”²

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

¹ Reported by at-Tabrabi and Deya`a al-Maqdasi and verified as good by al-bani SJ661 ss26

² Reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others.

“Whoever kills a sparrow or anything bigger than that without a just cause, Allah will hold him accountable on the Day of Judgment.” The listeners asked, “O Messenger of Allah, what is a just cause?” He replied, “That he will kill it to eat, not simply to chop off its head and then throw it away.”¹

About cruelty to animals the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“A woman entered the fire of hell because of a cat; she tied it and never fed it, nor did she free it to search for its own food from the creatures of the earth.”²

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, entered a garden owned by Amman from the Ansaar (Helpers) and he saw a camel. When the camel saw the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, it started crying with tears coming out of its eyes. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, approached the camel and rubbed off the tears asking, ‘Who is the owner of this camel?’ The owner replied ‘It is mine, O Prophet of Allah. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“Don’t you fear Allah in these animals which the Almighty made you the owner? Indeed your animal complained to me that you starve and overwork it.”³

¹ Reported by ad-Darami # 1978 and Husain Saleem Asad confirmed that its chain of narrators is good.

² Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

³ Reported by Ahmad and Da’ud and verified as authentic by al-Albani in SS # 20.

Abdullah ibn Masood, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated an incident that occurred when he traveled with the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him:

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'We were with the Holy Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, on one of his journeys and we saw a bird with its two babies. We took her babies. When the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him came, he said 'Who frightened this bird by taking away its babies? Return its babies to it; when he saw an anthill we had burnt he said, "Who burnt these? In reply we said, "we did". The Prophet peace and blessing be upon him said, "Indeed no one but the Lord who created a Fire has the right to punish by fire."'¹

There are numerous other examples of the Messenger of Allah's characteristic of mercy but for the sake of brevity we will allow the above to suffice here.

Showing mercy becomes most apparent in situations when punishment and vengeance are customary or required for justice. Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, said:

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"The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was not given a choice between two matters except that he chose the easier of the two as long as it was not a sinful act, for if it were a sinful act he

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari

would be the farthest from it. By Allah! He never sought vengeance for himself but he only became angry when people transgressed the limits and boundaries of Allah, for in that case he took vengeance (for the sake of Allah).”¹

Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, asked the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him: “Have you encountered a day harder than the day of (the battle of) Uhud?” The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, replied saying:

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“ I have faced from your people (a lot of trouble) and the worst trouble was the trouble on the day of Aqaba when I presented myself to Ibn Abd-Yalail ibn Abd-Kulal and he did not respond to my request. So I left overwhelmed with excessive sorrow, and went on and could not find any relief until I found myself at Qarnath-Tha-alib where I lifted my head towards the sky to see a cloud shading me unexpectedly. I looked up and saw Gabriel in it. He called me saying, ‘Allah has heard the saying of your people to you, and what they have replied back to you, so Allah has sent the Angel of the Mountains to you so that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people.’ The Angel of the Mountains called and greeted me, and then said, ‘O Muhammad! Order what you wish. If you like, I will let two blocks of wood (i.e. these two mountains) fall on them.’ The Prophet said, ‘No, but I hope that Allah will (at least)

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari # 6404

let them have children who will worship Allah Alone and will worship none other besides Him.”¹

Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, relates an incident wherein she said:

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“A group of Jews entered upon the Prophet and said: ‘As-Saamu Alaikum.’ (a trick and play on the words ‘as-salam alaikum’ [peace be upon you] which they said as a joke and mockery meaning ‘death be upon you’). I understood what they said and so I replied: ‘Death be upon you and the curse of Allah!’ The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Be calm O Aishah! Allah loves that one should be kind and lenient in all matters.’ I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, didn’t you hear what they said?’ The Messenger of Allah said: I have already said to them, ‘and upon you!’”²

This is an example of just returning upon the person his action in like kind without exceeding the bounds. Even in this retribution he encouraged kindness and leniency to be maintained. And the Messenger of Allah also said to his wife Aishah:

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“...O ‘Aishah! Allah is kind and He loves that one should be kind and lenient in all matters.”³ And in a longer version he said:

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¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and many others

² Reported by Muslim.

³ Reported by al-Bukhaari

“O Aishah, verily Allah is kind and He loves kindness, and he gives through (your) kindness that which he does not give through (your) severity and harshness, and He gives (through kindness much more) than any other way.”

As all educators know that a teacher or trainer who beats and scolds the students will not be as successful as a teacher or trainer who develops a rapport with them and brings forth their abilities in gradual increments with coaxing, kindness, jokes and delightfulness. This is the trait of the Rabbani (رَبَّانِي) meaning literally the “one who brings up and raises” or the “one of the Lord,” and often translated as the righteous scholar who practices what he preaches, who not only has the good traits in himself but the ability to teach to others gradually by exhortation, practice, examples and illustration. Allah ordered:

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“... and be pious scholars and practitioners for that you used to teach the Book and used study.” (3:79)

By nature the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, was not accustomed to being harsh and foul mouthed, and this was an obvious trait, as it was said of him:

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The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, was not bad mannered in his word and deed nor loud in the markets, and he did not return the evilness but would pardon and forgive.”¹

Mercy of course means to sometimes hold oneself back from just retribution and just punishment even when it is the due right of someone to seek revenge and execute the law of requital. Once the

¹ Reported by Muslim and at-Tirmidhi and Ahmad and other.

Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, was asked to curse some of the criminal wrongdoing polytheists, whereupon he replied, peace and blessings be upon him:

“I have not been sent to curse frequently, and verily I am only sent as a mercy.”¹ Here he designates that his mission is a mission of mercy - just as the verse above mentioned – a mission calling to spreading mercy and calling to repentance and forgiveness.

The Prophet did sometimes curse with the rightful curse of the Prophets of God like the curse of David and Jesus peace be upon them, mentioned by Allah in the Quran:

“Say, ‘O People of the Scripture, do not exceed limits in your religion beyond the truth and do not follow the desires of a people who had gone astray before and misled many and have strayed from the even way. * The disbelievers among the Children of Israel were cursed on the tongue of David and Jesus the son of Mary. That was because they disobeyed and continually transgressed. * They would not prevent one another from wrongdoing that they habitually did. How wretched was that which they were doing!’” (5:77-79)²

Concerning the subject of reviling and cursing, we know that almost all those who were cursed by any Prophet of Allah peace be

¹ Reported by Muslim.

² After these curses Allah sent the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar of the New Babylonians after David's curse to punish them and demolish the first Temple, and Titus of the Romans after the Hasmonean Revolt against the Jews in 70 CE after Jesus' curse to punish the Jews and destroy the Second Temple.

upon him, deserved that curse for their wickedness and thus will taste the punishment for the evil action and sin that precipitated the curse. The proofs of this are too numerous for us to recount here. On the other hand, we find narrations that explain how even his human emotion of occasional anger and outburst became a mercy upon the people, for instance, when he said:

“Any person that I revile or curse while angry, then indeed I am only a human and a son of Adam, and I get angry like they get angry, and Allah has only sent me as a mercy to the universe, therefore I make it a prayer for them on the Day of Resurrection.”¹

And in a very important explanatory narration reported by Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, he said: “There was an orphan girl with Um Sulaim (who was the mother of Anas). The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, saw that orphan girl and said: O, it is you; you have grown young. May you not advance in years (literally, may your teeth and hair lock not grow)! That slave girl returned to Um Sulaim weeping. Umm Sulaim said: O my daughter, what is the matter with you? She said: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, has invoked a curse upon me that I should not grow in age and thus I would never grow in age, or she said, in my (length) of life. Um Sulaim went out wrapping her headdress in such a rush that it slipped off her head until she met the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him. He said to her: What is the matter with you Um Sulaim? She said: O Messenger of Allah, you invoked a curse upon my orphan girl. He said: Um Sulaim, what is it? She said: She (the orphan girl) states you have cursed her saying that she might not grow in age or grow in life. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, smiled and then said:

¹ Reported by Ahmad # 23757, Abu Da'ud, ibn Majah and verified by al-Arna'ut and al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame #2728.

“O Um Sulaim, don’t you know that I have made this a conditional agreement with my Lord when I said to Him: ‘I am only a human being and I get pleased just as a human being gets pleased, and I get angry and lose my temper just as a human being gets angry and loses his temper. Thus for any person from among my nation whom I curse and he in no way deserves it, let that be a source of purification and nearness to You, O Allah, on the Day of Resurrection.’”¹

And Jabir ibn Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, also said that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“I am a human being and I have made this condition with my Lord, the Exalted and Glorious: For any servant among the Muslims whom I curse or scold, make that a source of purity and reward for him.”²

All of these narrations show conclusively that he made this condition as a human being who knew that sometimes he would become perturbed and angry, and that he wanted even his moments of agitation and anger to become of overwhelming mercy, purity and reward for his nation of followers. He practiced the commands of Allah to strive on the way of goodness:

¹ Reported by Muslim and Ahmad and others.

² Reported by Muslim and others.

“And have shown him the two ways? But he has not endeavored to enter upon the difficult pass. * And what can make you know what is (trekking) the difficult pass? * It is freeing of a slave, * or feeding on a day of severe hunger, * an orphan of near relationship, * or a needy person in misery. * And then being among those who believed and those who advised one another to be patient, and advised one another to be compassionate and merciful.” (90: 10-18)

The Prophet's character of mercy, clemency and forgiveness is even prophesized in the Bible and known to the Jews and Christians. There are many stories of this but we will limit ourselves here to two. Ata ibn Yasar asked Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As may Allah be pleased with him, of the description of Messenger of Allah in the Torah (since he had knowledge in this affair). He said:

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“Yes! By Allah he was certainly described in the Torah by some of his of the description of him given in the Quran (Surat-l-Azab 33:45) when it says, “O Prophet We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a Warner,” and a guard for the common unlettered people. You are my servant and my messenger; I have called you the one who trusts (and is trusted), not harsh or rough, nor loud-voiced in the streets. He will not repulse evil with evil, but will pardon and forgive, and God will not take him (his soul in death) till He uses him to straighten the crooked nation so that

people say “LA ILAHA ILLA-LLAH (there is no god except Allah), and opens thereby blind eyes, deaf ears and hardened hearts.”¹

The story of the Jewish Rabbi, Zaid bin Sa'nah, may Allah be pleased with him, is truly amazing for Zaid loaned the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him something in credit. As Zaid tells his story -of which some is deleted for its leanght- by the narration of Abdullah ibn Salam:

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¹ Reported by al-Bukhari, Ahmad, al-Baihaqi, and ad-Darimi relates a similar report on the authority of Ata on Abdullah ibn as-Salam. The references are to Isaiah 42/1-25 and other prophesies of the Bible about the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him, which is a vast and rich subject.

“When Allah the Most Blessed and Exalted desired the guidance of Ziad ibn Sa’nah: I know all the signs of prophethood in the face of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him when I look at him except for two which I have not yet experienced: his patience and perseverance precede his ignorance, and the second is that when you are the more harsher towards him, he becomes kinder and more patient. Zaid said: Two or three days prior to the return of the debt, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah exalt his mention, was attending the funeral of a man from the Ansar. Abu Bakr and Umar, Uthman and some other Companions, with whom Allah is pleased, were with the Prophet, may Allah exalt his mention. After he prayed the Jinazah (funeral prayer) he sat down close to a wall, and I came towards him, grabbed him by the edges of his cloak and looked at him in a harsh way, and said: O Muhammad! Will you not pay me back my loan? I have not known the family of Abdul-Mutalib to delay in repaying debts! I looked at Umar ibn al-Khattaab, may Allah be pleased with him, and his eyes

were swollen with anger! He looked at me and said: O Enemy of Allah, do you talk to the Messenger of Allah and behave towards him in this manner?! By the One who sent him with the truth, had it not been for the fear of missing it (Jannah) I would have beheaded you with my sword (for your insolence)! The Prophet, may Allah exalt his mention, was looking at Umar in a calm and peaceful manner, and he said: O Umar, you should have given us sincere counseling, rather than to do what you did! O Umar, go and repay him his loan, and give him twenty Sa'a (measurement of bulk) extra because you scared him! Zaid said: Umar went with me, and repaid me the debt, and gave me the twenty Sa'a of dates over the amount. I asked him: What is this? He said: 'The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him ordered me to give it, because I frightened you. Zaid then asked Umar: O Umar, do you know who I am?' Umar said: No, I don't - who are you? Zaid said: I am Zaid ibn Sa'nah. Umar inquired: The Rabbi? Zaid answered: Yes, the Rabbi. Umar then asked him: What made you say what you said to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and do what you did to him? Zaid answered: O Umar, I have seen all the signs of prophethood in the face of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him except for two - his patience and perseverance precede his ignorance, and the second is that when you are the more harsher towards him, he becomes kinder and more patient. I am now satisfied (after what I saw). O Umar, I hold you as a witness that I testify and am satisfied that there is no true god worthy of being worshipped except Allah alone, and my Deen (religion) is Islam and Muhammad, , peace and blessings be upon him is my Prophet. I also hold you as a witness that half of my wealth - and I am among the wealthiest people in Madinah - I give for the sake of Allah to the entire Ummah. Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said: You will not be able to distribute your wealth to the whole Ummah (nation), so say, I will distribute it to some of the Ummah of Muhammad, may Allah exalt his mention. Zaid said: I said, then I will distribute (the apportioned) wealth to some of the Ummah. Both Zaid and Umar, may Allah is pleased

twitth them, returned to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him. Zaid said to him: I bear witness that there is no true god worthy of being worshipped except Allah alone, and that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him is the slave of Allah and His Messenger. He believed in him, and witnessed many battles and then died in the Battle of Tabuk while encountering the enemy, may Allah have mercy on Zaid.”¹

Universality and Finality of the Message

The best mercy is that which is truly universal. Mankind yearns after that which is truly universal and good. He sees the awe inspiring expansiveness and beauty of the creation and the cosmic universe, knowing that to be in harmony with this universal order and beauty and to fulfill his purpose as part of this creation is an aspiration of the highest kind of truth, justice and mercy. He knows by experience and intuition that everything has a purpose and a place within the system. He also knows that everything in creation that has a beginning must naturally also have an end. Mankind in our era even more than before sees that the world will definitely have an ending since he is witnessing an amazing rate of irreversible destruction of the environment and extinction of many animal and plant species by the consequences of man's interference in the system, especially through corporate greed and over exploitation of land, air and water resources. In this generation he is seeing the effects of global warming, of mass pollution and of the general degradation of natural life. Although we could mention many aspects of the social and economic and political spheres also, they are outside our scope here. In this section our focus is to present to

¹ Reported by at-Tabarani, al Hakim and Ibn Hibban #288 and al-Haithami said in Majma'a az-Zawa'id 9/٢٤٠ that the chain of narrators of at-Tabarabi are trustworthy, and Ibn Hajar said in the Asabah in the biography of Zaid that the chains are narrators are trustworthy, and al-Albani said in Arwa'a al-Ghaleel 5/220 that (وهو حديث حسن مشهور في دلائل النبوة), "it is a well known and good narration in the proofs of Prophethood."

the reader that this revelation of mercy calling mankind to seek forgiveness in repentance to their One Lord, the religion of Islam, fulfills that aspiration mentioned above and is the universal and final message to all mankind attuned by the Omniscient and All Wise, especially for the later days before the Hour of Resurrection. Allah the Most Merciful personally calls each man and woman through His Prophet of Mercy, to Islam, the Message of Mercy.

The blessed words of the Qur'an that Allah revealed to His Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, address the whole creation, all of the jinn and all of the people of the earth whatever their time, place and race may be. He did not reveal particular principles and laws for the Arabs only but attached all the principles and laws to the names of a believer or disbeliever, a Muslim or a hypocrite, a good person or a wicked person, a just person or an unjust person...and so on in the names of various kinds of people in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Allah has not legislated the rulings for Arabs alone, rather He legislated laws for them to develop the traits that He loves and to avoid what He loathes. The religion of all the prophets of Allah, peace be upon them, is as we mentioned, one and the same in the basics - the religion of Islam. This basic religion commands for sincere worship of Allah and the prohibition of idolatry and all evil actions and corruption. The particular laws of religion from Allah were diverse according to the local times, conditions and needs, until Allah finalized the message of Islam by sending the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, whose message is general for all peoples of creation and will remain valid until the end of the world because it is suited for all times and places of the world and it will not be changed or abrogated until the Day of Resurrection and Judgment.

Allah the Exalted said in His Glorious Quran:

“Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.” (5:3)
And He said:

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“...and We have revealed to you an explanation of everything, and guidance, mercy, and glad tiding to the Muslims (those that submit).” (16:89) And He said:

“And We have revealed to you (Muhammad) the Book (Qur'an) in truth which confirms the truth of that which preceded of the Books and a protector of them. So judge between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their desires (taking you) away from what has come to you of the truth. To each of you (communities of followers) We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed He would have made you one nation but in order to test you in what He has given you; therefore race completing with one another to all that what is good. To Allah is your return all together, and He will inform you concerning all over which you used to differ.” (5:48)

Allah Most Benevolent and Wise says:

"Those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write (i.e. Muhammad) whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel, He commands them for the known good and forbids them from the known evil, He allows them at-Taiyibaat (i.e. all good, pure, wholesome things) and prohibits them as unlawful al-Khabaa'ith [i.e. all that is repulsive and evil], he releases them from their heavy burdens (of the covenant), and from the fetters that were upon them. So those who believe in him (Muhammad) honor him, help him, and follow the light that has been sent down with him, it is they who will be successful. Say (O Muhammad) 'O mankind! Verily, I am sent to you all as the Messenger of Allah - to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. None has the right to be worshipped but He. It is He Who gives life and causes death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, who believes in Allah and His Words, and follow him so that you may be guided.'" (7/157-158)

And He the Almighty said:

"And We have not sent you except comprehensively to mankind as a transmitter of good tidings and to warn, but most of the people do not know." (34:28) Allah the Exalted also said:

"Verily in this (Quran) is a notification for a people that worship (Allah). And We have not sent you except as a mercy to the universe. * Say 'It is only revealed to me that your god is only one God, so will you be Muslims in submission to Him?'" (21: 106-108)

And He said:

“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the messenger of Allah and seal (the final and last) of the prophets, and Allah is All knowing of all things.” (33:40)

The fact that he is the universal and final prophet is confirmed in the Sunnah also, for the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, said in a famous narration:

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“I have been given five (special things) which no other prophet was given: I have been made to be victorious (over the enemy) by “Ru`b” (awe, fear, terror) the distance of one month; the earth has been made a place of worship (literally: prostration) for me and means of cleansing, so whenever a person of my community reaches the time of prayer let him pray (wherever he is); the war booty is made permissible to me and it was not made permissible to any other (prophet and follower) before me; I am given the intercession; every prophet was sent to his people specifically and I have been sent generally to all men.”¹

And in another narration close to this but with a significant difference:

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¹ Reported by Bukhari #٣٣٥ an-Nasa`e 1/209 ad-Darami 2/223.

“I have been favored with six (unique things): the shortest expressions bearing the widest profoundest meanings; I have been made victorious with Ru`b (awe, fear terror i.e. cast into the hearts of the enemy); the war booty is made permissible to me; the earth has been made for me a means of cleansing and place of worship (literally: prostration); I have been sent to all creation; I am the final seal of the prophets.”¹

And in another narration with very significant clarifications, he said:

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“This night I have been given five (special things) which no other prophet was given before me: I have been sent to all men generally and every prophet before me was sent only to his people (specifically); I have been made to be victorious over the enemy by “Ru`b” (awe, fear terror) and even if there was a distance of one month (of travel) between me and them, they would become fearful of me; all the war booty is made permissible to me and it was not made permissible to any other (prophet and follower) before me since they would take it as a monstrous thing and thus they would burn it; the earth has been made a place of worship (literally: prostration) for me and means of cleansing, so whenever a person of my community reaches the time of prayer he can rub (from the dust) and pray (wherever he is), whereas those before (us) would take this as a monstrous thing and they would only pray in their

¹ Reported by Muslim #٥٢٣ and at-Tirmidhi # ١٥٥٣.

churches and synagogues; and the fifth thing is, what is it? It was said to me, Ask, for every prophet has asked. But I (didn't ask then and I) have postponed my supplication until to the Day of Resurrection and it will be (intercession) for you and for all those who testify LA ILAAHA ILLALLAH (there is no god except Allah).”¹ Although each of these gifts are important, our attention here is on the points of universality and finality which are crystal clear in these words.

Also in the authentic traditions, the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“By Him in whose hand my soul is, no one will hear of me from these generations, not a Jew or a Christian, and then not believe in what I have brought, except that he will be of the people of the fire.”² The follower Sa'eed ibn Jubair said about this: the confirmation of this is in the Book of Allah the Exalted:

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“And whoever of the sects disbelieves in him, then the Hellfire is promised to him.” (11:17) The meaning of this tradition is undeniable in that it proves that he is a prophet to all people of all sects and that it is obligatory on them to believe and follow him. This narration affirms the fact that as the last and final messenger anyone that rejects his message and him as messenger, by necessity rejects the One God who sent him, Allah the Most Beneficent and Merciful.

In another significant narration on Thauban, may Allah be pleased with him, who said that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

¹ Reported by Imam Ahmad # 7068 with al-Arna'ut saying the chain of narrators is good and al-Albani said is was good in Arwa al-Ghaleel 1/317.

² Reported by Muslim.

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“Allah drew the ends of the world near one another for my sake. I have seen its eastern and western extent. The dominion of my Ummah (nation of believers) will reach the ends that have been drawn near me. I have been granted the red and the white treasure (gold and silver). I asked my Lord for my Ummah that it should not be destroyed because of famine, nor be dominated over by an enemy who is from among other than themselves to take their lives and utterly destroy them to their roots. My Lord the Almighty and Majestic said: O Muhammad, whenever I make a decision, there is none to turn it back. Indeed I grant you for your Ummah that it will not be destroyed by famine, and it will not be dominated by an enemy who is from among other than themselves to take their lives and utterly destroy them to their roots, even if all the people from the different parts of the world were to join together (for this purpose), until they destroy one another. I fear for this Ummah the leaders who are misguided and who misguide. If the sword is drawn to spill blood in this Ummah it will never be sheathed until the Day of Resurrection. The Hour (nearness of Resurrection) will not come until tribes of my Ummah attach themselves to the polytheists and until they worship idols. There will be great liars in

my Ummah, thirty of them, who say that they are prophets. I am the final seal of the Prophets and there will be no prophet after me. There will not cease to be a victorious group of my Ummah on the truth prevailing, and those opposing them will not harm them, until the command of Allah comes.”¹

He also said, peace and blessing be upon him:

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“I have been sent to every black and red person (all people).”²

He also said, peace and blessing be upon him:

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“Verily the Messengership and Prophethood have been cut off now and there is no more Messenger and no Prophet after me, but there remain good tidings, which is a good dream that a Muslim person has, and this is a part of the parts of Prophethood.”³

He also said:

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“The Prophethood has ended so there is no Prophet after me except good tidings a person sees in his dream or are shown to him. And in the authentic traditions, the Prophet peace be upon him, said:

¹ Reported by Muslim, Abu Da`ud, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and others..

² Reported by Ahmad and authenticated by Ahmad Shakir in his confirmation of Ahmad 13/6, and al-Albani in SJ # ١٧٢٨

³ Reported by at-Tirmidhi and Ahmad and al-Hakim and authenticated by al-Albani in SJ # ١٦٣١

“My similitude and the similitude of the prophets that came before me is like a man who built a beautiful and complete house, except for one brick. The people would enter and be amazed at the house and say ‘if it weren’t for that place of brick. Then the people came walking around it in a circle saying ‘if only he had placed this brick’: I am the brick. I am the seal of the prophets.”¹

Also in the authentic tradition the Prophet said, peace and blessing be upon him:

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“The sons of Israel used to be ruled by their Prophets, every time one died another one replaced him to take his place. As for me there is no prophet after me, and there will be Khulafa`a (Caliphs)...”²

All of these verses of the Quran and narrations of the Sunnah do not leave an iota of a doubt about the universality and finality of this mission of mercy to all people for all times. Among the earliest companions were Arabs and non-Arabs and people of all colors and various conditions. The undeniable fact is that Muslims from the earliest times until today are of all races and peoples and continents of the earth. Each knowledgeable believer testifies to the truth of these scriptures, and they all witness that the message of Islam is for all peoples of all times and places, and that their responsibility is to practice the message themselves and spread it to the peoples of the world.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² Reported by al-Bukhari.

Centrality and Institutionalization of the Concept of Mercy

This most basic principle of Islam is that all of the religion of Islam is for man to achieve the good and beneficial things (Masaalih) and to avoid the evil and corrupting things (Mafaasid). The greatest benefit is that which brings Allah's mercy which leads to Paradise and to salvation from His Punishment. The Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, was asked:

Which religion is the most beloved to Allah the Almighty and Majestic? He said: "al-Hanifiyyah as-Samhah."¹ And he said:

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"I have been sent with al-Hanifiyyah as-Samhah." And in another version when some of the companions from Habashah (Ethiopia) were playing with their spears in the Mosque (Masjid) on the Eid day, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

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"So that the Jews will know that we have leniency (kindness, and tolerance) in our religion: I have been sent with the "Hanifiyyah Samhah."² And he is reported to have said:

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"I have not been sent with the Jewish way or the Christian way but with "al-Hanifiyyah as-Samhah" ..."

Here we have two important terms that need explanation because they explain the idea that the mission of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, was and is a mercy to all people. "Hanifiyyah" means straight and not deviating left or right and

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari in Adab al-Mufrid #287 and others confirmed as good by al-Albani in his verification of the book. Adab al-Mufrid and SJ

² Reported by Ahmad # 24899, 26004 and others, and confirmed as good by al-Arn'ut and al-Albani in his as-Silsalah as-Sahihah # 1829

includes the idea that straightness is rare whereas deviation is widespread. It often is used for the way of Abraham as compared to the deviated ways of latter Jews and Christians after Moses and Jesus had guided them, may Allah's peace be upon them and all the prophets. It is defined here in this narration as indicating strict Islamic Monotheism (Tauheed) by staying away from all false idolatry and worship of other than Allah. Thus it means sincere worship of Allah without innovations. It describes the dominant characteristic of the ideological aspect of Islam, the system of belief and worship in Islam, and the creed of faith. "Samhah" is defined as kindness, good conduct and the easy going, lenient and tolerant, and merciful way, and it describes the dominant characteristic of Islamic laws and regulations of human social interactions and relationships. Thus the major characteristic of the teachings of Islam is that: 1) all its faith and belief system and way of worship is Haneef, meaning straightforward and pure monotheism without swerves and corruptions into idolatry and innovation; 2) all its laws of jurisprudence to regulate man's affairs and relationships are Samhah which includes the allowance of all beneficent, pure and wholesome things and acts and the prohibition of all obnoxious and harmful things and acts. In simple terms all worships are prescribed except that which is specifically legislated to perform, and in worldly affairs all things are lawful to eat and drink and do except that which has been specifically prohibited and made clearly unlawful. Simplicity without complication. Easiness without difficulty. Lenience without harshness. This indeed is the universal and natural good way to which all people of good and upright character are naturally attracted. All can agree upon this for its benefits and obviously good results in individuals and society. Tolerance and mild, kind manners have always been an ideal to which all Muslims aspire since the Prophet may the peace and blessing be upon him, prayed for Allah's mercy for the tolerant and mild mannered person saying:

“May Allah’s mercy be upon the mild mannered man in his buying, selling, receiving and judging.”¹

Mercy in Faith and Worship

The entrance of mercy as a trait of “Hanifiyyah” begins in the most basic and central concepts of faith and worship in Islam as related to Tauheed (monotheism). Allah is the only Lord and Creator who is Sovereign, Master and Owner of all creation, called his “Rububiyyah” (Lordship) and we are by necessity his creatures and servants. Allah is the only Divine God worthy of being asked and supplicated and worshiped (called His “Uluhiyyah” or “Ilahiyyah” (Godhead or Divinity). We humans, if we choose to be, are obedient and humble worshippers. The worship of Allah in all forms of worships and in our behavior and manners with complete sincerity in intention, word and deed is called our “Ta`alluha.” Many of the disbelievers and polytheists acknowledge that Allah is the Lord and Creator in His exclusive Lordship (Rububiyyah aspect), but then they worship other so-called deities and gods in their awe, fear and hope (Ta`alluha aspect), along with the occasional worship of Allah when it suits them. This is their ignorance and rebellion against His exclusive Divinity (Uluhiyyah aspect).

Mercy is the main connection in all this, for Allah sends His mercy as sustenance like when He sends his rain, and His mercy as guidance like when He sends his Books. Those who receive the mercy with gratefulness and obedient compliance attain more mercy whereas those that reject and squander it only gain a degree of the general mercy in this life and then lose the special mercy of the hereafter. As the eminent scholar al-Maqreezi, may Allah have mercy upon him, explains:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim and others.

“...know that the Rububiyyah (Lordship) is from Allah to His servants, and that the Ta`alluha (taking Him as the only divine God and Deity with love, awe, fear and hope) is from the servants to Allah the Glorious, while the Attribute of Mercy (Rahmah) is the connection between Allah the Almighty and Majestic, and His servants.¹ And the eminent linguist al-Fairuzabadi said:

“Rahmah (Mercy) is the relationship between Allah and his creatures. By mercy He sent His Messengers and revealed His Books, and by mercy He guided them and entered them into His abode of reward (Paradise) and by mercy He gave them sustenance and good health.”²

Explaining the reason for our creation Allah our Lord the Most Exalted said:

“And I have not created man and jinn except to worship Me (Alone). I do not seek any provision from them, nor do I ask that they should feed Me. Verily; Allah is the All-Provider, Owner of Power, the Most Strong. (51:56-58)

The entire creation is subjugated for man's disposal, to see what course of action he will take: will it be for truth and good or for

¹ Taqi ad-Deen Ahmad ibn Ali al-Maqrezi, (born 766 Hijri and died 845 H), TAJREED AT-TAUHEED AL-MUFEED [Revealing the Absolute Beneficial Monotheism (تجريد التوحيد المفيد), page 6.

² Basa'ir Dthawi at-Tamayyiz 3/55, and see (نصرة النعيم في مكارم أخلاق الرسول الكريم) “Nadhrat an-Naeem fi Makaram Akhlaq ar-Rasul al-Kareem” 6/210.

falsehood and evil. Our entire being and our wealth and possession have the purpose to be utilized in establishing the worship of Allah in the best possible manner. We do not have to make striving for sustenance the primary objective for life since Allah is the Gracious Provider. The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, explained the purpose of money and wealth as related to our worship in the Hadith Qudsi (divine tradition):

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"Allah the Almighty and Majestic said: 'I have made wealth to descend for the establishment of prayer and the paying of alms, and if the son of Adam had a valley he would like a second, and if he had two he would like to have a third, and nothing fills the belly of the son of Adam except dust, and then Allah turns to those (in Mercy) who repent.'" ¹

The blessings and wealth that Allah bestows on man can be good or evil depending on its source and utilization. It can be good by earning it honestly in useful employment and being used for good, as the Prophet explained, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

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"Blessed is the good and righteous wealth of the good and righteous man" ²

Man by nature needs good, wholesome and pure foods, drinks and clothes etc that Allah has provided him, along with the other legal adornments, which make life full, enjoyable, and complete. There is

¹ Reported by Imam Ahmad and at-Tabrani, and authenticated by Sheikh al-Albani in SJ# ١٧٨ and SS #1639

² Reported by Ahmad # 17798 and al-Arna'ut said it had with good chain of narrators, and Ibn Habban # 3210.

no sin in seeking and acquiring these things in due and legal means and measure, and giving thanks to Him in these blessings is worship, and indeed they are a necessary means to have a strong and healthy mind, body and soul with which to worship Allah completely in all aspects of life.

Allah the Exalted says:

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“O Children of Adam! Take your adornment (by wearing your clean and best clothes), while in the places of worship (masjid), and eat and drink but waste not by extravagance, certainly He (Allah) likes not those who waste by extravagance. Say (O Muhammad) ‘Who has forbidden the adornment that Allah has bestowed and has produced for his slaves, and at-Taiyibaat (all kinds of lawful pure and wholesome things) of food?’ Say: ‘They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) then exclusively for the believers on the Day of Resurrection.’ Thus We explain the signs (and Islamic laws) in detail for people who have knowledge. Say: ‘The things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are "Fawaahish" (great sins, including every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse, etc), whether committed openly or secretly, sins (of all kinds), unrighteous oppression, joining partners (in worship) with Allah for which He has given no authority, and saying things about Allah of which you have no knowledge.” (7: 32-34)

These verses emphasize the point that Islam calls to and legislates all that is good, pure and well known for its pleasing and beneficial properties. For the preservation of that good, Islam forbids and

prohibits all evil, impure things and that which is well known for its obnoxious and damaging properties.

Here is where “Samhah” comes in. The trait of ‘Samhah’ in Islam means in practice that its teachings and laws allow only pure, wholesome and beneficial things and restrict and forbid only detestable, obnoxious, corrupt and harmful things. Upon this basic maxim, Muslim scholars vigorously defend all laws of Islam against any attack. They prove convincingly that all the Islamic laws directly derived from the correct understanding of the Qur`an and verifiable authentic Sunnah, - a necessary condition to avoid the corruptions and malpractices of some pseudo scholars - are the best laws for mankind, and immensely more sensible and more just than the man-made customs and systems of laws which inevitably are legislated as tools of exploitation of special interests, some against others, and for the benefit of a privileged class against the general public welfare. Just as all men must submit to the natural laws that Allah made for natural phenomena, all men should submit to the authentic revealed religious law that Allah sent by way of His Messengers for success in this life and in the hereafter.

As we mentioned above Allah only commands for the known good and forbids from the known evil. He only allows all good, pure and wholesome things and only prohibits the disgusting and evil things. Allah wishes to remove any and all unnecessary burdens and makes the way to the good easy and accessible. Allah is the Rich, the All-Wealthy, and the Independent One, who is in no need of His creation in the sense of necessity, but in His Wisdom and Mercy created them and wished for them their own fulfillment and pleasure by guiding them to fulfill that purpose of their life towards goodness and true satisfaction and felicity by love of their Lord and Creator and that which He loves. The sustenance He sent and the guidance He revealed all benefits man and serves man's own best interests. The intelligent person uses what Allah has given him for good and is grateful for all the gifts of free will and greater

intelligence and greater means with which Allah has honored the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. Allah says in the Glorious Quran:

"And indeed We have honored the children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with lawful good things, and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preference." (17:70)

And yet real honor is by faith and good deeds and not by birth, race, class or position, for Allah the Exalted stated in the Majestic Quran:

"O Mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the Sight of Allah is the one who is most pious and righteous. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (49:13)

Man naturally loves and benefits and derives true wholesome pleasure from all these traits of the "Hanifiyyah" and the "Samhah." We Muslims say, as Allah and His Messenger taught us, that Islam is the religion of the natural pathway, the "Fitrah" (natural inclination to good). It is not the innovated practices and laws of the deviated Jews and Christians and those like them who devised their own ways and corrupted the Islam of the Prophets of Allah, and thereby made many people hate the naturally easy and beautiful religion of Allah. By making unnecessary burdens, boundaries and taboos for the people, they made the people run away to the opposite extreme of the uncontrolled desires.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim

All humans are basically good as created in goodness by their Most Beneficent Creator. Children naturally go towards the good and beneficial if they are not corrupted by misinformation and corrupting influences of devils and men. The deviation from the correct path is usually due to blind imitation of the forefathers and from peer pressure.

As for the devils, they will not cease trying to mislead the people into idolatry and false taboos as the narration of Iyad ibn Himmar, may Allah be pleased with him, reads that Allah said:

“...The property which I have conferred upon them is lawful for them. I have created My servants as Hunafa`a (one having a natural inclination to the worship of Allah and good) but it is Satan who turns them away from the right religion, and makes for them unlawful what has been declared lawful (by Allah), and he commands them to ascribe partnership with Him although he has no authority of that...”¹

These verses and narrations explain that Islam is the way of straightness and easiness but the Satan and his troops of devils and innovators make it crooked and difficult and harsh, thereupon men naturally hate it and leave it altogether, or remain deceived and twisted and restricted by various innovated and bogus taboos, rules and rituals.

This doesn't mean that there are no rules and regulations, but they should be natural rules that make sense, like the rules of cleanliness and the easy tolerant sensible way of Abraham, peace be upon him, who was the first to institutionalize the ways of worship and human interaction for the faithful after him, as it says in the Sunnah,

¹ Reported by Muslim.

“There are ten (demands) of “Fitrah” (pure nature): trimming the moustache; letting the beard grow; using Miswak (tooth-stick for brushing); snuffing up water into the nose (for cleaning it); paring the nails; washing the bases of the finger and toe joints; plucking the underarm hair; removing of the pubic hair; and removing impurities with water from the affected parts after a call of nature.” The sub-narrator Wake’e said: I forgot the tenth but it might possibly be the rinsing of the mouth (in ablution).”¹

Man naturally inclines in the uncorrupted state to clean and purify himself with pure water for health, for grooming and to enhance beauty. General medical health tells us that all of the above mentioned acts are of good hygiene. Islam avoids both sides of extremism: the extreme of harsh formalism in demanding difficult purification rituals and rites that some religious systems demand, and the extreme of laxity and neglect which leads to filthiness, disease, slothfulness and unseemly appearance.

The importance of cleanliness in the worships of Islam is expressed in the following famous narration wherein the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, made it equal to half the faith:

“Purity is half of faith. (The word) “alhamdu-lillah” [Praise be to Allah] fills the scales, and (the word) “subhana-Allah” [How far is Allah from every imperfection] and (the word) Allahu Akbar (Allah

¹ Reported by Muslim.

is Great) fill that which is between heaven and earth. Prayer is light. Charity is a proof (of faith). Patience is illumination. And the Quran is an argument for or against you. Everyone starts his day and is a vendor of his soul, either freeing it, or bringing about its ruin.”¹

The easiness of Islam is repeatedly mentioned by Allah the Most Gracious, for instance, He says:

“...and He has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty.”
(22: 78) And He said:

“Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship.”
(2:185)

This ease of Islam is also emphasized in the sayings of the Prophet, may the peace and blessing be upon him, for instance:

“Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. Be near (as best as you can to perfection) and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings and part of the latter part of the night.”²

And a general maxim in the manner of teaching Islam to others and co-operation is given in the eloquent words of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, when he sent Mu’adth ibn Jabal and Abu Musa al-Ash’ari on a mission to teach the people of Yemen, and said succinctly in advice:

¹ Reported by Muslim.

² Reported by al-Bukhari, no.38.

“Show leniency and do not be hard and harsh; give them glad tidings and do not create aversion; work in collaboration and do not be divided.”¹

We have been informed that all of the worships in Islam must meet two criteria for acceptance. The fact that these two conditions remain before the eyes of the faithful is the greatest mercy of Allah upon them to protect them from deviating from the path of mercy, and to maintain the highest standard of purity and altruism in their deeds. The first condition is that it is done sincerely and purely for Allah without associating with Him any partner or including any form of idolatry or hypocrisy. The second condition is that it is done correctly according to the revealed law and teachings. About the first mentioned, Allah the Most Exalted said:

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“...so worship Allah making religion sincere (and pure) for him.* For Allah certainly deserves sincere and pure religion. (39: 2-3).

This condition has always been part of the religion of Allah for He said about the People of the Book, the followers of Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them, the Jews and Christians:

“And they are ordained nothing else than to serve Allah, keeping religion pure for Him, as men by nature upright and to establish worship and to pay the poor-due. That is true religion.” (98/5) And in another possible translation: “And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion.”

The supreme importance of correct intention is mentioned in the famous narrations like what is narrated by Umar ibn al-Khattab,

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim

may Allah be pleased with him, who said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, saying:

"The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So whoever emigrated for worldly benefits or to marry a woman, his emigration is for that which he emigrated." ¹ And in the prophetic narrations the Messenger of Allah said, peace and blessing be upon him:

"Allah does not look at your outer image and your wealth but He looks at your hearts and your deeds." ² And the Messenger, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

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Allah the Exalted said, 'I am the most independent from partners and whoever does a deed and associates a partner in it with Me, then I leave him and his partner.' ³ And in another narration he said:

"Verily Allah does not accept any deed except that which is done purely and sincerely for Him seeking His face" ⁴ And the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

"...O people be sincere in your deeds for Allah for verily Allah only accepts those deeds that are done with sincerity for Him..." ¹

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari 1/9 no.1 and Muslim 2/151 no 1907.

² Reported by Muslim and others.

³ Reported by Muslim # ۲۹۸۵.

⁴ Reported by Muslim # ۲۵۶۴.

And in a lengthy yet important explanatory narration of Abu Kabshah al-Anmari, may Allah be pleased with him, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

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"I swear by Allah for three (qualities) which I am going to tell you about. Remember them well: The wealth of a man will not diminish by Sadaqah (charity). Allah increases the honor of a man who endures oppression patiently. He who opens a gate of begging, Allah opens a gate of poverty. I will tell you, so remember well what I am going to tell you: The world is for four kinds of people. The first person is the one upon whom Allah has bestowed wealth and knowledge and so he fears his Lord in respect to them, joins the ties of blood relationship and acknowledges the Rights of Allah on him (and fulfills them); this type will have the best position (in Paradise). Another person is the one upon whom Allah has conferred knowledge but no wealth, and he is sincere in his intention and says: 'Had I possessed wealth, I would have acted like so-and-so.' If that is his intention, his reward is the same as that of the other person (mentioned). A third person is the one whom Allah has given wealth but no knowledge and he squanders his

¹ Reported by at-Tirmidhi and at-Tabarai and verified as good by al-Albani in his as-Silsalah as-Sahihah #2764 and SJ # ٣٠٢٤.

wealth ignorantly, does not fear Allah in respect to it, does not discharge the obligations of kinship and does not acknowledge the Rights of Allah. Such a person will be in the worst position (in the Hereafter). A fourth person is the one upon whom Allah has bestowed neither wealth nor knowledge and he says: 'Had I possessed wealth, I would have acted like so-and-so (i.e. I would indulge and squander the wealth like him).' If this is his intention, both will have equal sin.”¹

These scriptures and others like them make it clear that the true merit or fault begins and ends with correct or incorrect intentions and the consequent deeds are built upon them. For this reason the Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him:

... ”

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“ ... Truly in the body there is an organ of flesh which, if it be whole the entire body is whole and which, if it be corrupted, the entire body is corrupted. Indeed that is the heart.”²

All deeds of worship must be free of hypocrisy, showing off and of seeking selfish status, name and fame. Man is most proud of his achievements of strength, power and courage, of knowledge and intelligence, and of wealth and properties and for this reason the Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him, as narrated by Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him:

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¹ Reported by Ahmad, and al-Arna`ut declared it good, and at-Tirmidhi, and authenticated by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame #5335-5336.

² Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

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“The first of men whose case will be decided on the Day of Judgment will be a man who died as a martyr. He shall be brought and Allah will make him recount His blessings and he will acknowledge them all. Allah will say: What did you do with them (these blessings)? He will say: I fought for You until I died as a martyr. Allah will say: You lie. You only fought so that you might be called a ‘brave warrior,’ and so you were called. Then the command will be passed against him and he will be dragged on his face downward and cast into Hell. Then a man will be brought forward who acquired knowledge and imparted it to others and recited the Qur’an. He will be brought and Allah will make him recount His blessings and he will acknowledge them all. Then Allah will ask: What did you do with them (these blessings)? He will say: I acquired knowledge and disseminated it and recited the Qur’an seeking Your pleasure. Allah will say: You lie. You only acquired knowledge so that you might be called ‘a scholar’ and you recited the Qur’an so that it might be said: ‘He is a Reciter’ and so it has been said. Then the command will be passed against him and he will be dragged on his face downward and cast into Hell. Then will be brought a man whom Allah had made abundantly rich and had granted every kind of wealth. He will be brought and Allah will make him recount and he will acknowledge them all. Then Allah will ask: What did you do with them (these blessings)? He will say: I spent money in every cause in which You wished that it should be spent. Allah will say: You lie. You only did this that it might be said that ‘He is very generous’ and so it was said. Then the command

will be passed against him and he will be dragged on his face downward and cast into Hell.”¹

Allah is independent of all needs, yet sincerity pleases Him - may He be glorified - and the benefit of sincerity to Allah returns to man for as the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

“This Ummah (nation of believers) is only victorious by the weak ones among them, by their supplications and prayers and sincerity.”²

According to the degree of sincerity the reward for the deed will be given, as the Prophet said, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him:

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“Whoever asks Allah for martyrdom with sincerity, Allah will have him reach the levels of the martyrs even if he dies on his bed.”³

The second condition is that the deed is done correctly according to the law and worship prescribed and legislated by Allah through his Prophets, and in this latter era by the last and final Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him. The final revelation from Allah is the Quran and his detailed explanation and legislation of the Sunnah abrogates all revelations and legislations that preceded. Therefore deeds done without this detailed guidance are unacceptable, according to his famous saying:

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“Whoever does a deed which doesn't have our command, it is rejected.”⁴ And in another version he said:

¹ Reported by Muslim and many others.

² Reported by an-Nasa'i 2/65 and verified as authentic by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame' # 4153, and # 2388, and basis of this is also in al-Bukhari without the word 'sincerity'.

³ Reported by Muslim #1908.

⁴ Reported by Muslim 3/1344, # 1718.

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“Whoever innovates in our affair that which is not of it, it is rejected.”¹ And in the narration of Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, the Messenger, peace and blessing be upon him, said in a sermon:

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“...and thereafter, for verily the best speech is the speech of Allah and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the worst affairs are those that are invented and every innovation (Bid’ah) is a misguidance.”² He also said in his sermon, peace and blessing be upon him:

Whoever Allah guides none can misguide, and whoever He sends astray none can guide, and the most truthful speech is the speech of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, and the worst affairs are those that are invented and every invented thing is a Bid’ah (innovation) and every Bid’ah is a misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Hellfire.”³

This is also explained in the narration of Jarir, may Allah be pleased with him, wherein the Messenger, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari # 2697 and Muslim 1718 907.

² Reported by Muslim 1/591, #867.

³ Reported by an-Nasa’i 3/188, #1578 and at-Tabarani and others verified as authentic by al-Albani in Sahih an-Nasa’i # 1578.

“Whoever makes a good way (Sunnah Hasanah) in Islam will have the same obligatory reward as the reward of those that follow him, without this depleting anything of their rewards, and whoever makes an evil way (Sunnah Sai’iah) in Islam will have the sin of this misdeed and the sin of those that follow him, without this depleting anything of their sins.”¹

These two conditions are mentioned combined together in many scriptures like the saying of Allah the Exalted:

“And who is better in religion than one who submits his face to Allah while doing good...” (4:125). And also the saying of Allah the Exalted:

“But indeed on the contrary, whoever submits his face to Allah while doing good will have his reward with his Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.” (2:112) And also the saying of Allah the Exalted:

“Say, ‘I am only a man like you upon whom has been revealed that indeed your God is one God. Therefore whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, then let him do righteous work and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord.’” (18:110)

¹ Reported by Muslim 2/705 #1017.

From the many texts above and others like them the acceptable deed is only that which is the most sincere and the most correct. If it is sincere but incorrect it will not be acceptable. If it is correct but insincere it will not be acceptable. It must be both, sincere and correct. It is truly sincere only by being entirely and wholeheartedly for Allah without ulterior motive, and when that act is an act of charity, for instance, it is done with purity of intent to truly benefit that person. It is correct by being only according to the detailed Sunnah of the Prophet that explains and brings into example the Quran. According to the degree of sincerity and correctness the acceptance is awarded and the rewards are given.

Mercy in the Entire Social System of Islam

Here in this section we will give some of the evidence to show that mercy is the governing characteristic in the organization of the Islamic social system. Much to prove this point has proceeded in the sections about Allah's mercy, about the mercy of the Prophet's character, peace and blessings be upon him, and about his commands for mercy. Since marriage is the innate and pure inclination of men and women, and since it is of the natural wholesome ways of the Prophets of Allah, and because the Christians innovated celibacy as a religious worship which has confused many people about religion in general and its role in a healthy society - that it is against pleasure in life and the natural wholesome way - this leads us to the importance of the social system in Islam, beginning with "womb" of the mother, marriage and all aspects of family issues. Not only do we find the prohibition of celibacy in Islam and the encouragement to marry, but also we find supreme honor given to the mother and father, and relations of the "womb," and that marriage is one half of the religion, and that women are the twin parts of men, and so on in many crucial teachings, as will be explained in the next sections which shows the relationship of mercy to the wombs and what the wombs bring forth. All human society begins at home and in the foundations of

the social system with relatives and neighbors. The contemporary scholar Abdur-Rahman as-Sa'adi said: "The Islamic law is all built upon mercy in its basic foundations and roots, and its details and branches, and in all it commands to fulfill the rights of Allah and the rights of the creatures and creation, for Allah did not make any soul responsible except for that which it is able to do. If you reflect upon all the laws that Allah the Most Almighty and Majestic legislated in interactions and family affairs, in all the rights of the wives, parents and relatives and neighbors, etc, and all that He legislated, you will find it all based upon mercy." ¹ We will investigate this claim in the remaining portions of the book.

In the general sense this is the dominant characteristic of the believers in their behavior one to another as Allah said of them

"Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves."

And the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

"The similitude of the believers in their mutual care, love and kindness to one another is like one human body: if one organ aches, this prompts the entire body to be feverish and remain awake." ²

And the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, also said

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¹ Ar-Riyadh an-Nadhirah wal-Hada'iq an-Nirah 61-62, and see (نصرة النعيم في مكارم) "Nadhrat an-Naeem fi Makaram Akhlaq ar-Rasul al-Kareem" 6/2101.

² Reported by Muslim and Ahmad.

“...The Unified Community is a blessing, and Schism is punishment.”¹

Mercy of Relations of the Womb

All human social relations begin with the relations of the womb, for we all are born attached to our mothers. Very significantly the word for womb “Raham” is taken from the Arabic root for mercy, R H M (ر ح م), and is derived from Allah's Mercy. This indicates that mercy, affection and attachment are the special attachment between a mother and her child and generally between all those related by the wombs of their mothers. Blood relationships are the source of all family structure and all social organization of man. Among the most sensationalized and controversial issues in the media about Islam nowadays are those affairs related to the “womb” like gender and women issues, including love relationships, marriage and divorce, family structure, honor and respect, “Hijab” and the prohibition and punishment for fornication and adultery. It is appropriate here that we correct some of the common misconceptions while at the same time endeavor to illustrate some crucial points related to our investigation of “mercy.”

In the authentic narration Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him:

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”Allah said, I have created the womb (ar-raham) and derived it as a name from My Name (ar-Rahman: the Most Beneficent in Mercy). Whoever connects it (the ties of womb relationship) I will connect with him, and whoever cuts it I will cut him off, and he who severs

¹ Reported by Abdullah ibn Ahmad, and Ibn Abi Dunya, and verified by al-Albani as good in SJ # ٣٠١٤.

it totally I will sever him totally.”¹ And the Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him:

“The ‘raham’ (womb) is attached as a branch to the Throne (of Allah)”² And he said:

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The “raham” (womb) is a branch from ar-Rahman (the Most Beneficent in Mercy) Whoever connects it I will connect with him, and whoever cuts it I will cut him off.”³

Above we mentioned that a narration teaches us that Allah is more merciful than the love of a mother for its child. Allah tells us that even the womb (raham) is derived from His Name (ar-Rahman). For Allah is the greatest similitude! It is only an approximation to help us understand. We know that a mother’s mercy and kindness may be of two types, the beneficial or the unbeneficial, whereas Allah’s mercy is always beneficial. Take the example of the doctor and the over pampering mother as an image of a harmful type of mercy. For instance a child becomes wounded. The merciful doctor knows that a certain amount of pain must be borne by the little one in order to clean and dress the serious wound sufficiently to avoid greater pain and suffering later on if the unchecked germs caused the wound to become infected and gangrene. Even when no local anesthetic is available the washing must be done quickly and efficiently which necessitates a strong and exact application of the hand’s motions. The coddling interfering mother may wish to avoid this in order to save the child from his immediate pain and, thinking that this is the true expression of mercy, plead and demand it to be avoided. But true mercy, as we all know, is what is really in

¹ Reported by Ahmad #1659 and other places, Abu Da’ud, at-Tirmidhi and others and verified as authentic by al-Arna’ut and by al-Albani in SJ #٤٣١

² Reported by Ibn Hahbban #٤٤2 and at-Tabrani and verified as authentic by al-Arna’ut and by al-Albani in SJ #٣٠٤٧

³ Reported by al-Bukhari.

the child's best long-term interests even if he must bear some unavoidable lesser immediate pain for his own good. If the coddling mother rejected the sincere advice of the wise and merciful doctor, and snacked the child, or weaned it away from the doctor to coo and sooth it with her spoiling hugs and indulgences, we would rebuke that as reckless, irresponsible ignorance, and an example of misplaced and false mercy. Then if the wound did indeed become gangrene the doctor and the intelligent mother in their knowledge, justice and mercy would decide to cut the limb off rather than have it spread and kill the child. The coddling ignorant mother would rather want to keep the child away from this pain also. And to Allah is the highest similitude, may He be glorified.

Of course we don't mean that all mothers have this misplaced mercy that puts their children in danger, for there are many examples like the mother of Moses when she had to send him as a babe in the cradle in the little reed boat in the river to avoid his slaughter by the soldiers of Pharaoh seeking all males of the sons of Israel. When the womenfolk of the family of Pharaoh picked him from the water, then... as Allah related to us this part of the story, ...

“And the heart of the mother of Moses became empty (out of fretful concern) and she was about to reveal him had We not fastened firm her heart, that she would be of the believers. (28:10) The idiom of emptiness is of course the exact opposite since she was so bursting with love, concern and fear for him that there was nothing else for her and she almost gave his secret away by going to them, but then she caught herself, by Allah's grace, and sent another who lead them to give the child to a wet nurse that becomes - by Allah's even greater mercy - the mother of Moses herself, as Allah said...

“And she said to his sister, ‘Follow him’ so she would watch him from a distance while they perceived not. * And We had prevented from him (receiving any) wet nurses before, so she said, “Shall I guide you to a household that will take care of him for you with utmost sincerity? * So We restored him to his mother that she might be content and not grieve, and that she would know that the promise of Allah is true. But most of them do not know.” (28:12-13)

Then there is that famous story of the Wisdom of Solomon as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, related to us:

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“While two women were with their two sons a wolf came and took away one of them. One of them said to her companion: Indeed it was your child that the wolf took. The other one said: Indeed it was your child that the wolf took. They brought the matter to David for judgment and he made a decision in favor of the elder one. Then they went to Solomon son of David, may peace upon both of them, and told him the case. He said: Bring me a knife so that I may cut him into two parts for you. The younger one said (spontaneously): No don’t, may Allah have mercy upon you, he belongs to her (the elder one)! So he gave the decision in favor of the younger one.”¹ Look at the natural instinct of the intelligent mother who knows the real benefit of the child and acts accordingly to avert it. Marvel

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

at the proverbial Wisdom of Solomon who uses the spontaneity of innate love of the mother to divulge the truth!

This investigation now takes us to aspects of mercy in the institution of marriage and the family structure in Islam, which is the basic building block of the healthy society.

Mercy of Family life and the rights of parents

We mentioned above that the word “womb” is derived from the attribute of Allah’s “mercy” and here we will mention some more examples of how mercy is the dominant characteristic in family relationships. Allah the Exalted states in the Glorious Quran:

“Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him; and that you be good to your parents. If one of them or both reach old age in your life do not say to them a word of the faintest complaint or disrespect, nor shout at them; but address them in terms of honor. And lower to them the wing of humility in mercy and say, ‘O Lord have mercy on them as they had raised me up (in mercy) when I was small.’ (17:23)

In this verse the right of Allah to be worshiped is placed adjacent to the right of parents. All Muslim scholars agree that the rights of parents in Islam are greater than all others and placed before all others except Allah. The expression “wing of humility in mercy” is an eloquent similitude of lowering the wing to bring close to the breast and into the fold for tenderness, warmth and security in their old age, just as they did when the child was young. In this manner mercy is the dominant trait regulating all relationships in the family life from youth to old age.

Another expression of this is in the supplication of the righteous and obedient son, as compared to the invocation of curse upon the wicked and disobedient son, as mentioned by Allah the Supreme:

“And We have enjoined good treatment upon man to his parents. His mother carried him with pain and difficulty gave birth to him with pain and difficulty, and his time of gestation and weaning is thirty months, and then (he grows) until he reaches maturity and forty years and says, ‘my Lord, strengthen me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to work righteousness of which You will approve and make my offspring righteous for me. Indeed, I have repented to You, and indeed, I am of the Muslims (submitting to You).’ * Those are the ones from whom We will accept the best of what they did and will overlook their misdeeds, among the companions of Paradise: a promise of truth that they had been promised. * But the person who disrespectfully says to his parents “uff? (fie, be off) to you, do you promise me that I will be resurrected from the earth when generations before me have already passed (into oblivion)?” (The parents) call to Allah for help (concerning their son) ‘Woe to you! Believe! Indeed, the promise of Allah is truth.’ But he says, ‘This is not but fable of the former people’ * Those are the ones upon whom the word has come into effect to become among nations which have passed on before them of jinn and men. Indeed, they were losers. * And for all there are degrees (of reward and punishment) for what they have done, that He may fully compensate them for their deeds, and they will not be wronged (in the least).”

As the paradigm for the Muslims the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him illustrated for us the example of humility and kindness

in domestic affairs, for the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said in general, explaining the comprehensive principle about good character and behavior:

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"The most complete believers are those with the best characters, and the best of you are those who are best to their womenfolk." ¹
The Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, also said:

"The most beloved of the servants are the most beneficial to their dependents." ² And he informed us about who are the best and about himself as the best to his family when he said:

The best of you are the best to your families and I am the best to my family." ³ And he said also, peace and blessings be upon him, in another comprehensive principle:

"The person who does not respect our elders and have mercy on our young ones and give proper acknowledgement due to those of knowledge is not of us." ⁴

In his humanity and humility he used to mend his own clothes and shoes and help his wives with the domestic daily chores, as his wife Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, was once asked: What did the Messenger of Allah use to do while at home? She responded: "

¹ Reported by Ahmad, Abu Da'ud, at-Tirmithi and Ibn Habbaan, and verified as good by al-Arna'ut and as authentic by al-Albani in SJ # ١٢٣٢.

² Reported by Abdullah ibn Ahmad in additions of Zuhd and others confirmed as good by Sheikh al-Albani in his Sahih al-Jam'e # 176.

³ Reported by Tirmithi and others and verified as good by al-Albani in SJ # ٣٣١٤

⁴ Reported by Ahmad and al-Hakim in others in wordings near to this, and verified as good by al-Albani in SJ # ٥٤٤٣

“He used to serve and assist his household, and when he would hear the call to prayer, he would leave the house (for worship).”

¹And she mentioned, may Allah be pleased with her, his manners and simplicity in the home saying:

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“He would mend his shoes and sew his clothes and work in the home like any one of you in your homes. She said: He was a man like any man and would clean his clothes from any bugs and milk his goat and serve himself.” ²

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari.

² Reported by Ahmad # 25380 and at-Tirmidhi and verified by al-Arna`ut and by al-Albani in SS #671.

Mercy in love relationships

To allow any form of harm upon one another in a society would be to allow chaos and destruction that is the opposite of mercy. A general Islamic principle is expressed in the all-inclusive saying of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him:

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"Do not harm yourself, nor others." ¹ This principle has many ramifications. No one should hurt himself or others. No one should make a lawful beneficial thing as unlawful, just as no one should make a harmful thing lawful, neither for himself nor for others, since both are restrictive, false and harmful. Marriage and sexual relations are the basis of the family structure of any society, and concerning them two harmful extremes must be avoided: the first is widespread celibacy for religious reasons; and the second is widespread promiscuity for sheer indulgence and lust under the guise of freeborn.

Some of the companions desired to concentrate more on their worship of Allah without distractions and thought that they would accomplish this by being celibates, and one of them even thought about castrating himself to totally cut off his desires. If the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, had allowed this to even one of his companions, it would have been taken as the accepted and approved Way (Sunnah) of the Prophet and many would have followed the example, with dire consequences on them and in society in general. In his wisdom and mercy for his community of followers he curtailed this misconception and reprimanded those who refrained from marriage without any justification and from the other worldly pleasures thinking that by restricting themselves in this manner of asceticism they would become better and more

¹ Reported by Ahmad #2867, ad-Darqutni, and Ibn Majah, and verified by Imam an-Nawawi and al-Arna'ut and al-Albani in SJ # ٧٥١٧.

righteous. Anas ibn Malik narrates the story, may Allah be pleased with him:

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"It was reported that some of the companions of the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, asked the wives of the Prophet about his deeds in private (i.e. his private worships), and when they heard about it, (they considered their own deeds to be insignificant). Some said: 'I will never marry women', another said: 'I will never eat meat', another said: 'I will never sleep on a bed', and another said: 'I will fast and never break fast'. When this was related to the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, he said: "What is the matter with some people who say such and such? I make prayer and sleep, and I fast and break the fast, and I marry women, therefore, whoever turns away from my Sunnah (way) is not of me".¹ And in a narration the companion Uthman ibn al-Mazth'un left his wife unattended to make abundant fasts and prayers and the Prophet said to him when he found out:

O Uthman we have not been ordained to be celibates (living like a monk)! Don't you have a good example in my way? By Allah I am the most fearing of Allah among you and guard His boundaries the most." And in another account of the story Uthman ibn Ma'thun, may Allah be pleased with him, desired to castrate and then seclude himself for the purpose of worship, but the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, forbade him and said:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others.

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“O Uthman I have not been commanded with ‘Rahbaniyyah’ (to be a monk). Are you displeased with my Sunnah?” He said No! He said: “From my Sunnah is to pray and sleep, to fast and eat, to marry and divorce, and whoever is displeased with my Sunnah is not of me. O Uthman, your family has a right over you, and your self has a right over you.”¹

Castration is not allowed. Celibacy with good reason is allowed and even commanded at certain situations but without justification it enters into a kind of exaggeration in religion that Allah the Almighty and Majestic warned against repeatedly. He said to the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians):

“O People of the Scripture do not commit excess in your religion...” (4:171) And the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, warned against exaggeration in religion in general when he said, as narrated by Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them:

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“Beware of exaggeration in religion since exaggeration in religion is what destroyed those that preceded you.”²

One clear exaggeration leading to the ultimate deviation was exaggerating the status of Jesus peace be upon him, by making him into God and worshiping him. For this reason Prophet cautioned

¹ Reported by ad-Darami, and see Sheikh al-Albani's Silsalah as-Sahihah no. 394.

² Reported by an Nasa'i 5/268, Ibn Majah 2/1008, Ahmad 1/347 and its chain of narrators is good as Ibn Taimiyyah said in Iqtida Sirat al-Mustaqeem 1/289, and by al-Albani in his Silsilah as-Sahihah # 1283, and # 2144.

about inflating the status of any person when he said, peace and blessings be upon him:

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"Do not exaggerate my praise as the Christians exaggerated the praise of (Jesus) son of Mary, verily I am only a slave, so say: the slave of Allah and His Messenger." ¹

Another clear exaggeration the Christians innovated for themselves was celibacy, exaggerated asceticism and never-ending cloistered seclusion for worship. Despite their good intentions this unlegislated and unnatural state has had innumerable consequences and ramifications and counter reactions among their followers leading to many corruptions that remain evident even till today, the age of secularism and the curtailment of religion to the majority of them. Allah the Exalted said:

"Then, following their footsteps, We sent Our messengers, and followed them with Jesus the son of Mary, and We gave him the Gospel. And We placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy, and monasticism they innovated - We did not prescribe it for them except that they were seeking the pleasure of Allah. But they did not observe it with due observance." (57:27)

True asceticism is to leave the excesses in things of this life and those things that are not absolutely necessary for existence. False and harmful asceticism and ignorance is to leave what strengthens the person and is necessary for a full and complete life, those wholesome things that help establish him firmly on goodness and the path of righteousness. This was the pathway of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and his companions, may Allah

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari 4/171, no. 3445.

be pleased with them, the beneficial medium between two harmful extremes.

The fullness of love, affection and mercy cannot be fully learnt, developed and nurtured in the individual and society without protecting the institution of marriage and organizing and safeguarding the basic structure of family life. Many enormous psychological and social problems are often traced to the imbalances, disruptions and instability of a childhood deprived of warmth, love and mercy that all children and adults instinctively crave. Individuals need and crave the true satisfaction that exists within the bonds of attachment in marriage and family life and close relatives.

If men direct their sexual desires to satisfy their lust out of wedlock they degrade themselves and others and rebel against the beneficial institution of legal marriage. The resultant moral and social chaos includes debasing and exploiting womenfolk, prostitution, rape, perversions, homosexuality, corruptions, children born out of wedlock and abortions, just to mention a few, all with multiple filthy and ugly ramifications throughout the society. A child needs and craves loving parents, and when born in wedlock is received with celebrations, joy, love, mercy and tenderness by the parents and the extended family, and all people love the innocence, purity and beauty of this newborn. On the other hand, the child born out of wedlock - if he or she even reaches birth and is not aborted beforehand - most often is lamented for his or her appearance, most often is hated and cursed, and (if he or she is able to even survive the initial turmoil) most often is abandoned to harsh circumstances like criminal street gangs - unless Allah's mercy saves him from this miserable fate.

Islam treats lawful love, affection and sexual relationships as one of the greatest and purest pleasures of human life. Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that...

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“A man came to the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him and said, We have an orphan girl (under our custody) and a man without anything and a man with easy means both asked for her marriage. She desires the man without anything and we want the man with easy means. The Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said: I have not seen anything for two that are in love like marriage and sexual relations.”¹

The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

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“That which doesn't contain the remembrance of Allah is just amusement and play, except for four (things): to have fun and play with one's wife, to train one's horse, to walk between two destinations, and to learn swimming.”² Many amusements are merely for wasting time and idle play and are therefore without reward from Allah, but these mentioned above are useful, lawful, and fulfill valid beneficial purposes, besides being naturally pleasurable and an aid towards remaining within what is lawful. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, also said:

“The life of this world is all relief and pleasure, and the best relief and pleasure of the life of this world is a righteous wife”³ And he

¹ Reported by Ibn Majah and al-Hakim and confirmed as authentic by al-Albani in SS #624 and SJ #٥٢٠٠

² Reported by Imam Malik, Nisa'e, at-Tabarani and others and verified by al-Albani in SJ # ٤٥٣٤

³ Reported by Imam Muslim, Ahmad, and an-Nasa'e.

mentioned, peace and blessings be upon him, the major lawful worldly pleasures specifically when he said:

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“Four are from the happiness (of this life): a righteous wife; a spacious house; a good neighbor; and a fast transport. And four are from the misery (of this life): a cramped house; a bad neighbor; a wicked wife; and a slow transport.”¹ And he said, peace and blessings be upon him:

“A heart that is grateful, a tongue that is continually in remembrance, and a righteous wife: these (three) help you in the affairs of the life of this world and your religion, and they are better than what the people collect as treasures.”² And he asked one of his companions Jabir ibn Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, as he narrates the event:

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“Have you married O Jabir? I said: Yes. He said: A previously married lady or a virgin? He said: A previously married lady. He said: Why not a virgin so that you will have fun with her and she with you.” And in another version: “So she will make you laugh and you will make her laugh.”³

All of these narrations above indicate that men and women are instinctively attracted to each other to fulfill themselves spiritually, socially and physically, and this is pure, good and natural since they are created one from the other and one for the other. They both are inseparably bound to each other. Neither can find complete

¹ Reported by at-Tabrani, al-Bazzar, and al-Hakim, and verified as authentic by al-Albani in SJ 111 and SS # 282

² Reported by Ibn Habbab and verified as authentic by al-Albani in SJ # 111

³ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim and others.

fulfillment when they are healthy adults except in the natural relationship as legal and honorable mate and spouse, wherein there is peace, love and mercy between them, as Allah the Sublime said in His Majestic Book, the Qur'an:

“And among His Signs is that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find peace and repose in them, and He has put between you love and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for people who reflect.” (30:21) The verse shows that love and mercy are the two great bonds of attachment in the family. And Allah also said:

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“On the nights of the fasting (of Ramadan) it is allowed to enter upon your women for sexual pleasure: they are garments for you, and you are garments for them...” (2:187) Sine clothes and garments are a necessity of life for warmth, protection, covering, and adornment, we naturally find comfort, security, satisfaction and identity in them, and this is the sign of this simile. The male and female are in need of each other, similar to the naked body of the human stands in need of clothes to face his natural and social environment.

This all is within the natural and beautiful order of the universe for as Allah the Almighty said in the Glorious Qur'an:

“And of everything We have created pairs, that you may remember (the Grace of Allah).” (51:49) Even atoms exhibit this dual quality mentioned, with inter-related and complementary roles played by the positive and negative currents, yet each is an integral part of the whole system of the so called binary basis of all created life. Most living beings have male and female sexes for reproduction. As the science of biology teaches us, mammals have traits in their

molecular, glandular, bone formation and muscle structures that determine differences in gender. These basic physical, psychological and sexual traits have their definite effects on other spheres of life, and both sexes become naturally attracted to each other.

The story of Adam and Eve is known to all but significantly in the Islamic texts there is no evilness attached intrinsically to Eve or the female gender and no resultant evilness attached to sexual relationships and marriage and women like in some other religions. The Prophet, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

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"Verily women are only the twin halves of men." ¹ And the Prophet emphasized the importance of the marriage bond when he said in a verified tradition:

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"Whoever marries has completed half of his faith so let him fear Allah in the remaining portion." ² In another verified version of this narration we find that this equals one half of the religion (

) and this indicates all that is logically attached to marriage and family life of love, affection, mercy, mutual aid and assistance, and good manners in family relations and childrearing and even relating to the extended family, clan and tribe.

The Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, encouraged the youth to marriage saying:

¹ Reported by Abu Da'ood, Tirmithi and others and verified as sound by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame'as-Sagheer #2333.

² Reported by Tabrani and verified as sound by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame'as-Sagheer #٤٣٠ and as-Silsalah as-Sahihah # 625.

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“O young men whoever of you has the ability to become married then let him do so, for that is more conducive for him to lower his gaze and be chaste in his private parts, and if he cannot then let him fast, for this curtails (his sexual urge).”¹ And he said also:

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“Marry the loving childbearing women so that my nation will become greater in numbers.”² Loving so that there will be kindness and mercy in the family and childbearing so that the purpose will be fulfilled. And in another verified account the addition goes:

“Marry so that my nation will become greater in numbers, and do not be like the celibate monks of the Christians.”³

The institution of marriage needs to be protected just as the women and children by their natural weakness need guardianship and protection, for not only are there criminal elements in the world intent to prey upon and exploit the weak and to wreck havoc to satisfy their lust, but all men have their weaknesses and inclinations to what is unlawful as the prophetic tradition says:

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“Allah has written the portion of Zina (fornication or adultery) which the son of Adam will commit, and it must occur inevitably. The Zina of the eye is looking (at a woman), Zina of the tongue is speech, the heart yearns and desires, and then the private parts

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari 2/280, no. 1905 and Muslim 2/1018, no. 1400.

² This narration is reported in various versions and this version is by Abu Da'ud, an-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and others and has been verified as authentic by Arna'ut, and by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame as-Sagheer #2940.

³ See al-Albani's Sahih al-Jame as-Sagheer #2941. SS 1782

confirm it or deny it.”¹ This tradition specifies that a certain amount of sinful action in this regard will take place by men, like the roving eye. This being a given, therefore. Islam has legislated many protective measures to guard both men and women from excess temptation, all of which are explained in the details of Islamic jurisprudence, like the prohibitions concerning mixing in the public or private places without a chaperone, or traveling without chaperone, or acting immodestly, or wearing immodest clothes, or marriage without a guardian, etc. The general rule is to act with modesty and to protect and safeguard the individuals and the society from awkward situations of unnecessary intermingling between marriageable males and females leading to natural temptations. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said in an authentic tradition:

“Verily for every religion there is a characteristic, and the characteristic of Islam is al-Haya`a (modesty, shyness, bashfulness).”²

Allah the Almighty and Wise said:

“O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (and/or veils) over their bodies. That is better that they should be known so as not to be annoyed and molested. Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (33:59)

Allah the Almighty also said:

¹ Reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others.

² Reported by Ibn Majah and verified as good by al-Albani in SJ # ٢١٤٩ and SS # 9٤0

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts and not display their adornment (and beauty), except that which appears thereof (ordinarily) and to draw their coverings over their chests and not display their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husband's sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess (their slaves) or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stomp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornments. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed.” (24:31) This verse indicates those males who are categorized as due chaperones and “mehram,” and designates that men and women should lower their gazes in modesty to one another, which is the best self-protection from natural temptations and mutual attractions that occur between the opposite sexes.

Allah the Most Wise says, indicating good Islamic manners as opposed to the provocative manners and coquetry with which the women of pre-Islamic era used to walk about, and calling the believers to appropriate behavior, decorum and repentance:

“And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves in coquetry like that of the times of ignorance, and establish regular prayers and give obligatory charity and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah wishes only to remove impurity from you, O members of the family (of the Prophet), and to purify you with a thorough purification. And remember that which is recited in your houses of the Verses of Allah and Wisdom (the Prophet's Sunnah). Verily, Allah is Ever Most Sagacious, Well-Acquainted. Verily, the Muslim men and women, the believing men and women, the obedient men and women, the truthful men and women, the patient men and women, the humble men and women, the charitable men and women, the fasting men and the women, the chaste men and women, and the men and the women who remember Allah much with their hearts and tongues; Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward (i.e. Paradise). It is not for a believing man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter, that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, has indeed strayed in a clear error.” (33: 33-36)

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said for the protection of the women; so that she will not be exposed to molestation and abuse:

“A man is not secluded with a woman, but that the Satan is the third party to them.”¹ And in another version, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

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“A man is not to seclude himself with a woman except a “mehram (close relative).” A man said: O Messenger of Allah my wife has gone out to go for Pilgrimage and I have been written to go for a

¹ Reported by Tirmithi and verified by al-Albani in Mishkat # 3118.

military campaign. He said: “Go and make Pilgrimage with your wife.”¹

The reality is that libertine morals and freedoms in premarital and extramarital sexual affairs inevitably leads to universally recognized social evils like love triangles and the consequent jealous aggression and violence, honor killings, beatings, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, deserted and abused children, sexual diseases, exploitations, prostitution, and more. Women in general are extremely precious, first as mothers and sisters, then as wives and daughters, and generally as relatives and neighbors. The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, expressed this in the most eloquent of idioms when he said to a man singing with a beautiful masculine voice traveling songs to help the steady movement of the group with their riding and pack animals, as per the custom of caravans:

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“Gently, O Anjashah, in your urging on of the delicate glassware.”² The phrase “delicate glassware” describes the fragileness and softness of the women’s nature, who were the riders in that caravan, easily broken or disturbed, and may be affected adversely by the beauty of the vocal song.

This is because daughters are most precious, as the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said in a verified tradition:

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“Do not force the daughters and girls for they are precious and delightful companions.”³

¹ Reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others

² Reported by al-Bukhari.

³ Reported by Ahmad and verified by al-Albani in his as-Silsalah as-Sahihah # 3206

Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, said:

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“A woman came to Allah's Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and said: O Prophet of Allah! My father offered me in marriage to his nephew to elevate his social status. Allah's Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, returned the matter to her hands, to accept and approve the marriage or to reject. The woman said: “I approve now of what my father has done, but I wanted to teach other women that their fathers have no right in this (to force them to marry whoever they want).”¹

For preciousness of the womenfolk Islam holds them in the greatest respect and has legislated many rules for their protection, honor and safeguarding, like guardianship. The Messenger of Allah, may peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, made this perfectly clear when he said:

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“There is no marriage without a guardian.”² And in another version:

“There is no marriage without a guardian, and the ruler is the guardian for those who have no guardian.”³

¹ Reported by Imam Ahmad # 25087 and Nasa'e and al-Baihaqi and others, and al-Arna'ut said that it has a good chain of narrators.

² Reported by Ahmad, Abu Da'ood, at-Tirmithi, an-Nasa'e, Ibn Majah and many others and verified as authentic by al-Albani in SJ # ٧٠٠٠.

³ Reported by Ahmad and Ibn Majah, and verified and verified as authentic by al-Albani in SJ # ٧٠٠٦

Therefore, for her own protection if she elopes and marries herself, this marriage is considered unlawful, as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, declared:

“Any woman who marries without the consent of her guardian, then her marriage is nullified, then her marriage is nullified, then her marriage is nullified, and if he has consummated the marriage then she must receive a dowry from him for what he has made lawful of her private parts, and if they fall into dispute then the ruler is the guardian for those who have no guardian.”¹

As mentioned above in the rights of daughters, whether a virgin or otherwise, the right of a woman is to accept or reject any marriage offer of her own free will. The institution of guardianship is only to protect her interests and welfare and preserve her rights. The true measurement of a suitable match in marriage is the statement of the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him:

“If a person comes to you to propose a marriage, and you are pleased with his religion and morals, then marry him. If you fail to do so, great affliction will take place on earth, and corruption will be widespread.”²

All that protects from unlawful and shameful deeds is commendable, but extremism is not, and of this is what he mentioned, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, about two kinds of jealousy and protectiveness:

¹ Reported by Ahmad, Abu Da'ood, Tirmithi and Ibn Majah, and verified as authentic by al-Albani in SJ # ٢٧٠٩

² Reported by Tirmithi, Ibn Majah and verified as good by al-Albani in SJ # ٢٧٠ and SS # ١٠٢٢ .

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"There is a kind of Gheerah (jealousy and protectiveness) that Allah loves and a kind which He hates: the kind that he loves is in the doubtful acts, and the kind he hates is in the acts which are not doubtful or suspicious."¹

No matter how noble one thinks he is being in his "Gheerah", Allah has more Gheerah than that person, and certain types of jealousy are acceptable and commendable, and others are not, and the kind that are not are unlawful. The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, explained this above, and in another verified tradition he said:

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"Verily Allah gets jealous and the believer gets jealous and the jealousy of Allah is to see a believer doing unlawful acts..."² And in a longer account of this he said:

"There is no one who loves to be praised more than Allah and for this reason He praised Himself. There is no one that is more jealous than Allah and for this reason He has prohibited all the monstrous sins (like fornication and adultery). There is no one that loves to have the justification and excuse for himself more than Allah and for this reason He has revealed His Books and sent His Messengers."³

¹ Reported by Ahmad, Abu Da'ood and Nisa'e verified as good by al-Albani in SJ #2221

² Reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others

³ Reported by Ahmad, al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others.

And he said, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him:

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“Three persons do not enter Paradise: the disobedient one to his parents; the one without commendable jealousy (about his wife); and the women who act (and dress) like a man.” And in an account the man without commendable jealousy came explicitly saying “ the man who allows corruption for his wife.”¹

And in a famous incident Salman Al-Farisi, may Allah be pleased with him, reported: "I went to visit my brother in faith, Abu-Darda, may Allah be pleased with him, and upon arrival, I was greeted by his spouse Um Darda, may Allah be pleased with her, who was in an unkempt state. Seeing that I asked her, 'What is the matter with you; why are you in this state and not attentive to your husband?' She said: Your brother Abu-Darda has no interest in this world and its affairs. He spends his nights praying and days fasting! Upon the arrival of Abu-Darda, who welcomed Salman and offered him some food, Salman said: Why do not you eat with me? Abu-Darda said: I am fasting. Salman said: By Allah you must break your fast and eat with me. Abu-Darda broke his fast and ate with Salman. Salman spent that night with Abu-Darda, and Abu Darda got up during the night to offer some night prayers whereupon Salman stopped him from doing so, saying: Your body has certain rights upon you, your Lord has certain rights upon you, and your family has certain rights upon you. Fast some days and break the fast on others, approach your spouse (for marital relations). Grant everyone their due right. Just before the break of dawn, Salman permitted Abu-Darda to get up and offer prayers. Both of them rose, performed ablution, offered prayers and then headed to the Masjid to offer Fajr (dawn) prayer. Upon finishing the prayer with the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him,

¹ Reported by Ahmad and an-Nasa'i verified as good by al-Albani in ST # ۲۰۷۰ and #۲۳۶۶ and SS # 6۴0 and #1397 and #3099.

Abu-Darda reported to the Prophet about the incident. The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

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"Salman has spoken the truth." ¹

A famous story also shows the utmost respect that Islamic teachings have for this affair to attending to the rights of each partner. Abdur-Razzaq and others narrate that Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him:

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He was making night rounds (of guardianship) when he heard a woman lament:

The night has grown long, and its end is dark and black,

I am sleepless since I have, with whom to play, no lover,

If there was not (the Lord) whose Throne is above the Heavens,

The sides of this bed, would roll, shake and quiver.

In the morning he went to her and asked her the reason for her poetry, and she answered that her husband had gone with the soldiers on a long campaign. Umar then conferred with his daughter Hafsa on how long a woman can be patient for her

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and others.

husband to return. After some moments of hesitation and embarrassment, in which he convinced her that this question was for the general good of the Muslims, she replied six months. After this, Umar would close a campaign within six months so that they could return to their wives within that time.

Even if he dislikes her for whatever reason, he must not mistreat her, as Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

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“A believer must not hate a believing woman (i.e. his wife): if he dislikes one of her characteristics, he will be pleased with another.”¹

All this above is indeed to safeguard each marriage partner's rights and spread gracious, respectful and merciful relations between the two genders.

Once a man is married, it would be extremely harmful to leave her and her children uncared for and not give his spouse and family due attention and rights in all relationships. The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

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“It is enough sin for a person to neglect those for whose care he is responsible.”²

And Ibn Omar, may Allah be pleased with them, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and others.

² Reported by Muslim and others

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"Each one of you is a shepherd and each one of you is responsible for those under his care. A leader is a shepherd and is responsible for his citizens. A man is a shepherd of his family and is responsible for them. A woman is a shepherd in her husband's home and is responsible for whatever is under her care. A servant is a shepherd of his master's wealth and is responsible for whatever is under his care. Each one of you is a shepherd and each one of you is responsible for whatever is under his care."¹

Mercy in the Economic System, and the concern for sensible, sustainable development of the environment

The entire life of this world is at man's disposal to utilize, nevertheless, his deeds therein are a test from Allah to see how he would act: for good or bad, in obedience or disobedience, with constructive purposes to spread virtue, good will and benevolence, or with destruction decadence to spread vice and ruin and wastage. We are all slaves and owned by Allah, our master, whether we admit it or not. Abu Qatada ibn Rib'e al-Ansari narrated that a funeral procession passed by the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, so he said:

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"Relieved and relieved from! The people asked, 'What (do you mean by) relieved and relieved from? He said: "A believing slave is relieved (by death) from the troubles and hardships of the world

¹ Reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others.

and leaves for the Mercy of Allah, while a wicked slave dies and then the people, the land, the trees, and the animals are all relieved from him.”¹

An obedient slave of Allah and true worshipper knows that as a slave he owns nothing in himself, and that his body and thoughts and labors should all be at the disposal of the Master who is the true owner. This slave looks at the creation of the Master around him with deep respect, reverence and gratefulness, for it was created for a rightful purpose and goal and not for mere play, sport and uselessness. The eminent Taba'e (follower) Ata said:

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“Udaid ibn Umair and I entered to visit Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, (the beloved wife of the Prophet) and between us was the curtain. She said, O Ubaid, why don't you visit more often. He said, (For) what the poet said, visit a day after some days so you

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari # ٦٥١٢ and Muslim # 950.

will increase in love. Then Udaid said, Please tell us what was the most amazing thing you ever saw about the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him. She started crying and then said: 'Everything about him was amazing. He came to me on my night until my skin touched his skin and he said: Please let me worship praying to my Lord the Almighty and Majestic tonight. I said: By Allah I love you to be next to me, and I love that you worship praying to your Lord. She said: He stood and made ablution without using much water and then stood and prayed and continued crying until his beard was wet from his tears, and then prostrated and continued crying until the earth was wet from his tears. And then he turned and laid down and continued crying until Bilal came for calling the dawn prayer. When he saw him crying he said: O Messenger of Allah, do you cry (in this manner) even though Allah has forgiven you what has preceded of your sins and what will come afterwards? He said: Woe to you O Bilal, and why shouldn't I cry and it has been revealed tonight (the saying of Allah) 'Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.' Then he said: woe to those who read them and do not ponder over them." And in a version of the narrative he said: "Shouldn't I be a grateful slave (of Allah)? Some verses have been revealed to me tonight, and woe to those who read them and do not ponder over them." ¹ The emotional and thought provoking verses indicated are as follows:

¹ Reported by Ibn Habbab # 620 and verified as authentic by Shuaib al-Arna'ut, and verified as good by al-Albani in ST #1468 and SS # 68, and this version is that which was mentioned by Ibn Katheer in his Quranic exegesis under the relevant verse of the report of Ibn Mardawaiy – may my body and soul be sacrificed for Allah's sake to the Messenger of Allah the most amazing and inspiring worshiper of Allah in sincerity and thankfulness, may the praises, salutations, prayers, and peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

“Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. * Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting or on their sides, and who give thought about the creation of the heavens and the earth, (and who say) ‘Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly! Exalted are You! And protect us from the punishment of the fire! * Those who remember Allah while standing or sitting or on their sides, they think and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth, (and they say) ‘Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; Glory be to You in Exaltedness! Protect us from the punishment of the fire. * Our Lord, no doubt that those who You condemn into the Fire You have disgraced him, and there are no helpers for the wrongdoers. * Our Lord, indeed we have heard a caller calling to faith, (who said) ‘Believe in your Lord,’ and we have believed, Our Lord, so forgive us our sins and remove from us our misdeeds and make us to die with the righteous. * Our Lord, and bestow upon us what You have promised us (by the revelation) through Your messengers, and do not disgrace us on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, You do not fail in promise.’” (3:190-194)

When believers look into the heavens and the earth, they are awestruck by Allah’s expansive creation and return upon themselves and reflect even upon the minute details before their eyes and then again ponder the unseen. Their souls yearn spontaneously propelling them to supplicate their Lord with this sincere invocation. Does it make sense that the person who believes the creation of Allah to be the sacred property of Allah the Master and Creator, which is given to him as a sacred trust to deal with responsibly, and then wreck ruin destruction and misery in that trusteeship? Allah the Exalted said:

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“Allah, it is He Who has subjected to you the sea, that ships may sail through it by His Command, and that you may seek of His Bounty, and that you may be thankful, And has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; it is all as a favor and kindness from Him. Verily, in it are signs for a people who think deeply.” [45:12-13]

The entire creation is subjugated for man's disposal, to see what course of action he will take: will it be for truth and good or for falsehood and evil. Our entire being and our wealth and possession have the purpose to be utilized in establishing the worship of Allah in the best possible manner. We do not have to make striving for sustenance the primary objective for life since Allah is the Gracious Provider. The Almighty said:

“Believe in Allah and His Messenger and spend out of that which He has made you successors. For those who have believe among you and spent (rightfully), there will be a great reward.” (57:6) All wealth and property in man's possession is a gift from Allah, as Allah says in the context of the slaves who have contracted to buy their own freedom from their masters through their labor:

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“...and give them from the wealth that Allah has given you...” (24: 34) This wealth in trusteeship should be used for benefit and not squandered and wasted in foolishness, for Allah the Exalted says:

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“And do not give the foolish ones your “mal” (wealth, money) that Allah has made for your uprightness (in sustenance and livelihood etc)...” (4:5)

Ibn Omar, may Allah be pleased with them, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said:

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“Each one of you is a shepherd and each one of you is responsible for those under his care and guardianship. A leader is a shepherd and is responsible for his citizens. A man is a shepherd of his family and is responsible for them. A woman is a shepherd in her husband's home and is responsible for whatever is under her care. A servant is a shepherd of his master's possessions and is responsible for whatever is under his care. Each one of you is a shepherd and each one of you is responsible for whatever is under his care.”¹

This stewardship, trusteeship and consequent responsibility is according to the degree that man owns and controls of those around him. Thus every action he does is purposeful and with a deep sense of conscientiousness, for he knows that the ramifications of his deeds may multiply in the good or the bad accordingly. The Messenger of Allah said, peace and blessings be upon him:

“A Muslim does not plant something or cultivate something of which the birds or the human or the animals eat, but that a reward is given to him for this as a charity.”²

Even if many people may think that some specific deed will not bring the immediate fruit and therefore it should be abandoned

¹ Reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others.

² Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim, and others.

being not profitable in the material sense, the slave of Allah knows that the result and reward is with Allah for good deeds and he continues on the path of goodness, for the Messenger of Allah said, peace and blessings be upon him:

“If the Hour (of the Day of Resurrection) took place while one of you is holding a palm-tree seedling (to plant in the dirt) then if he can plant it before standing up, he should do it.”¹

Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“While a person was in a barren land he heard a voice from the cloud (commanding it thus): ‘Water the garden of so and so.’ The clouds then turned to a side and poured its water on a stony ground and filled a channel of that land. The person followed that water and found a person standing in a garden busy directing the course of that water with his garden shovel. He said to him: O slave of Allah, what is your name? He said: So and so. And it was that very name which he had heard from the clouds. He said to him: O slave of Allah why do you ask me my name? He said: I heard a voice from the clouds of which this downpour came, saying: Water the

¹ Reported by Ahmad # 2304 and others and verified as authentic by al-Arna`ut and by al-Albani in SJ#١٤٢٤.

garden of so and to, which was your exact name. What do you do (to earn this blessing from Allah) in this matter? He said: Now that you mentioned it, I see that the yield which I receive from this land is divided in to three parts: I give one-third as charity; my dependents and I eat one-third of it; and one-third I return to it as its maintenance.”¹

Putting 1/3rd into charity after consuming 1/3rd and then putting 1/3rd of all proceeds back into the land is the superlative concept of being merciful to the land and environment through responsible sustainable development. Many of the scriptures here and in preceding sections about benevolence to the land and plants and animals concur that this is the goal and ideal to achieve. For this reason any person who brings life to the barren desert land by labor and irrigation becomes the owner of that land since he has proven his honest worth and usefulness. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“The earth is the land of Allah and the creatures are the slaves of Allah, and whoever brings the dead earth to life (in cultivation) then he is the owner of it.”² And in another version:

“The creatures are the slaves of Allah, the earth is the land of Allah, and whoever brings a piece of the dead earth to life (in cultivation) then he is the owner of it, but the sweat of the unjust has no right whatsoever.”³ The last phrase indicates those that take even a hand span of land from others and devour their rights and properties.

¹ Reported by Muslim # 2984.

² Reported by Abu Da'ud and confirmed as good by al-Albani in SJ #2766 and Sahih Abi Da'ud #2641.

³ Reported by al-Baihaqi and confirmed as confirmed as good by al-Albani in SJ #٤١١٨.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was asked:

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"Is there wastage and extravagance in ablution (with water)? He said: Yes even if you are using a running river." ¹

And the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, gave us a general instruction of benevolence when he said:

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"The believer is kind and sociable, and there is no good in one who is not kind and sociable, and the best person is the most beneficial to the people."² And in a longer version of a tradition close to this meaning:

"The most beloved to Allah are those who are most beneficial to the people, and the most beloved deeds are giving happiness to a Muslim, of relieving him from a catastrophe, or paying his debt for him, or removing his hunger. For me to walk with a Muslim in need to help him is more beloved than to stay in I'tikaf (seclusion for worship) in this Masjid –meaning the Masjid of Medinah – for a month, and whoever holds back his anger Allah will hide his defects, and who suppresses his fury when he could let it loose if he wanted, Allah will give him hope on the Day of Resurrection, and

¹ Reported by Ahmad and Ibn Majah and others and verified as reliable by al-Albani SS # 3292 even though he had previously deemed it weak in other books.

² Reported by Darqutni, and Deya al-Maqdasi and others and verified as good by al-Albani in SS #٤٢٦.

whoever walks with his brother Muslim in need until he completes it, Allah will make his feet stand firm on the day that they slip (the dreadful day of Judgment). Bad character ruins deeds like vinegar ruins honey.”¹

These two narrations above both are in the general sense of universal goodwill and to all people and all the creation in all circumstances. Along these lines social interaction is better than isolation and seclusion, for the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“The believer who mixes with the people and is patient with their annoyance is better than the believer who doesn't mix with the people and isn't patient with their annoyance.”²

Upon the reasoning of universal benevolence and good will Islam has legislated honesty and forthrightness in dealings and has upgraded charity as a religious duty, moral obligation and a virtue towards the needy as many of the prophetic narrations mentioned previously have shown. We also find that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, praised altruistic community cooperation saying:

“Those of the Ash'ari tribe when they go on a military expedition or their food decreases in Madinah (the City) they collect all what they have among themselves and place it in a cloth and then divide

¹ Reported by at-Tabrani and verified by al-Albani in SS #٩٠٦.

² Reported by Ahmad #5022, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah and verified as authentic by al-Arna'ut and by al-Albani in SJ# ٦٦٥.

distributing it equally: they are of me and I am of them.”¹ And as some of the companions narrated:

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“We were with the Prophet, may the peace and blessing be upon him, when a man came riding on his beast and looked right and left, so the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said: ‘Whoever has an extra space on the back (of his riding beast) then let him give it the one who doesn’t, and whoever has extra food then let him give it the one who doesn’t have food. And he mentioned other kinds of wealth until we thought that there was no right for anyone to have something extra (and beyond his needs).’”²

Upon this reasoning all forms of dishonesty and injustice in the economic sphere is prohibited including robbery, theft, embezzlement, cheating, inside trading, monopoly, hoarding, usury and interest etc. We cannot investigate in detail each of these in our limited research here but will use the issue of Riba (usury and interest) to illustrate that Islam is merciful to the creation by prohibiting that which is harmful to them individually and collectively. After mentioning that Riba was prohibited on the followers of Moses, peace be upon him, but they transgressed, and other verses of severe criticism, Allah the Exalted said in some comprehensive verses about Riba:

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¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² Reported by Muslim.

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“Those who spend their wealth (in Allah's Cause) by night and day, in secret and in public, they shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Those who eat Riba will not stand (on the Day of Resurrection) except like the standing of a person touched by Shaitan (Satan) leading him to insanity. That is because they say: ‘Trading is only like Riba’ whereas Allah has permitted trading and forbidden Riba. So whosoever receives an admonition from his Lord and stops devouring Riba shall not be punished for the past; his case is for Allah (to judge); but whoever returns (to Riba) such are the dwellers of the Fire - they will abide therein. Allah will destroy Riba (usury) and will give increase for charity. And Allah likes not the disbelievers, sinners. Truly those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish prayer and give charity they will have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. O you who believe! Fear of Allah in piety and give up what remains (due to you) from Riba if you are believers. And if you do not do it, then take a notice of war from Allah and His Messenger, but if you repent you shall have your capital sums. Deal not unjustly (by asking more than your capital sums), and you shall not be dealt with unjustly (by receiving less than your capital sums). And if the debtor is in a hard time (has insufficient money), then grant him time till it is easy for him to repay, but if you remit it by way of charity, that is better for you if you did but know. And be afraid of the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then every person shall be paid what he earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.” (2: 276-281)

Note that the person who greedily devours Riba is like a crazy obsessed person. He harms the entire financial system by making the means of exchange into a commodity thereby taking unfair advantage on others, causing inflation, and myriads of other evils that ramify through the entire system. Jabir ibn Abdullah said, may Allah be pleased with him:

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“The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, cursed the person who devours Riba and who is entrusted with it and who records it and who witnesses it. He said: They are all equal (in sinfulness).”¹ And the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

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"Riba is of 70 kinds, the least of which is as evil as a man marrying and having sexual relations with his mother, and the worst kind of Riba is equal to slandering of a Muslim.”² And he said, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

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“No one practices much Riba (usury and interests) except that eventually his affair turns towards decrease.”³ Considering all this and many more verses and narrations about Riba, it is not surprising that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him said:

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“If Zina (fornication and adultery) and Riba (usury and interest) become obvious in a village then they are close to having the punishment of Allah descend upon them (or literally the punishment becomes acceptable to descend upon them)”⁴

¹ Reported by Muslim, and Ahmad and many others with near wording.

² Reported by at-Tabarani, Ibn Abi ad-Dunya and others and verified by the combination of its pathways al-Albani in SS #1857.

³ Reported by Ibn Majah and al-Hakim and verified by al-Albani in SJ #٥٥١٨ and #٣٥٤٢

⁴ Reported by At-Tabarani and al-Hakim and verified by al-Albani in ST # ١٨٥٩.

We mentioned above that the appearance of usury and interest will be of the destructive signs of the nearness of the Hour of Resurrection. Today no one but the most callous have doubts about the consequences of collective and corporate greed for profit in ravishing the environment and exploiting the masses of workers, and about the evils of usury and interest upon the financial system, by creating class imbalances and increased poverty of the poor and middle class while enriching the unscrupulous wealthy and privileged classes, certain financial institutions and multinational corporations, since this is all well known and thoroughly documented. What remains is the solution. Islam enacted legislation to eradicate this scourge in the interests of general good in humanity. Allah has made all useful transactions legal and all labor, industry and business can be based on equitable partnerships and agreements in ventures and projects without Riba and exploitation, while respecting the rights of private property, capital investment and honest labor. The natural unimpeded flow of currency and business transactions are not to be exploited and manipulated for the benefit of some against others, as is the case of the present world financial systems and many global institutions. Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

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“The people came and said, O Messenger of Allah the prices have increased so fix the prices for us, so the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: Allah is the one who determines prices, and He is the One who Grasps and Releases, and He is the Provider and Sustainer, and I hope that I will meet Allah and no one of you will plead his case against me for an injustice in the affair of blood or money.”¹

¹ Reported by Ahmad # 12613, Abu Da`ud, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and others verified as authentic by al-Arna`ut and by al-Albani in SJ# ١٨٤٦.

For this reason it is not allowed for a city person to meet the country person before the market and cheat him from his market price as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“Don’t have the city dweller sell for the Bedouin and let the people take their livelihoods from one another.”¹

Another example of the wisdom of Islamic laws in monetary affairs aiming at the general good and benefit is the distribution of inheritance of the deceased’s properties among his or her specified relatives with exact allotments for the parents, spouses, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters, etc. These predetermined allotments by fractions of $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{3}$ rd or $\frac{1}{6}$ th etc according to the number and categories of remaining relatives and circumstances, curtail acrimonious litigations and wrangling in this affair and spreads justice in the society by not allowing foolish and exploitative situations creating chaos, hostilities and injustices.

It is not our place here to explain in detail how the Islamic economic law and system has avoided the known faults and contradictions within the capitalist, socialist and communist economic systems while utilizing those that are positive and useful. The Islamic system preceded them and it stands on its own merits as the way of the Prophets, teaching and enacting every pathway for sustainable development and social justice in economic affairs, a blessing and mercy for all, especially for those who submit themselves to Allah the Lord of the worlds and the Most Merciful.

¹ Reported by Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Da’ud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa’e, Ibn Majah and others.

Mercy in the Islamic Political System

Here we come to the very sensationalized topic of political action and “Jihad” (struggle for the cause of Allah and not ‘holy war’ as it is mistranslated). Some may ask how can the message of Islam be a mercy and this Messenger of Islam be merciful when warfare and fighting is prescribed and mandated for the Muslims? For the enemies of Islam to hear of mercy within the political system of Islam seems to be an oxymoron.

Mercy in the First Islamic State and the Conquests

No one can deny that the constitution of the first Muslim Political State in Madinah in Arabia, with the Messenger of Allah as the Head of State, peace and blessings be upon him, was a historically unprecedented and enlightened political constitution documenting and guaranteeing the mutual rights and obligations of the Muslim and non Muslim citizens, and that his defense of this state and its citizens against aggression and attack was unjustified. No one can deny that the spread of the Islamic Caliphate after him over much of the known world at that time in human history occurred with unprecedented swiftness and brought extraordinarily lasting institutions upon the subjects of those areas that remain intact until this day. This conquest has been described as the most amazing and merciful conquest in human history since the subject peoples were liberated from oppressive decadent rulers, were admitted into the enlightened social and political justice of the Islamic polity, and were not coerced to accept the religion but willfully entered the religion of Islam in droves when they experienced its inherent truth, virtues and merits. One of the oft-repeated claims to malign Islam is that the faith of Islam was spread by the sword, yet many impartial historians refute this as a historical fallacy and falsehood based on prejudice. Sir Thomas Arnold refutes the fabrication about the faith of Islam being spread by coercion saying convincingly “...of any organized attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic

persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout which no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions. So the very survival of these Churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of Muhammadan governments towards them.”¹ Dr. Gustav LeBon also refutes this in his writings and he says for instance, “...the early Caliphs... were remarkably kind in the way they treated the peoples of Syria, Egypt, Spain and every other country they subdued, leaving them to practice their laws and regulations and beliefs and imposing only a small Jizya in return for their protection and keeping peace among them. In truth, nations have never known merciful and tolerant conquerors like the Arabs.”² And De Lacy O'Leary comments on this fallacy saying: “History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.”³

Indeed the Islamic Caliphate did spread by conquest, and provided the opportunity to hear and see the message and the medium for the spread of Islam, but the faith itself won its way into the hearts by its own merits since conversion by force is against the basic commands of Islam, as Allah the Majestic says:

¹ Sir Thomas W. Arnold: *The Preaching of Islam, a history of the propagation of the Muslim faith*, Westminster A. Constable & Co., London, 1896, p. 80.

² *Civilization of the Arabs*, p.127–128.

³ *Islam at the Crossroads*, London, 1923, p. 8

“Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth has been made clear from error.” (2: 256)

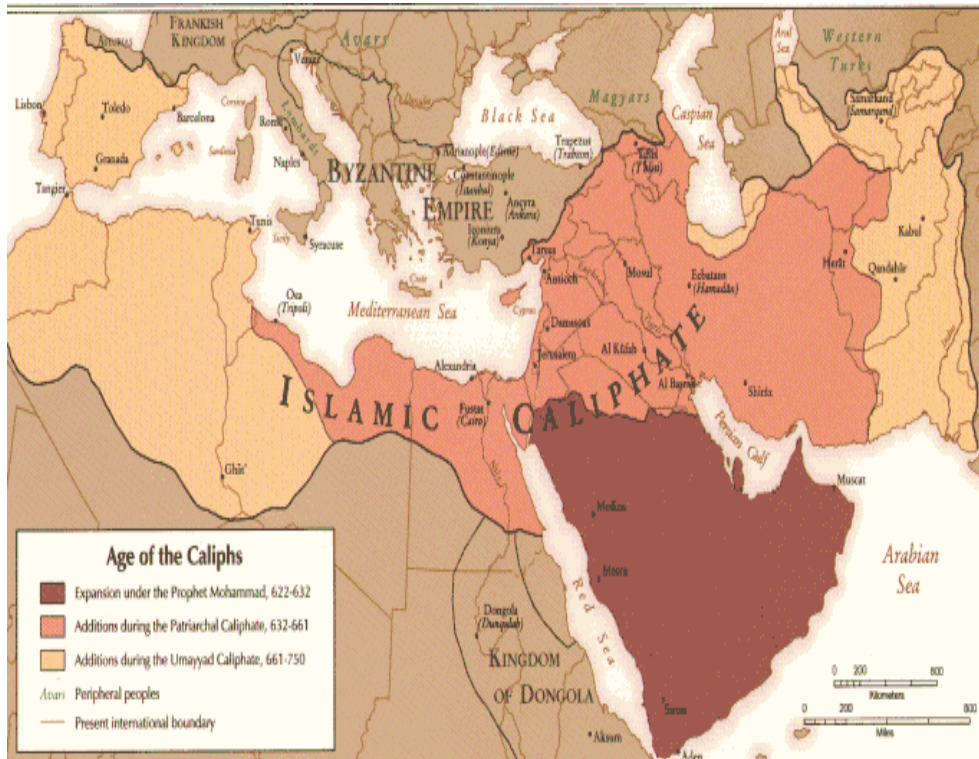
And Allah the Almighty says:

“If it had been your Lord's will all of the people on Earth would have believed. Would you then compel the people so to have them believe?” (10: 99) Allah the Exalted says:

“So if they dispute with you, say ‘I have submitted my whole self to Allah, and so have those who follow me.’ And say to the People of the Scripture and to the unlearned: ‘Do you also submit yourselves?’ If they do, then they are on right guidance. But if they turn away, your duty is only to convey the Message. And in Allah's sight are all of His servants.” (3: 20) and Allah the Exalted says:

“The duty of the Messenger is only to proclaim the Message.” [(5:99)]

All that has preceded and will come about the centrality of mercy in Islamic scriptures and teachings testifies to the mercifulness of Islam and the behavior of faithful practicing Muslims, and consequently, the mercifulness of these first conquests. The map directly below (with its Internet links in the public domain) illustrates the remarkable historical swiftness of the spread of the Islamic Caliphate and of Islam from 622-750 CE.



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Age_of_Caliphs.png and
<http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/maps/maps.htm>

Significant communities of Jews and Christians remained with their citizen rights intact within the polity of the Islamic Caliphate and they were never forced to convert or expelled or exterminated. Except for Andalusia, Muslim Spain, all these areas were and remain the core homelands of the Muslims until this day. Muslim Spain lasted for centuries (until the Reconquesta and brutal Inquisition) and is universally recognized for its wonderfully progressive and tolerant society, superb educational and medical institutions, beautiful architecture and public works, multitudes of marvelous orchards, parks, pools and public baths, amenities etc, and for its pivotal role (along with influences of the Muslims in North Africa and the Near East) in inspiring the European Reawakening and Enlightenment after the Dark Ages.

Amazingly the Prophet Muhammad prophesized this remarkable expansion, peace and blessings be upon him, when he said:

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“Verily Allah has shown me the east and the west of the earth and the domination (or kingdom) of my nation will reach what I saw of it, and I have been given the red and white treasures. I asked my Lord that my nation not be devastated by general affliction (like famine) or by the external enemy other than themselves which will overtake what is most precious, and my Lord said, ‘O Muhammad If I give a decree it cannot be repelled, and I have decreed that your nation will not be devastated by general affliction or by the external enemy other than themselves which will overtake what is most precious even if they come from all corners of the earth, then some of them will destroy the others and take captives.’ I am most fearful of misguided leaders and if the sword is drawn once in my nation then it will never return to the sheath until the Day of Resurrection. The Hour (of the Day of Resurrection) will not come until some of my nation go over to the polytheists and some tribes of my nation worship the idols, and there will be thirty great liars in my nation each one claiming to be a prophet whereas I am the final and last of the prophets and there is no prophet after me. There will not cease

to be a group of my nation on the truth and those that oppose them will not harm them until the decisive command of Allah comes with finality.”¹

And he said, peace and blessings be upon him:

“There will come upon the people a time in which a group of people will go for a military campaign and it will be said: ‘Is there anyone among you who was the companion of the Messenger of Allah?’ They will reply, ‘Yes,’ and so they will be given victory. Then there will come upon the people a time in which a group of people will go for a military campaign and it will be said: ‘Is there anyone among you who was a companion of a companions of the Messenger of Allah?’ They will reply, ‘Yes,’ and so they will be given victory. Then there will come upon the people a time in which a group of people will go for a military campaign and it will be said: ‘Is there anyone amongst you who was the companion of a companion of a companion of the Messenger of Allah?’ They will reply, ‘Yes,’ and so they will be given victory.”² This is a practical result of what he informed us when he said:

“The best of mankind is my generation, then those that come after them, then those that come after them.”³

As you see from the map above, his companion and followers did indeed expand west and east from their homeland of the Arabian Peninsula but not significantly north and south in comparison,

¹ Reported by Abu Da`ud, Ahmad and Ibn Habbaan and others, and verified as authentic by al-Arna`ut and al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame' as-Sagheer #1773.

² Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim and others.

³ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim and others

exactly as he predicted. The north south expansion did occur gradually in the following centuries, but never to the same extent of the east west extensions that eventually spread all the way from Senegal to Indonesia and the Mindanao (Southern Philippines).

He also predicted the exact time frame of the first four rightly guided Caliphs that were mentioned in the introductory sections as examples to follow their pious ways, and the subsequent kings of “Mulk” (domination or kingdom) of his nation, when he said, peace and blessings be upon him:

“The Caliphate following Prophethood will remain in my nation after me for thirty years. Then Allah will give the kingdomship to whomever He wishes.”¹

Hudthaifah ibn al-Yaman, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“Prophethood will remain with you for as long as Allah wills it to remain, then He will lift it if He decided to lift it. Then there will be Caliphate that will follow the mandate of Prophethood remaining with you for as long as Allah wills it to remain. Then He will lift it if He decided to lift it. Afterwards, there will be strongly held monarchy and it will remain with you for as long as Allah wills it to remain. Then, there will be a reign of tyrannical rule and it will remain for as long as Allah wills it to remain. Then, Allah will lift it

¹ Reported by Ahmad # 20522, at-Tirmidhi and others and verified by al-Arna'ut as good and by al-Albani as reliable in his Sahih al-Jami'as-Saghir # 3341.

if He decided to lift it. Then, there will be a Caliphate that will follow the mandate of Prophethood.” Then he stopped speaking.”¹

This establishment of dominion was the fulfillment of the promise of Allah as Allah the Almighty and Majestic said:

“Allah has promised those who believe among you and have done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession (and ascendancy) upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them. He will surely establish their religion that He has chosen for them. He will surely substitute for them security after their fear for that they worship Me and do not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieve after that, those indeed are the defiantly disobedient.” (24:55) And the Almighty said

“Verily Allah helps and gives victory to those who help and give victory to Him. Indeed Allah is Strong, Almighty. * Those whom if We give them power in the land, establish Salah (prayer), give Zakah (charity), and enjoin virtue and forbid evil. And with Allah is the outcome of events.” (22: 40-41)

After they themselves were liberated from oppression, tyranny and persecution, and in the true spirit of benevolence and good will, the companions and early Muslims knew it was their duty and mission to obey the commands of Allah and Messenger and spread the Word of Allah and Message of Islam, to liberate the oppressed masses from the repression of the tyrants, and to offer them the possibility to enter into the justice of Islam. How many of these

¹ Reported by Ahmad #18430 and al-Baihaqi and verified by al-Arna`ut as good and by al-Albani as good in as-Silsilah as-Sahihah #5.

exploited ones supplicated out to Allah their Lord, as the Exalted informed us:

“And what is the matter with you that you do not fight in the cause of Allah when the oppressed ones from among men, women, and children (cry out) saying, ‘Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people, and appoint for us from Yourself a protector, and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?’” (4:٧٥) And Allah said:

“Allah defends indeed those who have believe, and certainly Allah does not like everyone treacherous and ungrateful. * Permission (to fight in defense) has been given to those who are being fought because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is Able to give them victory. * Those who have been expelled from their homes without right only because they say, ‘Our Lord is Allah.’ And was it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, many monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned (in glorification) would have been demolished. Verily Allah helps and gives victory to those who help and give victory to Him. Indeed Allah is Strong, Almighty. * Those whom if We give them power in the land, establish prayer) give charity, and enjoin virtue and forbid evil. And with Allah is the outcome of events.” (22: 40-41) And Allah the Almighty and Majestic said:

“Allah has promised those who believe among you and have done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession (and ascendancy) upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them. He will surely establish their religion that He has chosen for them. He will surely substitute for them security after their fear for that they worship Me and do not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieve after that, those indeed are the defiantly disobedient.” (24:55)

Any political entity and state must have three aspects and branches of government: the legislative, the judiciary and the executive. In Islamic government the legislative is encoded in the revealed Law (Shareeah) taken from the scriptures of the Quran and Sunnah as explained in the introduction. Man does not legislate for himself since that allows class and special interest groups to influence the laws and regulations for their interests and privileges. Allah the Sublime Omniscient and Almighty has the exclusive right to legislation as the All-Wise Sovereign and Legislator. The competent scholars of law and jurists have the role of interpreting and applying the revelations for their best application to the circumstances of the society. The judges in the judiciary branch rule on and arbitrate the disputes that occur among them. The general ruler and governor with the police force and army are entrusted with protection of the society and the state, and with the just enforcement of the law, and each is responsible for his sphere of command.

An aspect of any new system bringing revolutionary change to truly produce a radical transformation to the society, is that it most usually necessitates a certain amount of military power to remove the stubborn leaders of the privileged classes of the old system and enforce the new system.

To mention some of the most famous personalities of conquest and great change in human history (other than the Prophets):

- Cyrus the Great, the Zoroastrian, founder of the Persian empire
- Alexander the Great, polytheistic pagan, conqueror and founder of the vast Greek empire
- Asoka, Buddhist, king of India who converted to and spread Buddhism
- Julius Caesar, pagan, the famous Roman conqueror of Gaul and emperor
- Constantine the Great, the Roman pagan emperor who converted to Christianity and established the doctrine of Trinity as official doctrine.
- Charlemagne, who with his baptism in 800 CE created the Catholic Holy Roman Empire that continued for centuries.
- Peter the Great, the Russian Orthodox Christian, who lead Russia into becoming a European nation and spread Christian Orthodoxy.
- Hernando Cortez, the Catholic conqueror of Mexico for imperial Spain
- Genghis Khan, the pagan shamanism, the Mongol conqueror.
- William the Conqueror, a Catholic, who laid the foundation of modern England
- Oliver Cromwell Puritan, a Protestant, a famous British political and military leader
- Napoleon of France, who conquered much of Europe.
- Lenin and Stalin the two communist revolutionary leaders and rulers of the USSR
- Mao Zedong Atheist and founder of Maoism, the Chinese form of Communism.

We could mention others but these are exemplary for the purpose of exposing that in comparison the Prophet and Messenger of Allah Muhammad as a military leader and conqueror and

administrator of the first Islamic Political State was the most merciful of all of them. This mercy was in multiple aspects. After suffering years of persecutions and expulsion from his homeland Allah gave the permission to fight against the Quraish aggressors and their allies. He only fought in what is considered a legitimate just war, with right intention, the legitimate command of authority, just cause, and just conduct. We explained just cause and legitimate authority above, and we can add to this the famous narration of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, may Allah be pleased with him, when he recounted:

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“A man came to the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, and asked, ‘A man fights for war booty, another fights for fame, and a third fights for showing off: which one of them fights in Allah's Cause?’ The Prophet said, “Whoever fights that Allah’s Word should be superior fights for the sake of Allah.”¹ We have the general rule that it is considered a fundamental maxim among the Muslims, as in the saying of the companion:

“He (the Prophet) prohibited against killing women and children”² The Prophet also gave the following instructions, peace and blessing be upon him:

...

“Begin your fight with the Name of Allah against those who declare the state of disbelief in Allah. Fight against them, but do not

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari # 2810, and Muslim # 1904

² Reported by Imam Malik, Ahmad, al-Bukhari, Muslim Abu Da'ood, at-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah, ad-Darami, and others.

breach your contracts or covenants. Do not mutilate the bodies of the fighters killed. Do not kill a newly born baby...”¹

Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq, the paradigm of Muslim virtue in Islamic government who was the first Muslim Caliph of the Muslims, gave the following advice to the Muslim army he commissioned: “...Do not betray or act treacherously. Do not steal from the war booty before its proper and lawful distribution. Do not breach your pledges and covenants with your enemies. Do not mutilate the bodies of the killed fighters; Do not kill a minor child, a woman, or an elderly man. Do not cut or burn a palm tree. Do not cut a fruit-bearing tree. Do not slaughter a sheep, a cow or a camel except for your food. You may come across people who seclude themselves for the worship of God, leave them alone. Do not bother them or cause any disruption to their lives.”²

When we compare the Messenger of Allah Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, with the Biblical Prophets, we note that his conduct of warfare was exceptionally merciful for he praised those of them who were merciful and forgiving, like when Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

“It is as though I am looking at the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, as he is telling the story about a Prophet who was hurt by his people. He wiped the blood from his face and said: ‘O Allah! Forgive my people, for they do not know.’”³ and this is how he acted, for his lenience and forgiving attitude is well known, like when he forgave the people of Makkah who had been his worst persecutors and aggressive attackers and forgave them and said as the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) son of Jacob, peace be upon them, said to his tormenters:

¹ Reported by Muslim and many others.

² Reported by at-Tabari in his History, vol.3, p.226, and others.

³ Reported by al-Bukhari #3290.

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“I say to you as Joseph said: “No penalty upon you today, may Allah forgive you and He is the Most Merciful of those who are merciful” (12:92) The narrator said: They left as if they had been released from their graves, and then they accepted Islam.¹ They were called thereafter with the title al-Tulaqa`a (the released ones).² Since he was the role model for the Muslims to follow him never do we hear about pillage, rape and slaughter, and killing of non-combatants in this initial conquest as illustrated in the map above, but rather we hear recounts of humane and exemplary conduct even in conquest, and this was one of the factors in mass conversions of these people to Islam.

We had mentioned above some of the titles of the Messenger of Allah like the “Prophet of Mercy” (Nabiyur-Rahmah) (نبي الرحمة), in the narration that said, “I am Muhammad, and Ahmad (the praised one), and ‘al-Muqaffi’ (the last and final Prophet); and I am ‘Hashir’ (one of resurrection); and the Prophet of Repentance, and the Prophet of Mercy.” In a reliable version of this narration Imam Ahmad adds another name: Nabiyul-Malhamah, (ونبي الملحمة), which means the Prophet of great battles and especially those that will occur at the end of times.¹ He is the precursor to the eschatological reality of last days foretold of all prophets of God. In

¹ Reported by an-Nasa`e and al-Baihaqi and others and verified as good by al-Albani in Fiqh as-Sirah #375.

² This is known in the authentic literature of al-Bukhari, Muslim and others, but the reported words that he said, (يا معشر قريش ما ترون أني فاعل بكم؟ قالوا خيرا أخ كريم وابن أخ كريم) [O Quraish, what do you think I will do to you (now that I am in control). They said: Goodness for you are a generous one and the son of a generous one. He said, Go for you are released], does not have a reliable chain of narrators as the scholars of the Hadeeth sciences explain, for instance, Hafizth al-Araqi, and Sheikh al-Albani in his Silsilah al-Ahadeeth ad-Da’eefah #1163, although Ibn Hajar says in Fath al-Bari 8/18 that the chain is good.

¹ Reported by Ahmad # 19543 and Ibn Habbab # 6314 and declared authentic by the verifier Sheikh al-Arna`ut, and al-Albani in SJ ٤٧٣.

this time will occur the second coming of Jesus Christ peace be upon him, and coming of the Mahdi (rightly guided one of the Muslims), and the epic battles between the forces of faith and justice lead by Jesus and the Mahdi against the forces of the evil and tyranny lead by the grand deceiver the antichrist.¹ Another reason for the name is because the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, is also the Prophet of Jihad and of just warfare. One might ask how can these two be combined with consistency and coherence. How can he be a man of peace and mercy and a man of war and battles? How does this commensurate with mercy? How is this not an oxymoron as some try to claim?

There is no contradiction in this, for many in history are known as both renowned warriors and great peacemakers. They established the peace by eliminating the causes of warfare and classes of privileged oppressors and tyrants to establish a period of peace. Many of these great leaders were themselves tyrants and in this we are reminded of Pax Romanic and of Pax Britannica, while some were so called benign kings who established a just and moral system of law and practice whereby general peace with the rule of the law as taught by the prophets was indeed established. The important issue is why and how the leaders and followers conducted themselves in warfare and in peace. The great prophets after Moses like David and Solomon, peace be upon them, established such a peace, although it degenerated afterwards due to the disobedience of the followers.

Of course the point is that there will be those with vested interests who fight to keep their systems of idolatry, corruption, privileges and exploitation of the people in control, who organize as a class and army. These elements and their soldiers will fight tooth and nail and use any treacherous stratagem to maintain the abusive status

¹ Since this is not point to elaborate on here I will only note in passing that there are many reliable and detailed narrations prophesizing about these great events and battles at the end of times.

quo. Therefore to establish just peace in the beginning a certain amount of force is necessary to eliminate these kinds of sources of corrupting power and to enforce the new rule of law. The leaders of idolatry and disbelief and their henchmen are called to Islam just as all others but when they become the leaders of opposition they must be eliminated to allow the masses of people to be able to follow the truth. Hopefully those that were opposed will eventually see that this just system benefits all and submit willfully and even become proponents and leaders.

The relatives of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, who were leaders in disbelief in the Quraish tribe, some of them like Abu Sufyan eventually became Muslims and performed good in Islam, and yet others remained steadfast in opposition and warfare until some were killed in battle. Yet it is noteworthy that the number of those killed in the eighty-two battles, skirmishes, and encounters between the Muslims and the non-Muslims during the life of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was amazingly low. Even by the most inflated accounting they were less than 4000 on both sides ¹ which is far less in comparison to the numbers killed by many great renowned conquerors in history wherein thousands, or tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands, or even millions, were killed in eliminating the opposition and establishing their particular brand of peace and order. This relatively low number of casualties for such a great social and political revolution in the Arabian Peninsula is a miracle in itself.

¹ See the accounts of the renowned biographer's of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, like al-Waqadi in his *Maghazi*. See also Abdul Hamid Siddiqui's translation of *Sahih Muslim*, in the introduction to *KITAB AL-JIHAD WA'L-SIYAR (THE BOOK OF JIHAD AND EXPEDITION)*, and see Jalal Abualrub's robust rebuttal entitled "The Prophet of Mercy, vs. Craig Winn's The Prophet of Doom" and his book, *Holy Wars...Crusades...Jihad*, Madinah publishers and distributors.

The fact that political leaders hold responsibility of their followers and subjects is mentioned in the letter of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to the Roman Qaisar (Caesar and Emperor) when he wrote: “In the name of Allah, Most Beneficent in Mercy, Most Merciful. From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to Hiraql, the Emperor of the Romans. Peace be upon him who follows the guidance. Proceeding: I extend to you the invitation to Islam. Accept Islam and you will be safe. Accept Islam, and God will give you double reward. And if you turn away, upon you will be the sin of your subjects (areese`een: common people, followers). ‘O People of the Book, come to the word that is common between us that we should worship none other than Allah, should not ascribe any partner to Him, and some of us should not take their fellows as Lords other than Allah. If they turn away, say that we testify to our being Muslims (submitting to Allah).” (3:64).”¹

As for the manner of conduct in warfare, the numerous scriptures of the Quran and Sunnah testify that, to put it in the words of Bernard Lewis (the politically connected zealously Pro-Israeli scholar of repute in Near Eastern Studies and Islamic history) in his book “License to Kill” (1998)] “At no point do the basic texts of Islam enjoin terrorism and murder. At no point do they even consider the random slaughter of uninvolved bystanders.” He also said in a 27 Sept 2001 Wall Street Journal, Learning the Lingo Jihad vs. Crusade: “Classical Islam in all its different forms and versions has never permitted suicide. This is seen as a mortal sin, and brings eternal punishment in the form of the unending repetition of the act by which the suicide killed himself.... Similarly, the laws of jihad categorically preclude wanton and indiscriminate slaughter. The warriors in the holy war are urged not to harm non-combatants, women and children, ‘unless they attack you first.’”

As noted above there are many scriptures – the basic texts - of the Quran and Sunnah, which confirm this perception of the scholar

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim and others.

noted above. Muslims generally and any commander or soldier particularly should not condone disobedience to these and other commands about Jihad. Punishments are to be given according to the crime and situation, or according to mistakes and misinterpretations. The fact that there are instances of some criminal acts by some commanders or soldiers doesn't mean that the Islamic principles are at fault, for they are instances of noncompliance or outright defiance. The commander is absolved of the mistakes of those who disobey him acting ignorantly outside their range of authority.

Thus the Islamic principles and Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, are absolved and cleared from the mistakes and misinterpretations of those of the Muslims who fall in to these mistakes. We do not deny that among the rulers and commanders of the Muslims from this initial conquest there were some who disobeyed to some of the teachings and commands of Islam about kindness, tolerance and mercy even in conduct of warfare, but these aberrations do not detract from the original teachings of Islam and the righteous faithful Muslims, for the true heroes and ideal leaders in the eyes of the Muslims are like Sultan Salahud-Deen al-Ayuubi who magnanimously released the inhabitants of Jerusalem after his hard fought conquest, an act which was in stark contrast to the first Crusade's conquest of Jerusalem wherein the inhabitants of Jerusalem numbering hundreds of thousands, including Muslims, Jews and even some Christians, were brutally massacred in mass; men, women and children. Never in the history of Islamic rule do we see pogroms and mass persecutions against Jews and Christians within the boundaries of the State which is in bold contrast to the mass persecutions of Muslims in reconquered Spain and repeated pogroms and expulsions of the Jews by the Europeans in their midst.

Issue of Evil and Injustice

The crucial issue here is the issue of evil, corruption and violent injustice since if one continues to allow evil to persist nothing will change and eventually this will cause general civil strife, upheaval and increased killing and death in the world. Therefore, removing that evil and injustice is the true mercy for it brings well-being, justice, and the law and order which safeguard life. A general maxim about changing evil is mentioned in the famous narration about one's ability for true change:

“Whoever sees an evil act should change it with his hands, and if he is unable then with his tongue, and if he is unable then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith.”¹

For this reason a faithful Muslim is courageous in fighting injustice and struggling for rights according to his faith and ability. Even if he is killed he and his loved ones are happy since he dies for the good cause as a martyr. Sa'eed ibn Zaid, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

“Whoever is killed defending his property is a martyr, and whoever is killed defending his family is a martyr, and whoever is killed defending his religion is a martyr, and whoever is killed defending his self (literally blood) is a martyr.”¹ In a version of this narration

¹ Reported Muslim # 49.

¹ Reported by Abu Da'ud no. 4772, an-Nasa'i no. 4099 at-Tirmidhi no. 2580, Ibn Majah no. 2580 and Ahmad no. 1651-1653, and other places and authenticated by at-Tirmidhi, Ahmad Shakir, al-Arna'ut and al-Albani in SJ # ٦٤٤٠, and part of this is in the two authentic books of al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Suwaid ibn Muqrin added, may Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, also said:

" ... "

"...and whoever is killed defending his right against injustice (and oppression), is a martyr." ¹

The concept of correcting and preventing injustice is very general and comprehensive as the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said explaining the widest application of "aid" to your brother:

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"Help your brother whether he be oppressed or the oppressor. The Companions asked: 'To help the one oppressed (is understood) but how shall we help our brother the oppressor?' He replied: You help him by preventing him from doing oppression and injustice." ² And he said, peace and blessings be upon him:

"The best 'Jihad' is speaking a true word to the tyrannical ruler" ³
And the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

"The most noble of martyrs is Hamzah ibn Abdul-Mutallib and a man who stands up to an unjust tyrannical leader and commands him (to good and forbids him from evil) and he kills him."¹

And the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

¹ Reported by an-Nasa'e no. 4101 and Deya al-Maqdasi and verified by al-Albani as authentic in Sahih an Nasa'e 3/858, SS # ٦٤٤٧, and ST # 1413.

² Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

³ Reported by Ahmad # 18850, Abu Da'ud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'e, Ibn Majah, al-Hakim, and verified by al-Arna'ut and al-Albani in SS # 491 and SJ # 1100.

¹ Reported by Hakim and Deya'a al-Maqdasi and verified as good by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame'e # 3675

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“A people that don't have many acts of disobedience (to Allah) occur among them and are stronger and mightier than those that do these acts, yet they do not try to change them (by prohibiting them), Allah's general punishment is imminent upon them.” And in another version “...and those people are able to change it but do not...”¹

Mercy Even in the Enforcement of the Prescribed Punishments which Cleanse and Purify

In this section we will further illustrate that all the laws and rules, and even the prescribed punishments in Islam are legislated to bring the greatest benefit and mercy to the individuals and to the society in general. We will explain this principle by beginning with referring to the fact that one of the Beautiful Names of Allah which contains His Perfect Attribute, is the Name ar-Ra`uuf (الرؤوف) meaning the Most Kind, Most-Compassionate, the All Pitying. Allah said about Himself:

“And Allah is Most Kind to the servants” (2:207) and (3:30) And He said about His forgiveness:

“Allah has forgiven the Prophet and the Muhajireen (Emigrants) and the Ansar (Helpers) who followed him in the hour of difficulty, after the hearts of a party of them had almost inclined (to swerve), and then He forgave them. Indeed, He was Most Kind and Merciful to them.” (9:117) And He said:

¹ Reported by Ibn Majah and Abu Da`ud and verified as authentic by al-Albani. in as-Silsilah as-Sahihah #3353.

“And if it had not been for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy (you would have been punished) and verily Allah is Most-Kind and Most Merciful.” (24:20)

Allah is ar-Ra`uf (الرؤوف) and this is explained in the most kind and sympathetic form of mercy, as we say that someone is soft hearted, compassionate and full of empathy and mercy. As a Name of Allah He places this kind of mercy in the correct place and for deserving only, for not all people deserve mercy and some deserve justice and rightful punishment. We find the word Ra`fah (رَأْفَةٌ) derived from the same three letter root R ` F which is the Name of Allah, and yet this word is used twice in the Quran and both times this Ra`fah (رَأْفَةٌ) may be that which leads someone astray, a kind of misplaced mercy and tenderness.¹ True mercy is the mercy placed in its right place. Some people think that they are being merciful in face of an evil when in reality they are allowing destruction, corruption and the evil element to persist by being soft and over lenient. True mercy in this case is to confront it wisely and firmly and deal with it decisively. Tolerance in the name of “mercy” is indulgence, weakness, and an over display of tenderness.

Allah says in the Majestic Quran:

“This is a Surah (chapter) which We have sent down and made (its rulings) obligatory and therein (We have) revealed verses of clear evidence, that perhaps you will remember. * The female fornicator

¹ The first instance is about application of the punishments which we will explain presently and the second instance, used to describe the Christians as will be mentioned in the context of what they innovated for themselves celibacy and asceticism which despite their good intentions this unlegislated and unnatural state against the ways of the Prophets .

and male fornicator, lash each one of them with a hundred lashes, and do not be taken by tenderness and pity (Ra`fah) for them in the religion of Allah, if you indeed believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment.” (24: 1-2)

This verse was revealed for the ruling of fornication of the unmarried and not previously legally married men and women. The Sunnah of the Prophet added the stoning of the adulterer and adulteress as the punishment for adultery by command and execution, as will be mentioned below.

The word “Ra`fah” (رَأْفَةٌ) is translated here as tenderness and pity. Generally this is a good trait when placed in its proper place, but here it is indicated as a weakness because in this affair any weakness and misplaced mercy and pity “in the religion of Allah” will be the cause of permissiveness and promiscuity (i.e. fornication and adultery) to become widespread in the society. Justice in Allah’s religion demands that the laws and punishments are applied equally on those confirmed to have committed the crime after the case has been raised to the authorities. Chaos concerning sexual intercourse wrecks havoc upon personal morals and undermines the family structure that will destroy the entire social fabric of the society, not to mention the exploitation and degradation of the women in the society.

For this reason false accusation and slander is also a great sin in Islam and this is the exact context of these verses about enforcing the punishments in “Allah’s religion” without misplaced mercy. We will mention here the fuller context with special note that favor and mercy from Allah is the constant repeated refrain throughout these verses and presented as the goal to achieve. In full context Allah the Most-Kind and Most Merciful said:

“This is a Surah (chapter) which We have sent down and made (its rulings) obligatory and therein (We have) revealed verses of clear evidence, that perhaps you will remember. * The female fornicator and male fornicator, lash each one of them with a hundred lashes, and do not be taken by tenderness and pity (Ra`fah) for them in the

religion of Allah, if you indeed believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment. * * The fornicator does not marry except a fornicator or polytheist, and none marries her except a fornicator a polytheist, and that (kind of immorality) has been unlawful to the believers. * And those who falsely accuse chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses, then lash them with eighty lashes and do not accept from them testimony ever after. And those are the defiantly disobedient, * except for those who repent thereafter and reform, for indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. * And those who accuse their wives (of adultery) and have no witnesses except themselves, then the witness of one of them by four testimonies (swearing) by Allah that indeed, he is of the truthful. * And the fifth (oath will be) that the curse of Allah be upon him if he should be among the liars. * But it will prevent punishment from her if she gives four testimonies (swearing) by Allah that indeed, he is of the liars. * And the fifth (oath will be) that the wrath of Allah be upon her if he was of the truthful. * And if not for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy (you would be ruined) and because Allah is Most Accepting of Repentance and All-Wise. * Indeed, those who came with slanderous falsehood are a (vile) group among you. Do not think it is evil for you; rather it is good for you (to have all this exposed). For every person among them is that which (i.e. punishment) he has earned from the sin, and he who took upon himself the greater portion of it, for him is a great punishment (of Hellfire). * Why when you heard it, did not the believing men and believing women, think good of themselves and say, "This is an obvious falsehood"? * Why did they (who slandered) not produce for it four witnesses? If they do not produce the witnesses, then it is they, in the sight of Allah, who are the liars. * And if it had not been for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy in this world and the Hereafter, you would have been touched by a great punishment for that which you are involved. * When you received it with your tongues and said with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thought it was insignificant, while it was

monstrous in the sight of Allah. * And why, when you heard it, did you not say, "It is not for us to speak of this. Exalted are You (O Allah), this is certainly a great slander"? * Allah warns you against returning to the likes of this (conduct) ever, if you are indeed believers. * And Allah makes clear to you the verses (and rulings) and Allah is All-Knowing and All-Wise. * Indeed, those who love that immorality should be spread among those who have believed, will have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows and you do not know. * And if it had not been for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy (you would be ruined) and indeed Allah is All-Kind and Most Merciful. * O you who have believed, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing. And if not for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have been pure, ever, but Allah purifies whom He wills, and Allah is Hearing and Knowing." (24:1-21)

This demonstrates conclusively the crucial point that many people misunderstand: obedience to these rulings and even the occasional enforcement of these rulings upon the criminals is actually a blessing and mercy upon the people. We will now illustrate and clarify this point with examples of those upon whom the laws were enforced and thus were "cleansed and purified, as the verses above indicate.

In the famous story of the execution by stoning of the adulteress of the tribe of Ghamid who, after committing adultery, came to the Prophet seeking repentance and purification by due punishment for her sin. After determining the truthfulness of her confession, she was stoned according to the law of Allah and the Prophets. During the stoning the companion Khalid ibn Waleed, may Allah be pleased with him, became excited and cursed her, to which the Prophet rebuked him saying:

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"Slow down, O Khalid, verily by Him (Allah) in whose hand my soul is, she has repented a repentance, even if a person of "Maks" repented like it he would be forgiven." [Reported by Muslim and others] And in another account of the occurrence he said "...she has repented a repentance even if it was divided among seventy of the people of Medinah it would encompassed them, and did you find anything better than the fact that she was devoted and gave herself for Allah ..." ¹

This desire for purification and expiation of sins to receive the final and complete mercy of Allah in the hereafter is also evident in other cases when the punishments were enforced, and the stories are many. For instance in a report about the law of lashing for those caught for intoxication:

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"During the time of the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, there was a man whose name was Abdullah and he was called by the nick name "Himaar" (donkey), and he used to make the Messenger of Allah laugh, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, used to have him whipped for drinking Khamr. And so one day he was brought to the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah

¹ Reported by Muslim, Abu Da`ud, at-Trimidhi, an-Nasa`e and others

be upon him, and he ordered him to be flogged (again). Someone said: O Allah, Your curse be upon him! How often is he brought (to be whipped)? The Prophet of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said: "Do not curse him, by Allah, I do not know except that he loves Allah and His Messenger." And in another account reported, he said:

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"Do not help the Satan on your brother." ¹ In the account of Imam Abu Da'ud, he said:

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"Rebuke and admonish him." So the people started to say to him: you didn't respect and have awe of Allah? You didn't fear Allah? You aren't embarrassed in front of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him (about your sin)? And in another version it says that the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

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"Say to him: O Allah forgive him and have mercy on him." ²

As for the cases of aggressive assault and premeditated murder, it is understood that the law of requital in kind is the most just check against aggression, for this gives all people in the entire society the sense of fair play, justice rule of law and respect for life and limb. All the punishments are geared to correspond exactly to the crime with specific measurements of retribution predetermined to stop all arguments, confusion and vengeance, and to preserve the sanctity of human life and property in an Islamic society. Allah states in the Glorious Qur'an:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhai, Muslim and Abu Da'ud,

² Reported by Abu Da'ud and verified by al-Albani in Mishkat #٣٦٢١ .

“O you who have believe, the decree of legal retribution is an obligation upon you for those murdered: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But whoever pardons his brother (the killer) anything then there should be a suitable recompense and payment with good conduct to him (or his legal heirs). This is and lessening (of difficulties for you) from your Lord and a mercy. But whoever transgresses after that will have a painful punishment. * And there is life for you in the Law of Equality in punishment, O you men of understanding, so that you may become those that remain aware and fearful of Allah.” (2:178-179)

This alleviation of harshness and “mercy” mentioned is between two harmful extremes which lead to an anarchy and an increase of assault in the society: excessive laxness in the affair of dealing strictly with the hardened criminals in their aggression and murder; and excessive harshness wherein dealing with legitimate mitigating circumstances that justify clemency and reduction. The principle of just retribution in the legal maxim “an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth” is an unrelenting obligation in the Judaic law, whereas the opposite maxim to “turn the other cheek” when one strikes you on your face is a famous as part of the Christian tradition. The Islamic Law is much more comprehensive, sensible, just and merciful in this respect than the Judaic law of the Torah or the Christian tradition since it allows retribution in kind for hardened criminals and also allows alternatives to strict retribution by payment of set prices for each limb injured or for the types of injury perpetrated on the victim. It also allows the victim the option of complete forgiveness. This gives a broad leeway for implementation according to circumstances, across a spectrum from the most severe punishment to the less severe to the more merciful, and yet it nevertheless acts as an excellent deterrent against any kind of

foolish assault. The rights of people must be protected but clemency is a virtue, and in unintentional mistakes there is reduction of punishment, for the narration of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, says:

“Verily Allah has granted pardon for my nation in their mistakes and forgetfulness and what they are coerced to do.”¹ And the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“Leave the mistakes of those who are known for good behavior, except for the prescribed punishments.”²

One might ask the question: the case of aggression, assault and murder is understood, but why is free choice in personal sexual affairs and in imbibing intoxicants bad and evil? How does it lead to such devastating consequences? In this modern era of personal freedom, liberal life style and morality, how can such harsh rulings and punishments be applicable, let alone be considered a “mercy”?

Our answer is in general and in specific. In general systematic mercy permeates throughout the social, economic and political system of Islam, and the just enforcement of the Islamic legal punishments is in the long term truly merciful by reducing the crime rate of the criminal elements in the society, for any leniency and softness to this element emboldens them to commit crime. All agree that the rule of law is necessary. The prescribed criminal punishments upon which all are subject equally are necessary for establishment of the rule of law and justice and maintaining social order for the mutual benefit of all the citizens. The Prophet, may

¹Reported by Ahmad, Ibn Majah, al-Hakim, al-Baihaqi, and others and verified by al-Albani in SJ #1731.

²Reported by Ahmad # 25513 and Abu Da`ud and others and verified by al-Arna`ut and by al-Albani in SJ # 1185.

the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said in an authentic tradition:

“The example of a person who observes the laws of Allah and the person who violates them are examples of two groups of people who gathered on a ship and decided to divide their places. One group received the upper deck as their lot, while the other group received the lower part of the ship. Whenever the people in the lower part needed water they had to pass through the people on the upper deck. The people in the lower part thought to themselves: 'If we drill a hole in our portion of the ship, we can have access to the water without disturbing the party on the upper deck.' If the group on the upper deck allows them to execute their plan, all the people will be destroyed, and if they forbid them from doing so, they all will be safe.”¹ Here the truly wise and merciful action for the group is to keep the ignorant unruly elements in check by running a tight ship – to continue the simile – meaning the enforcement of organization and rule of law and moral correction for those that go astray.

The Prophet also said, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

“A prescribed punishment is executed in the land (justly) is better for the people than for them to have (beneficial) rain for forty days.”²

¹ Reported by Bukhari and others.

² Reported by Imam Ahmad, an-Nasa'e, and Ibn Majah verified as good by al-Albani in his as-Silsalah as-Sahihah #3130.

This law is imposed on all regardless of class, status and color, as the wise and noble Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said in a famous narration of Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her:

“The people of the Quraish tribe became worried about the woman of the Makhzum clan who had committed theft. They said, “Who can speak (in favor of her) to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, and nobody dared do that except Usamah who was the beloved one (of the Messenger). When Usamah spoke to Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, about that matter, he said, ‘Are you interceding to violate the sanctity of one of the legal punishments of Allah?’ Then he got up and addressed the people, saying, ‘O people, the nations before you went astray because if a noble person among them committed theft they used to leave him, but if a weak person among them committed theft they used to enforce the legal punishment on him. By Allah, if Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, committed theft, I will cut off her hand!’”¹

People need to feel protected against any excesses of stronger ones who take advantage of their strength or lawless people of the society. An owner of a property who has either worked hard to establish it or legally inherited it, wishes people to respect his hard earned wealth and possessions because this respect is the basis of economic life and interactions. If it is judicially proven that a

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim and others.

person has committed the crime of theft, his hand is to be severed by law to protect the sanctity of the stolen property, labor and honesty in livelihood. Justice itself is mercy because it eradicates the desire of revenge from the hearts of the people who are wronged and discourages wrongdoing in the society by implementing prescribed punishments that scare the 'would be' criminals off.

Specifically, if the Islamic Law seems harsh about fornication, adultery, and manufacturing, trading and imbibing intoxicants, etc, then there are many justifiable reasons for this strictness. Foremost of them is the fact that Allah, the Law Giver, knows His creatures and what is in their best interests. Another reason is that the fornication, adultery and intoxicants are the major causes of the destruction of a society. They cause violence and hatred, and destroy the moral values. Thus the strictness is with the revealed knowledge from the Creator to check the major scourges of humanity in the latter times. The Messenger of Allah, may the of peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, informed us about the signs of the nearness of the Day of Resurrection, saying:

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“Verily, of the signs of the last days is the raising up (removal) of knowledge (by the death of knowledgeable people), the increase in ignorance (especially of the religion of Islam and morality), much fornication and adultery, and abundance of drinking alcohol (and taking intoxicants)....”¹

And in another narration, the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

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“Of the signs of the last days is the appearance (of much) usury and interest (in debt), and fornication and adultery, and intoxicants.”²

¹ Reported by Bukhari, Muslim, and others

² Reported by at-Tabrani and verified as good by al-Albani in ST # ١٨٦١ and SS # ٣٤١٥

And he said, peace and blessing be upon him:

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"If Zina (fornication and adultery) and Riba (usury and interest) become obvious in a village then they are close to having the punishment of Allah descend upon them (or the punishment becomes acceptable to descend upon them) " ¹

And the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said in a long narration:

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"O all of the Emigrants, there are five things that you may be afflicted with - and I seek refuge in Allah from their afflicting you - never did a people commit lewd debauchery openly until it became common among them except that pestilence and painful diseases increased among them which were unheard of among their forefathers that preceded them. They do not shortchange the weighing balance and scale except that they will be stricken with difficult years and restricted sustenance and injustice of the rulers over them. They do not refuse to pay their obligatory charity but that rain is deprived from them, and if it were not for the sake of the animals they would not receive rain. They do not violate the covenant of Allah and the covenant of His Messenger except that

¹ Reported by At-Tabarani and al-Hakim and verified by al-Albani in ST # ١٨٥٩.

Allah will bring their enemies from other than themselves to have hegemony over them who will take some of what they possess from their hands. When their leaders do not rule by the Book of Allah the Almighty and Majestic and seek earnestly what Allah has revealed (to rule accordingly), Allah will make them do violence one upon another.”¹

The Messenger of Allah also said, peace and blessings be upon him:

“ ... ”

“There will be some sections of my nation who will make fornication (and adultery), silk (for men), wine (and intoxicants), and musical instruments legal ...”²

When we look into human history we find that many of the common people were grounded in traditional morality whatever cultural form it took, but now in this modern age of secularism, hedonism, personal freedom, liberal life styles, fast media and consumerism, these prophecies have indeed come true. Although we have mentioned this narration here specifically for the context of our subject at hand about the spread of fornication, adultery, homosexuality, perversions and fetishes (just to mention some forms of “lewd debauchery” which are harmful to man spiritually and physically), yet all of what he mentioned has become – and we seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our sins - commonplace evil practiced among many of the Muslims. Thus the punishments have come consequently as he had predicted miraculously.

Some examples will illustrate that the Islamic laws and teachings to deal with these social ills are extremely judicious, wise and merciful. The example of checking the spread of fornication and adultery,

¹ Reported by Ibn Majah and verified as good by al-Albani in Sahih Ibn Majah #4019, as-Silsilah as-Sahihah #106, Sahih al-Jame'e as-Sagheer #13,938, and see #7978.

² Reported by al-Bukhari by a suspended narration, and confirmed as authentic by him and others.

and of wine and intoxicants in the society, are prime examples of the wisdom of Islamic teaching and the incremental legislation in this regard. Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, the wife of the Prophet, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, explained the people's infatuation with some of their pleasurable sins in the beginning:

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Aishah, may Allah pleased with her, said: At first Allah revealed the verses in Makkah that were of the Mufassil (last chapters of the Quran) mentioning Paradise and Hellfire, when the people accepted Islam, then Allah revealed the verses of the Halal wal Haram (lawful and unlawful). Had Allah revealed: Do not drink Khamr, they would have said: We will never leave Khamr! And if he had revealed: Do not fornicate, they would have said: We will never leave fornication! It was revealed in Makkah while I was a little girl: "Nay but the promised time for them is The Hour (of resurrection) which is harsh and bitter!" [54:46] And the Surat-al Baqarah and Ma'idah and An-Nisa'a (full of legal obligations) were not revealed but I was with him (in Madinah as his wife years later)."¹

Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, explains the unavoidable realities of human nature and behavior, for by nature men and women are reluctant to accept any new concept or idea without some resistance. No matter how good it may be there often is a strong reaction to a novel idea and way. Wisdom and patience are the most important factors in bringing any change in a society. Even though the early Muslims were sincere converts and believers,

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari.

their accustomed habits, pleasures and pride were at stake. She points out that they would not immediately have been able to stop these habits and practices, no matter how destructive, corrupt and obnoxious, were they asked to stop them immediately at that early stage. They had to first believe in Allah and the Hereafter, in the realities of life after death, and Paradise and Hell, and had to be weaned and convinced, and encouraged with the rewards of faith, and discouraged by the warnings and threats about the severe punishments. After educating themselves with belief in Allah and knowing the rewards and punishments of this life and the Hereafter, after living in the pure society of Medinah, after becoming stronger in faith and practice, after all that and more, were they able to realize the evil and destructive nature of fornication, adultery, intoxicants etc and accepted the final commands for total prohibition which cut all the pathways to their customary evil habits. The time frame involved allowed them to become progressively accustomed to a new life of pure and noble acts, or become fulfilled by the remembrance of Allah and good deeds, and to wholesome food and drink and lawful matrimony etc as a substitute to their past entertainments and practices.

As for wisdom in dealing with widespread sexual immorality in society, the following case will illustrate the insight of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, in dealing with people's desires. Abu Umamah narrates, may Allah pleased with him:

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“A young man came to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him and asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, permit me (with special license) to commit fornication (and adultery).’ The people started to rebuke him harshly, but the Prophet sat close to him and asked: ‘Would you like it for your mother?’ He replied ‘No, by Allah, may Allah make me a sacrifice for you!’ The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: ‘And thus the people do not like it for their mothers.’ He said: ‘Would you like it for your daughter?’ ‘No’ he replied. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: ‘And thus the people do not like it for their daughters.’ He said: ‘Would you like it for your paternal aunt?’ ‘No’ he replied. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: ‘And thus the people do not like it for their paternal aunts.’ He said: ‘Would you like it for your maternal aunt?’ ‘No’ he replied. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: ‘And thus the people do not like it for their maternal aunts.’ Then the Prophet put his hand on the youth and said: O Allah forgive his sin and purify his heart and make him chaste (fortify his abstinence from sexual sins)”.¹

As for the case of wine, alcohol and intoxicants, as mentioned in the narration of Aishah above, Islam has strictly forbidden all of them and Allah is the Most Wise, the Omniscient about what is best for His creatures. Yet Allah legislated the prohibition in a gradual, step-by-step approach, in a series of incremental laws to give the Arabs time to adjust and leave the practice who were accustomed to this. Eventually these stages lead toward the total prohibition. Companion of the Prophet and 2nd Caliph of the

¹ Reported by Ahmad #22265 and verified by al-Arna`ut and also by al-Albani in his as-Sahihah #370.

Muslim Nation Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said in his supplication:

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"O Allah make clear (to us by revelation) about the case of Khamr (wine and intoxicants) completely! So the verse of Baqarah was revealed. Umar was called and it was read to him, and he (again) supplicated: O Allah make clear about the case of Khamr completely! So the verse of Nisa'a was revealed, and the caller would call out when he called to Salah (prayer): O you who believe! Do not come to prayer if you are intoxicated! And Umar was called, and it was read to him and he (again) supplicated: O Allah make clear about the case of Khamr completely! Then the verse of Ma'idah was revealed and Umar was called and it was read to him, and when he reached the part that says: "So will you not then be finished (and abstain)?" He said: We are finished, we are finished."¹

¹ Reported by Ahmad #378 Abu Da'ood, Nisa'e, ibn al-Khuzaimah #2897 and others and verified by al-Arna'ut al-Azthami, and al-Albani in Sahih an-Nasa'e. The verse of Surat-al-Baqara indicates is the saying so Allah And Allah, the Almighty and Majestic, said:

"They ask you (O Muhammad) concerning alcohol and gambling. Say: "In them is a great sin, and (some) benefit for men, but the sin of them is greater than their benefit." And they ask you what they ought to spend. Say: "That which is beyond your needs." Thus Allah makes clear to you His Laws in order that you may give thought." 92:219) This verse clearly states that the sin of drinking these intoxicants is greater than any perceived benefit. Yet this was not an unequivocal in prohibition, so some of the Muslims at the time continued to drink and become

The fuller context of this last verse is as Allah said:

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“O you who believe! Intoxicants, gambling, altars (of idolatry), and divining arrows (for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Satan’s handiwork. So avoid (strictly) this (abomination) in order that you may be successful. The Satan wants only to instigate enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling, and to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from the prayer. So will you not then finish (and abstain)?” (5:90-91) Although the destruction wrought by violence and fighting is well known in connection to gambling, alcohol, drugs and intoxicants, the verse points to the higher issue of hindering the remembrance of Allah and prayer which is a state of mind and soul and practice that develops the inner conscientiousness of a person to help him refraining from crimes, as Allah said:

“And recite what is revealed to you from the Book and establish prayer, verily prayer forbids monstrous deeds and wickedness, and the remembrance of Allah is greater and Allah knows what you

intoxicated, as was their custom. The full verse of Surat-an-Nisa`a is the saying of Allah the Wise and Sublime:

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“O you who believe! Intoxicants, gambling, altars (of idolatry), and divining arrows (for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Satan’s handiwork. So avoid (strictly) this (abomination) in order that you may be successful. The Satan wants only to instigate enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling, and to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from the prayer. So will you not then finish (and abstain)?” (5:90-91)

do.” (29:45) This verse mentions the internal and the external benefits of prayer for the betterment of the souls and proper conduct, yet the greater benefit - and therefore the greater battle for correction - is the inner one, for in another verse Allah said:

“The ones who find satisfaction and tranquility in the remembrance of Allah, and verily, the hearts (of men) do not find satisfaction and tranquility except in the remembrance of Allah. (13:28) Allah is the Most Merciful Creator and Benefactor and knows what truly satisfies His creatures and brings tranquility to their inner being and peace to their outer disposition and what will spread peace and security and well being in the society.

Many people think that alcohol and similar intoxicants are cures for illnesses. We find the word “Doctor” as a description of Allah’s greatness as the Almighty Creator who knows all and cures all. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, had a physical mark on his shoulder that was not a defect but appeared as an unusual birthmark. A doctor came to him thinking that he needs a man of the medical profession who cures illness. The doctor, the father of Abi Ramthah, may Allah be pleased with him, said as narrated by his son:

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“I went with my father to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and he said to him, “Let me see this mark on your back since I am a doctor.” So the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said “Allah is the Doctor, but you are a man who is a graceful colleague. The doctor of it is the one who created it.”¹

¹ This is the version of Abu Da`ud which Sheikh al-Albani judged as good in Sahih Abi Da`ud # 4207 and Sahih al-Jame`as-Sagheer #1252.

This means that Allah created this as a sign of prophethood and therefore there is no illness in it. In another more detailed version of Imam Ahmad he says:

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“I said O Messenger of Allah I am a doctor and my father was a doctor and I am from a family of doctors and by Allah nothing is unknown to me about the body, not a vein or bone, so show me what is on your shoulder for if it is a tumor I can remove it and cure it. He said: No. Its doctor is Allah ...” to the end of a lengthy narration.¹

Allah most Exalted is also the “Tabeeb” (doctor) in another narration reported by Ahmad and narrated by Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, who said:

“The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, was ill so I placed my hand on his chest and said, ‘Remove the affliction O Lord of the people, You are the Doctor, You are the Curer.’ And the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, would say (in this illness of which he died) To the companionship of Exaltedness, To the companionship of Exaltedness.”²

¹ A narration of Imam Ahmad #7118 which Sheikh al-Arna`ut judged to be authentic

² A narration of Imam Ahmad #24818 which Sheikh al-Arna`ut also judged to be authentic.

There are other narrations that prove that of the Beautiful Names of Allah is the ash-Shafe (الشافعي) the Curer, the Healer, the Granter of Health, for instance when he supplicated Allah saying:

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O Allah the Lord of the people remove the affliction and heal, for You are the Healer, there is no curer except You, heal with a cure that doesn't leave any illness.”¹

Of course the true cure and medicine is that which doesn't have terrible side effects, and the true doctor is the one who is truly knowledgeable and who knows that he doesn't cure or heal anyone, only Allah the Creator does. An ignorant incompetent doctor is described by the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him:

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“Verily Allah has not sent down disease or did not create disease but that He sent down or created its cure, he knows it who wants to know it and he is ignorant who wants to stay ignorant of it, except one disease.” They asked: What is that O Messenger of Allah? He said: “Death.”²

Allah is the Creator and in His wisdom He created all diseases and their cures. The Prophet said, peace and blessings be upon him:

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“Allah did not send down disease but He sent down its cure.”³ Also the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, said:

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari, Abu Da'ud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'e, and Ibn Majah and others.

² Reported by Ahmad and others, and verified by al-Albani in SS # ١٦٥٠.

³ Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others.

“For every sickness there is a medicine so if the medicine strikes the sickness, the person is cured by the Will of Allah, the Almighty and Majestic.”¹

Thus the true doctor is skillful and knowledgeable, and the criminally negligent person who calls himself a doctor without proper knowledge is liable for legal proceedings towards punishment, for the Messenger of Allah said, peace and blessings be upon him:

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“Anyone who practices medicine and is not known as a doctor, he is responsible (to pay the damages).” And in a longer version reported by Abu Da`ud and Ibn Majah it reads:

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“Anyone who is not known beforehand for being a doctor, yet who practices medicine for a peoples and then harms someone, he is responsible (to pay the damages).”² These narrations mention the quack pretending to practice as a doctor, or the criminally negligent and incompetent one who harms the people.

Of course there are those that prescribe medicines that are not truly medicines but actually increase the disease, cause more harm than cure by increasing the poison in the body and the disease. The doctors and patients that prescribe and use alcohol, harmful drugs and concoctions and intoxicants for a cure and better health eventually cause harm. Even though initial benefits may appear, the long term ill-effects eventually take over, like steroids and their likes. We are commanded to be merciful to ourselves to seek out beneficial knowledge and cures and thus to only heal ourselves with

¹ Reported by Muslim

² Reported by Abu Da`ud, an-Nasa`e, Ibn Majah, al-Hakim, with a good chain of narrators as al-Albani mentioned in Sahih al-Jame' # 6153.

wholesome medicines and not to seek cure in that which is illegal and forbidden since Allah the Wise and Omniscient would not make remedies and cures in illegal substances since they increase sickness. We read in the traditions the following instructions:

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Wa'il al-Hadrami, may Allah's pleasure be upon him, said: "A man called Tariq ibn Suwaid Al-Ju'ufi came to the Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, and asked him about alcohol. The Prophet forbade him or disliked for him to make it. The man said: I only make it as a medicine. The Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, answered: "It is not a cure but a disease and an ailment."¹ And the Prophet said, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

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"Verily Allah has created the disease and the cure, so cure yourselves but do not cure yourselves with that which is illegal."² A similar saying is narrated in which the companion Abdullah ibn Mas'ood, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

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"Do not give your children any alcohol as that Allah created them on natural purity and wholesomeness, and God didn't make your remedy in any of the things He has prohibited for you."³

In a general principle the Prophet, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

¹ Reported by Muslim

² Reported by ad-Daulabi and verified by al-Albani SS#1633

³ Reported by Bukhari as a commentary of Abdullah Ibn Mas'ood, and verified by Ibn Hajar and al-Albani.

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"If a large amount of anything causes intoxication, a small amount of it is prohibited."¹ And he explained exact amount leaving no doubt, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him:

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"If a large bucketful (or tubful) intoxicates, then only a (sip from the) scoop of your handful of it is illegal (Haram)."² And he also said, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, so that people will not say that only Khamr ("wine") and alcoholic beverages are intended:

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"Everything that intoxicates is Khamr and every intoxicant is illegal and forbidden..."³

All of these prophetic teachings lead us to the conclusion that these intoxicants prescribed as medical drugs are actually harmful, and Allah is the true and wise and merciful "Doctor" who has informed us about their harmfulness and pointed to the real cures. If this is true in this affair that is so common among mankind, then it is also true in all other affairs. Allah has created in the vast biodiversity in the plant and animal world and the natural substances and chemical compounds all that will nourish and sustain us, and that which will cure any ailments of mankind if he will only seek and experiment and discover them, and then protect these treasures of natural storehouses from corruptions for others and for future generations.

Conclusion : Achieving mercy through repentance

¹ Reported by Abu- Da`ud, and al-Tirmithi, an-Nisa`e, Ibn Majah, and others and verified as authentic by al-Albani in SJ # ۰۰۳.

² Reported by Ahmad Abu Da`ud, and al-Tirmithi and Abu Ya'la # 4360 verified by Husain Saleem Asad and by al-Albani in SJ # ۴۰۰۲.

³ Reported by Abu Da`ud and al-Baihaqi and others and verified by al-Albani. In SJ # ۴۰۴۸ and SS # ۲۰۳۹

We have seen in this presentation that mercy permeates Islam from the beginning to the end. Allah our Most Merciful Lord and Creator, created us by mercy in mercy for mercy and sent His general mercy to us in the form of our material and social and spiritual needs. He sent His Messenger of Mercy whose dominant trait is to be merciful and concerned for the welfare of others. He revealed the Quran and inspired the Prophet Muhammad with his Sunnah to spread Islam, the message of universal mercy, to all peoples for all times. Mercy is a central characteristic seen throughout the social, political, economic systems of Islam, and even the prescribed punishments are for mercy. Those that accept and follow the way will receive Allah's special mercy.

Allah in His Almighty Wisdom calls his slaves with a combination of promises of glad tidings of His Mercy for faith and obedience and warnings of strict impartial justice for the unrepentant criminals, of His eternal rewards and His punishments, as He the Exalted said:

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“Inform my slaves that I am the Forgiving and the Most Merciful. And (inform them) that My punishment is indeed severely painful.”
[15:49-50]

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

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“... If the disbeliever knew about the Mercy which is with Allah, he would not lose hope of Paradise, and if the believer knew of all the punishment which is with Allah, he would never consider himself safe and secure from the Hellfire.”¹

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Hope and fear both must be balanced to keep in perspective even though the aspect of mercy is greater and dominant over the aspect of punishment. Allah knows his slaves and their innate nature, as the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, was inspired to inform us:

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“Every son of Adam makes mistakes and the best of those who make mistakes are the ones who repent.”¹ And Allah the Exalted has promised:

“And indeed I am the One Who Continuously Forgives whoever repents and believes and acts righteous and then continues in guidance.” (20:82) And He assured:

“And whoever does a wrong, or wrongs himself then seeks forgiveness of Allah, will find Allah Most-Forgiving and Most-Merciful.” (4:110).

Just because a believer is continually tempted and falls in to sins, does not mean that he should not try to repent again and again, as the following tradition informs us:

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¹ Reported by at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and al-Hakim and others and confirmed as good by al-Albani in ST # ۳۱۳۹.

“A slave (of Allah) did a sin and then said: O Allah I have done a sin so forgive me. The Lord (Allah) said to him: My slave knows that he has a Lord that forgives sins and also punishes (if He wills), so He forgave him. Then he waited a while as Allah wills and committed another sin -- and maybe he said – and then did another sin. And so he said: O Allah I have done another sin so forgive me. His Lord said: My slave knows that he has a Lord that forgives sins and also punishes (if He wills), so He forgave him. Then he waited a while as Allah wills and committed another sin -- and maybe he said – and then did another sin. And so he said: O Allah I have done another sin so forgive me. His Lord said: My slave knows that he has a Lord that forgives sins and also punishes (if He wills), so He said: I have forgiven my slave so let him do as he wishes.”¹

This doesn't mean -- Allah forbid such a misconception -- that he should continue sinning (since we learn from the tradition that if Allah will He will punish) but it means, and Allah knows best, that as long as he continues asking forgiveness and making repentance sincerely with the intention not to repeat the same sin, and knows well that Allah can forgive or punish as He wills, then this is the way a believer should continue in life – a life wherein he constantly makes mistakes and commits sins, and therefore should constantly repent and ask forgiveness. As the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said about himself that he repents more than 70 times a day.

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“By Allah I ask Allah's forgiveness and repent to him more than seventy times a day.”²

And he said explaining more, peace and blessing be upon him:

¹ Reported by Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim and others.

² Reported by Bukhari.

“My heart becomes covered and I seek Allah’s forgiveness in a day a hundred times.”¹ This indicates that like all humans he became forgetful for moments and then returned to remembrance and glorification and sought Allah’s forgiveness.

The Prophet of Allah, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, also said:

“None of you will be saved by his deeds. A man said: Not even you O Messenger of Allah? Not even I except that Allah encompasses me with Mercy from Him, but try your best to do good as close as possible.”²

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

“Verily Allah accepts repentance from his slave up to the time that he gurgles (at death).”³ And the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said:

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“Repentance destroys (the sin) that was before it.”⁴

And the repenting slave of Allah and believer in His mercy should rejoice in his repentance since he knows that any repentance of the wretched slave is met with happiness by Allah the Majestic as the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon him, explained to us:

¹ Reported by Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Da`ud, an-Nasa`e and others.

² Reported by Bukhari and Muslim and others.

³ Reported by Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, and verified by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jame’ no 2784.

⁴ Reported by Ibn Majah and verified by al-Albani SJ 3008

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"Allah is more delighted by the repentance of his slave than one of you would be if he had camped in a deserted and dangerous wasteland, and his pack animal had all his food and drink on it. He slept and when he woke up, found that the animal had disappeared. When the heat advanced and grew harsh, he became desperately thirsty. Then he returned to his place of rest and slept (awaiting his death) and when he woke up the animal was there." And in another version of the narration:

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"...then as he was in this (pitiful) state, the animal appeared before him, so he took its reins, and said in extreme happiness: O Allah you are my slave and I am your Lord! He miss-spoke from the excitement of his happiness."¹

Then there is the mercy of intercession. Intercession means that Allah will allow some of his servants to intercede for the sinful believers who deserve punishment, and they will plead on their behalf that they receive a lesser punishment or that Allah pardons them altogether, and then after allowing His angels, prophets, and the martyrs and the righteous to intercede to those whom they desire, Allah the Majestic will intercede Himself for some of the sinners. In one telling and long narration the Prophet explained the events of the Resurrection and the Hereafter and that some sinners will enter the Hellfire, and then after some time of their

¹ Reported by Bukhari, Muslim, and others

punishment Allah will allow the intercession and then after they have interceded on behalf of those they will...

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Then Allah the Almighty and Exalted would say: "The angels have interceded, the prophets have interceded, and the believers have interceded, and no one remains (to grant pardon) but the Most Merciful of those who are merciful. He will then take a handful from the Fire and bring out from it people who never did any good and who had been turned into burnt charcoal, and He will throw them into a river called the River of Life on the fringes of the Paradise and they will come out like pearls with rings on their necks. The inhabitants of Paradise would and say: These are whom the Most Compassionate One has set free He who has admitted them into Paradise without any (good) deed that they did or any good that they sent forth in advance Then He would say: Enter the Paradise and whatever you see in it is yours and the likes thereof." ¹

We will conclude with a call to you and ourselves to sincerely seek the mercy and forgiveness of Allah. The Messenger of Allah told us about the value of never ever abandoning prayer and seeking forgiveness and mercy when he said, peace and blessings be upon him:

"Satan said, by Your power (Allah's) I will not cease leading Your servants away by deception as long as their souls are in their bodies.

¹ Reported by Bukhari and Muslim and others.

And Allah said, By My Power and My Majesty I will not cease forgiving them as long as they seek forgiveness.”¹

And finally the wonderful story Abu Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah said, may peace and blessings be upon him:

“I know the last of the inhabitants of Paradise to enter it and the last of the inhabitants of Hell to come out of it. He is a man who will be brought on the Day of Resurrection and it will be said: Present to him his minor sins and withhold from him his serious sins. The minor sins would be placed before him and it would be said: On such and such a day you did such and such, and then on such and such a day you did such and such. He would say: Yes. It will not be possible for him to deny anything, yet all the time he will be afraid lest his serious sins might be presented before him. It would be said to him: You will have in place of every evil deed a good deed. He will say: My Lord! Indeed I have done things I do not see here. Verily I saw the Messenger of Allah laugh till his front teeth were exposed.”²

-----Concluded-----

Al-Hamdulillah Rabbil-Alameen

¹ Reported by Ahmad and al-Hakim and verified as good for its pathways by al-Albani in Sahih at-Targheeb, 1617.

² Reported by Muslim #190, and also at-Tirmidhi, Ahmad and Ibn Habban



All praises for Allah by Whose aid are all good deeds completed, and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger Muhammad the Trustworthy One and his family and companions and those who follow them and their way until the Day of Judgment

O Allah send Your Blessings upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as you have sent Your Blessings upon Ibraheem and the family of Ibraheem, - Verily you are Praiseworthy, Glorious. And bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as you have blessed Ibraheem and the family of Ibraheem - Verily you are Praiseworthy, Glorious.

...If I have been correct (in the words above) then from You alone who is without partner and if I have made any mistake then it is only from me and from the Shaitaan (Satan), and Allah and His Messenger are entirely absolved and free of it.

We ask Allah, the Most Gracious and Merciful, to accept our good deeds and forgive our misdeeds, only He, the Exalted, is al-Qareeb (the Near One) al-Mujeeb (the Acceptor). May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, and upon his family, his companions and his followers until the Last Day,,
