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**YOUR REFLECTION IN  
THE MIRROR OF ISLAM**

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**By**

**Mamdouh M. Salama**

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With Al-Quran in one hand and college diploma in the other  
I'll look around to see the happy face on every mother**

**Their generation will walk tall  
And they will be counted in every hall  
We, all, will be filled with pride  
The time is passed when Muslims stood aside**

**You are the one who made this dream  
Muslims in America are the top of the cream  
Allah will reward you for your foresight  
So please make the MUST fund roar to new height**

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## CONTENTS

		Page
	Preface	
	About the Author	6
	Important Notes to the Reader	7
	Reflections	8
1.	Why Man Needs Religion	10
2.	The Universal Mercy of Islam	12
3.	Tolerance - Islamic Perspective	16
4.	The Cause of Hostility Between Muslims	20
5.	The Unique Culture of Islam	26
6.	The Characteristics of The Successful Muslim	32
7.	The Islamic Moral Code for Business	37
8.	Muslims' Attitude toward failure	41
9.	God's Gift to Man - The Human Brain	49
10.	Study Skills for Muslim Students	53
11.	How to Improve your English Language	66
12.	The Responsibility of Foreign Muslims in the West	71
13.	Presenting Islam to Non-Muslims.	79
14.	Islam and Muslims	81
15.	Mohammad - The Prophet of Islam	84
16.	Authentic Sources of Islam	91
17.	The Nature of God in Islam	95
18.	The Nature and Purpose of Humankind in Islam	98
19.	The Relationship Between God and Humankind	103
20.	Examples of the Application of Islam in Daily Life	106

2	Your Reflection in the Mirror of Islam	Salama
21.	Do Muslims Believe in the Bible	111
22	Some Prophecies in the Bible on the Upcoming of Mohammad	119
23.	Mary and Jesus in the Quran	124
24.	Peace and War - Islamic Perspective	128
25	Muslims Views on Life and Life After Death.	131
26	Peace Through Self-unity	143
27	The Tactics of Satan	148
28	ISLAM - The Religion of the Lord is not Smorgasbord	157
29	The Minimum Conditions for Success	161
30.	The Need for Paradigm Shift	166
	Prayer	170

## Preface

One of the most frustrating challenges that every Muslim in the west faces is the perception many people have about Islam. The majority of Muslims will argue that the reason for this misconception is the organized propaganda by the media, motivated by prejudice, to present Muslims as terrorists, kidnappers, hijackers, greedy, ignorant, etc. The question that Muslims must, however, answer is: Who provided the media with the materials to reflect this image about Islam and Muslims? The honest answer is: the Muslims themselves. Yes, we can argue that this is an unfair presentation because those Muslims who are responsible for these acts are only a very small minority. We must, however, realize that news, by definition, is deviation from the norm and people, unfortunately, tend to be only interested in the extremes, the very bad or the very good. The majority of Muslims are ordinary; therefore, not newsworthy, and the minority, the very bad, makes the headlines. The only way to force the media to present the true Islam and to correct the current image of Islam is for Muslims to be the very best.

Most people in the west are skeptical and always ask for proof. The state of Missouri captured this view by the motto on their car license tag: "Show Me". Yes, if you want to convince me that Islam is the religion that can cure the ills of the society and can transform people to greatness, then "Show Me" what it did to Muslims. Unfortunately, when a Muslim is faced with this challenge, he cannot find a convincing answer unless he turns back 1400 years to prove the greatness of Muslims and Islam. A powerful and convincing answer to "Show Me" is: "See what Islam did to Me".

Every Muslim is carrying on his shoulders the responsibility of being the image of Islam, whether he likes it or not. The Prophet

(PBUH) warned Muslims of this reality by saying: **"You are a part in the picture of Islam, don't make your part ruin the picture"**. Some Muslims are deceived by thinking that Allah will judge them based solely on their actions and not on the actions of others that are directly or indirectly influenced by theirs. Allah said: **"Let them carry all their own burdens on the Day of Judgement as well as the burdens of those whom they have misled without having any knowledge. Surely what they bear is evil" (16:25)**. How many did you mislead unknowingly by not setting the good example? How many did you turn away from knowing the true Islam by not projecting the true image of Islam?

It is the responsibility of every Muslim, particularly those living in the west, to portray the true image of Islam. This is a portrait of a person who is highly motivated and a superior performer with outstanding moral character. Success and exceptional achievements are synonymous with Islam. As a Muslim, you must set a proper example and be the role model. People will seek the true Islam because they want to understand you and they will believe in Islam because they want to imitate you. The success of every Muslim in the hereafter depends on his ability to represent the true image of Islam in this life. A Muslim's success in this life is a prerequisite to his/her success in the hereafter. We, Muslims must stop giving lip service to Islam and start our hard work for Islam. Actions speak louder than words, Allah said: **"You who believe, why do you preach what you do not practice? Allah feels a strong hatred for those who preach what they do not practice" (61:2-3)**.

With the conviction that Muslims have the will and ability to restore the past glory of Islam, I have been presenting this message to Muslim students in Oklahoma for the past few years. Their response and enthusiasm motivated me to share this

message with others by compiling my lectures in this book. I pray to Allah that this book will inspire you to stand as the foundation on which the modern Islamic civilization will be built.

I am grateful to Allah for providing me with the opportunity to contribute a small part in propagating the message of Islam. I am grateful to my parents who brought me to this world as a Muslim.

I am also thankful to several friends, particularly Drs. Fred Radd, Neil Eldin, Ahmad Agha, Riaz Ahmad and Ahmad Abou-Basha for encouraging me to write this book and for reviewing its content. I am grateful to my family who served as my literary critic to ensure the clarity of the text. I am indebted to Sheik Mohamed Metwalli Al-Sharawi and Dr. Jamal Badwai whose writings and lectures have greatly influenced me. I also want to express my gratitude to the many unnamed authors and lecturers whose ideas I have incorporated in my discussions without proper acknowledgements. Above all, I am grateful to you, the reader, for reading this book and sharing it with others. I pray to Allah to forgive me for any mistakes that I may have made in the text of this book, particularly, those related to the English translation of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH).

December 1996

The Author

### **Biographical Sketch about the Author**

Dr. Mamdouh Mohamed Ibrahim Salama is a Senior Research and DuPont Fellow in Conoco's Exploration and Production Technology Department. Conoco, a wholly owned subsidiary of DuPont, is a major international oil company. Prior to his current position, he held several management positions in Conoco's R&D department. He holds Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Production Engineering from Ain-Shams University, Egypt, and Master of Science, Mechanical Engineering and Doctor of Science degrees in Mechanical Engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Dr. Salama is well recognized in his technical field and the recipient of several achievement awards. He published more than fifty technical papers, edited several conference proceedings, and holds more than ten patents. He was responsible for organizing several international conferences on Offshore and Arctic Development. He is a member of several professional societies including the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) where he served as the chairman of the Offshore Mechanics and Arctic Engineering Division, a member of the nomination Committee and an associate editor of two ASME transaction Journals. Dr. Salama has written several articles about Islam that were published by the local newspapers in Oklahoma and has given many lectures to both Muslim and Non-Muslim groups on the subject.

## IMPORTANT NOTES TO THE READER

1. All the subjects in this book address both males and females. The use of the pronoun "he" is only intended for convenience to avoid continuously writing he/she and his/her.

2. Since the Quran was revealed by Allah in the Arabic language and also the prophet's sayings were stated in the Arabic language, referring to the English translations as God's word or the Prophet's saying is technically wrong. English translations merely represent the translator's interpretation of God's and the Prophet's words. Therefore, the use in this book of "Allah said" or the "Prophet said" is only done for convenience. This explains why the same verse may be translated differently in different chapters because Allah's words are very rich in meanings and the use of a single English word is very restrictive. This issue is clearly reflected by the meaning of the following verses of the Quran: **"If only the trees on earth were pens and the water of the ocean and their replenishment seven times were ink, (the meaning of) God's words would never be exhausted" (31:27)<sup>1</sup>. "If the ocean were ink for (writing the meaning of) the words of your Lord, the ocean would be drained before the words of my Lord would be spent, even if we added another ocean like it to replenish it" (18:109)<sup>1</sup>.**

3. PBUH means "Peace Be Upon Him" and it is a form of respect that must be stated upon hearing or saying the name of any Prophet.

<sup>1</sup> *The numbers between parentheses refer to the chapter and the verses in the Quran.*

## REFLECTIONS

### **The Torch of Islam and You**

The prophet and his companions succeeded in very short years to establish the greatest civilization history has ever known. They passed its bright, shining torch to your ancestors who, unfortunately, failed to keep it lit. Now, this torch is being passed to you and the responsibility of lighting it is in your hand. The Muslim world is in despair; the world is becoming unbearably dark, and everyone has lost his way. Everyone is looking at you hoping that you will succeed in giving them the light again. You may be thinking, "I am just one person... what can I do?" The time has passed when people like you can say, "It doesn't matter what I do". It does matter, because you are the elite of this nation, you are the chosen one, you are its hope and dream, and you are its vision and future. Your values must be firm and pure; your goals must be grand, noble and great; your effort must be unmatched, because your responsibility is too serious. Future generations will ask: did you do everything you can? The torch has been passed to you, and our Muslim nation is too young to quit; it has a dream that someday we will all walk together with our heads standing high and say: great at last, great at last, great at last.

### **Form of Worship**

A righteous, achievement-filled life for Allah's sake is the highest form of worship amongst mortals.

## Keep Clear

From all the backbiting, carping, slander, and falsehood whether heard or spoken. Let him hold it essential to keep clear and avoid any association with those addicted to such practices! Let him listen more than he speaks --- because God has given him two ears and only one tongue.

## Dreams

A true Muslim is an optimist. Dreams, not desperation, will bring hope. Hope will bring power, and power will bring change. And change will make the dreams come true. You, the true Muslim, must not hold back on your most sacred dreams. Since life is short, you must act now to make your dreams come true.

*Muslims must hold fast to dreams*

*For if dreams die*

*Life becomes like a broken-winged bird*

*That cannot fly*

*They must hold fast to dreams*

*For when dreams go*

*The Ummah becomes an arid field*

*Where life will never grow*

## CHAPTER 1

### Why Man Needs Religion

Our lives on earth are brief. They are but small fractions of eternity. What then is the point of life? Science and materialism are dazzling but fail to provide a complete answer. There must be something more. We can contact the eternal source of power and understand the purpose of our lives. Religious belief is the channel through which we gain this understanding; therefore, the human soul is naturally inclined toward religion. It satisfies an instinctive need in us to acknowledge our Creator and to understand our duty to Him. This need has been derived from the covenant that was taken from all the posterity of Adam, born and unborn, as described in the following verse in the Quran: **"When your Lord drew forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants and made them bear witness about themselves saying: Am I not your Lord?"; they said: "Yes, we testify to it" (7:172).**

Not only do we need religion to explain the point of life we need it to teach us how to live. Therefore, religion should guide us in all activities. True religion not only tells us how to pray to God but also tells us how to deal with everyday life. Moses was given the rules which guided the Jews in their worship, and in all aspects of their daily lives. Then Jesus came to ratify and clarify the Laws of Moses. In the centuries following Jesus, this divine code for living was clouded by interpretations and amendments and was divided into "church" and "state".

As the final revelation, Islam not only restored clarity and unity to the teachings of Jesus, Moses and all the prophets who preceded them, it also expanded them into a complete code which explains the purpose of life and how to live it, for all people, for all times.

Fortunately, this code was recorded during its revelation through the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and has been preserved to the letter for more than 1400 years as the holy Quran. Unfortunately, today Islam is misunderstood not only by non-Muslims but also by many Muslims as well. The beautiful guidance of Islam has been overshadowed by prejudice and by misguided acts committed in the name of Islam. Only through the sincere study of this final revelation and acting according to its teachings can man fulfill his potential in this life.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Universal Mercy of Islam

Islam is based on few basic principles that, unfortunately, are overlooked by many of its followers. One of these principles relates to God's main purpose for revealing the religion of Islam to Prophet Mohammad. It may be surprising to many that this purpose is stated very concisely by Allah in the following verse in the Quran:

**"We have not sent you (Mohammad) except for the purpose of bringing mercy for all creatures" (21:107)**

In this verse, Allah states that the purpose of Islam is not to only bring mercy to believers or even only to humans, but Islam is intended to bring mercy to all creatures: humans, animals and nature. Therefore, if we seriously examine the pure teachings of Islam and study the true life of its Prophet without any bias or prejudice, we can only conclude that they all merge to achieve only one purpose and this is peace. This should not be surprising because the word Islam come from the Arabic root "slm" which means peace.

Prophet Mohammad warned Muslims: **"Whoever kills a bird for pleasure, Allah will raise that bird on the day of judgment to point to that individual and shout: O' Allah, take my revenge from him because he killed me for no useful purpose but for pleasure"**. Even when it is lawful to slaughter animals for food, the Prophet teaches Muslims to be kind to the animals. Muslims are forbidden to slaughter an animal in front of another animal. Muslims also must only use a sharp knife to make the kill as painless to the animal as possible. There are many sayings of the prophet condemning cruelty to animals and promoting kindness to

animals. The prophet said that a woman was sent to hell because she was cruel to her cat and Allah forgave a harlot because she saved a dog that was going to die from thirst.

Islam provides protection for plants. The prophet said, **"Whoever cuts Sidrah (a type of shade tree), Allah will cast him into the hell fire."** The Prophet also said, **"Whoever plants a tree from which humans, animals or birds' benefit, Allah will provide him with great rewards in the hereafter"**. In addition, Islam teaches Muslims to protect the environment. The Prophet orders Muslims not to pollute water sources and it is considered a major sin for a Muslim to urinate in a water stream. If these are the teachings of Islam toward animals, plants and environment, can you imagine the extent of Islamic teachings regarding mercy to humans whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims.

One of the greatest contributions of Islam to humanity is the principle of universal brotherhood and the doctrine of the equality of mankind. All great religions have preached the same doctrine but in the case of Islam, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) had put this theory into actual practice. Recognizing this contribution, Mahatma Gandhi, in his atypical style, said: *"Some one has said that Europeans in South Africa dread the advent Islam - Islam that civilized Spain, Islam that took the torch of light to Morocco and preached to the world the Gospel of brotherhood. The Europeans of South Africa dread the Advent of Islam. They may claim equality with the white races. They may well dread it, if brotherhood is a sin. If it is equality of colored races, then their dread is well founded."* Every year, during the Hajj, the world witnesses the spectacular demonstration of Islam in levelling all distinctions of race, gender, color and rank.

Even at war, Islam humanized the battlefield and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) issued strict instructions not to cheat, not to

break trust, not to mutilate, not to kill a child or woman or an old man, not to cut or burn a tree, and not to harass any person engaged in worship. His own treatment with his bitterest enemies is the noblest example of mercy. After conquering Mecca, the city that tortured him and his followers, drove him and his people into exile and unrelentingly persecuted and boycotted him even when he had taken refuge in a place more than 200 miles away, he did not avenge their cruelties but instead he declared: "**This day, there is no reproof against you and you are all free.**" This day he proclaimed: "**I crush under my feet all distinctions between men and all hatred between men.**" If these are the examples that Muslims must follow, it is disheartening to find anyone who claims Islam as his religion and engages in any act of terrorism. It is an oxymoron to use the term Muslim terrorist.

It is an act of mercy to humankind that Islam directs Muslims' attention towards the study of nature and its laws. The Quran says: "**God did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in play. He did not create them all but with the truth. But most men do not know**" (44:38-39). Under this influence, Muslims began to observe nature closely and this gave birth to the scientific spirit of the observation and experiment which was unknown to the Greeks. Robert Priffault states in his book "The making of humanity", "*The debt of our science to the Arabs does not consist in starting discovers or revolutionary theories. Science owes a great more to Arabs culture; it owes its existence*". It is the same practical character of the teaching of Islam that gave birth to the scientific spirit, that has also sanctified the daily labors and the so-called mundane affairs. Islam sanctifies life and all its pursuits provided they are performed with honesty, justice and pure intents. It obliterates the age-long distinction between the sacred and secular.

The greatest mercy provided by Islam to mankind stems from its

central doctrine of the unity of God and the universality of its message. There is no God but Allah, is the pivot from which hangs man's absolute freedom from the servitude to another man. From the beginning of the Quran to its end the concept of equality of mankind and the universality of the religion of Islam is developed.

The first chapter in the Quran begins with: "**Praise be to the Lord of the universe**". (1:2) and the last chapter starts with "**Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of Mankind**". (114:1). This concept of universality makes extremism and fanaticism inconsistent with Islamic teachings. The true Muslim nation was characterized when Allah said, "**We have made you a justly moderate nation so that you may be witnesses for mankind and the Messenger may be a witness over you**" (2:143).

## CHAPTER 3

### Tolerance - Islamic Perspective

The question is what is the definition of tolerance? Webster's new collegiate dictionary defines tolerance as: "The disposition to tolerate beliefs, practices, or habits differing from one's own. It also gives the definition for tolerance as: "A specified allowance for error." Using these definitions, let me start by giving what Muslims believe that God tolerates and what He does not. In the Muslims' holy book, the Quran: God said: **"God does not forgive anyone for associating others with Him, but He forgives anything else to whomever He wishes. Anyone who sets up partners with God has committed the most heinous sin" (4:48).**

From this verse one can conclude that God is tolerant to all Human errors except for one which is associating others with him. Even in this case, God is tolerant and opened the door for repentance because He said in the Quran: **" Those who believe, then reject faith, then believe, then again reject faith, then go on increasing in unbelief - will have no means for God to forgive them nor guide them" (4-137).**

Islam teaches Muslims that only God can judge beliefs. Muslims must tolerate others' beliefs and religions. Indeed, the Quran is the only religious book which has, on one hand, commanded the followers of Islam to spread their faith by the use of beautiful words of persuasion and, on the other hand, prohibited them against the vice of being intolerant of other peoples' religious beliefs and practices. This has been clearly and unequivocally stated in the Quran where God declares that: **"There should be no compulsion in religion; truth stands out clearly from falsehood" (2:256).** The Quran has gone even farther and gave

God's order to Muslims: **"Don't insult those whom they call on besides God, lest they, in their ignorance, insult God," (6:109).**

The tolerance preached by Islam reaches its high watermark when the Quran declares: **"Verily, those who believe (Muslims) and those who are Jews, Christians and Sabeans, whosoever believes in God and the day of judgement and does that which is right shall have their reward from their Lord. Fear shall not come upon them, nor shall they grieve" (2:62).**

The greatest contribution which Islam has made to human history, in my views, is what it offered as the only foundational principle on which mankind as a whole can be brought to live together in peace and harmony. The Quran has emphasized over and over again the supreme necessity of mankind getting together, for after all, God said in the Quran: **"O mankind, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul and created its mate from it, and from them He created countless men and women" (4:1). "O' Mankind, We created you from a single pair of a male and female and set you up as nations and tribes so you know (and cooperate with) each other. Verily, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. God is full of knowledge and well aware of all things" (49:13).**

One can hardly doubt the authenticity of the fact that the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) has great tolerance toward the followers of other faiths and immense regard for their rights. The following decree by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is a living testimony to that fact: **"To the Christian of Najran and the surrounding territories, the security of God and the pledge of His Prophet are extended for their lives, their religion and their property. There shall be no interference with (the practice of) their faith or their observance, no bishop shall be removed from his bishopric nor any priest from his priesthood; and they shall**

**continue to enjoy everything, great and small, as heretofore: no image or cross shall be destroyed; they shall not oppress nor be oppressed; no tithes shall be exacted from them, nor they be required to furnish provisions for the troops."**

It was on the basis of the Quranic commandments that the Prophet and his successors conceded to every non-Muslim community a judicial autonomy, not only for personal status but also for all affairs of life: civil, penal and others. It must be admitted that in evolving a policy of behaviors toward non-Muslims, Islam made a remarkable contribution to the promotion of tolerance and human rights.

The intolerance, injustice and warfare that have gone between groups, communities, sects, and nations appear to stem from man's constant desire to uphold not what is right, but merely to decide who is right. The internal divisions and intolerance which have disrupted the peace of the world result from mankind disregarding the supreme fact that all of us are from God and to God is our return. Similarly, the racial pride is discounted by Islam when Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) proclaimed that: **"All mankind is from Adam and Adam is made from dust"**.

In his Book "Civilization on Trial" (pp. 205-209, 87-88), the historian Arnold Toynbee writes: *"Two conspicuous sources of danger - one psychological and the other material - in the present relations of this cosmopolitan proletariat (i.e. Westernized Humanity) with the dominant element in our modern Western society are race consciousness and alcohol, and in the struggle with each of these evils the Islamic spirit has a service to render which might prove, if it were accepted, to be of high moral and social value"*. He continues to say: *"The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding moral achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is, as*

*it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue..... It is conceivable that the spirit of Islam might be timely reinforcement which decide this issue in favour of tolerance and peace."*

Also, in his book "The making of Humanity", the Historian Robert Briffault writes (pp.307-309): *"Not merely in the direction of intellectual evolution of Modern Europe alone is the influence of Islam to be acknowledged and understood. To the intellectual culture of Islam corresponded an ethical development not less notable in the influence which it has exercised. The fierce intolerance of Christian Europe was indeed more enraged than humiliated by the spectacle of the broad tolerance (of Islam) which made no distinction of creed and bestowed honour and position on Christian and Jews alike."*

## CHAPTER 4

### The Cause of Hostility Between Muslims

Every Muslim must recognize that the name of his faith means peace. Islam is a faith that removes hostility and achieves peace by bringing everyone together. You will be meeting other Muslims with different understanding of Islam which may reflect on their practices. If you examine these differences, you will find that they are not in the basics of belief but in issues where scholars have made different interpretations. You must respect the opinions of others.

While in the past Islam was the only unifying force among Muslims all over the world, it is now being used to divide Muslims. You only need to look around to find many sects, many factions, and many groups; each claiming that his Islam is the right Islam. What is the cause of this? The answer is ignorance. Because a lot of Muslims and unfortunately some scholars have failed to differentiate between divine orders and personal choices. There is no difference between the various Muslim groups in areas where there is a clear order from Allah and his Prophet. Differences exist in areas where there are no clear orders. In leaving these areas, Allah wanted Muslims to exercise their individuality and to learn to make their own decisions. Allah ordered the Prophet to consult the believers by saying: **"Consult with them on the matter, and once you have reached a decision, then rely on God; God loves those who are reliant"** (3:159).

Surely, no Muslim would believe that the Prophet would consult with the believers in matters in which he received revelations. Early Muslims understood this point clearly. In order to identify the difference, they used to ask the Prophet (PBUH) whether the

matter was revealed to him, or they have a choice in it. In the matters that Allah has left for Muslims to make their own decision, there is no absolute right answer. The right answer will depend on the people, on the time and on the place. Conflicts between Muslims arise when one group believes that they know the right answer and want to impose their opinion on others. This point can be easily illustrated by reviewing the verse on ablution (washing):

**"You who believe, whenever you intend to pray, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe off your heads and wash your feet up to the ankles"(5:6).**

This verse illustrates that Allah has clearly described specific parts of the body for washing and left the others to your choice. Allah said: wash your faces without any additional details because no two Muslims will differ on the definition of a face. Then, He said wash your hands. If He stopped at this point, differences would have been risen because your definition of the hand may differ than mine (up to the wrist, elbow or shoulder). Because God wanted to define the hand in a specific manner, He said: wash your hand up to the elbow. Also, a specific definition was given for washing the feet up to the ankles. However, no definition was given for the head. In this case, Allah left it up to us to select our own definition of the head. It would not be surprising to find that an Egyptian performing his ablution (Wudu) in August may select to wet all his head, while a Norwegian performing his Wudu in January may select to only wet his forehead. If any scholar came and made a specific definition, and claimed that this is the only correct one, he would have missed the whole point about the individuality of Islam and the mercy of Allah. In addition, he would have generated a conflict with other scholars. Allah have left certain issues for the choice of the people; shouldn't we respect Allah's desire and accept His wisdom!

The history of early Muslims gives us ample evidence that Muslims had differed with each other in interpreting some of the prophet commands. When they asked the prophet on which opinion is correct, he approved the different interpretations. The following is two examples:

The first of these examples happened following the battle of the trench during which the Jews of Bani Korizah betrayed the Prophet and did not honor the treaty he made with them. The Prophet told the Muslims that the angles will not rest their swords until Muslims punish Bani Korizah. He also said: "Anyone who believes in Allah and his Messenger should not pray the Asr prayer except in the land of Bani Korizah". While Muslims were still in their way to the land of Bani Korizah the time for the Asr prayer arrived. Some of them prayed the Asr before they reached the Land of Bani Korizah while the other waited until they arrived and, thus, prayed the Asr after its time passed. The group who prayed when the Asr time arrived interpreted the Prophet orders implicitly, i.e. they should go quickly. While the group who waited interpreted the Prophet's instructions explicitly, i.e they should pray at a specific location. In spite of the different opinions, Muslims respected each other's interpretation and remained united. Upon returning, they informed the prophet and he supported the actions of the two groups.

The second example is the incident of the man who swore that he will not approach his wife for "Heen Men Al-Dahr" (period of the age). When he came to his senses, he did not know how long the period "Heen" was. He went to ask the Prophet (PBUH) but could not find him and found instead the prophet's companions Abou Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali. So, he explained to them his dilemma and asked them how long "Heen" is. Abou Bakr said, go and divorce your wife because the "Heen" is the whole life. Omar

said: If you live forty years, then you can return to your wife, because the "Heen" is forty years. Othman said: Wait for one year and return to your wife because the "Heen" is only one year. Ali asked the man, when did you swear? The man said: yesterday. Ali said: return to your wife because the "Heen" is half a day. Upon their completion, the Prophet came. The man explained to the prophet his problem and the answers given by his companions. The prophet turned to his companions and asked them on the basis of their answers. They all said that their answers were derived from the Quran.

Abou Bakr said: his answer was based on Surah Younis (Jonah) in which Allah said: **"When they believed, We removed from them the torment of disgrace in the life of this world and gave them comfort for "Heen" a while". (10:98)** Abou Baker continued to say that the Prophet has previously explained that Allah removed from them the torment of disgrace for their whole life; therefore, "Heen" is the whole life.

Omar said that his answer was based on Surah Al-Insan in which Allah said: **"Has there not come upon man "Heen" a period of time in which he was nothing to mention". (76:1)** Omar then added that the Prophet's explanation of this verse was that Allah created Adam and left him for 40 years without telling him who he is and what his purpose is. Therefore, the "Heen" is 40 years.

Othman said: The "Heen" is a year because Allah said in Surah Ibrahim that the goodly palm tree **"Gives its fruit every (Heen) season". (14:25)** Since the palm tree gives its fruits once every year, then the "Heen" is one year.

Ali said: "The Heen" is half a day because Allah said in Surah Al-Room (The Romans): **"So glory be to Allah (Heen) when you**

**enter the night and (Heen) when you enter the morning". (30:17)**

After listening to these explanations, the Prophet expressed his pleasure and said: **My companions are like stars, whoever you follow you will be guided".**

These are just two examples to demonstrate that differences in interpretations existed between Muslims, even during the time of the Prophet (PBUH). And the Prophet (PBUH) did not only sanction these differences but was also pleased with this diverse wisdom of his followers. Despite these differences, Muslims remained united. Muslims should never disagree on issues where there is no absolute revelation or where the truth can take many forms.

The religion of Islam, as God had revealed it and as early Muslims understood it, is like water. Water, in its natural state, is liked by everyone. As soon as you add any additive to water, no matter how good your motive is, you will quickly discover that some would like it and others wouldn't. The same is for Islam, as soon as you start adding to it, no matter how noble your intention is, you will find that some would accept it and others wouldn't. It is a universal rule that any form of Islam which appears to be identified with a specific country, region or ethnic group will always represent a modified form of the true Islam. This does not mean that these forms are wrong, it only means that it is not mandatory for every Muslim to accept them in their entirety. The most important issue is that these differences should not cause a division between Muslims. Allah has warned us from divisions and disagreement by saying:

**"Don't be like those who are divided and disagree with each other, those will have awful torment" (3:105).**

Although you may belong to a group who feels strongly that their understanding is the most correct, you should act as a Muslim by believing that your opinion is right with a possibility of being wrong and others' opinion is wrong with a probability of being right. The key to Islam is unity. When you treat or judge other Muslims, remember that none of us has a perfect knowledge but all of us must be sure that our faith is built on the right foundation, and the foundation of Islam is unity. So, be patient and kind. Allah has made this point very clear to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) when he told him:

**"If you had been harsh and cruel-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you. Pardon them, seek forgiveness for them, and consult them on the matter" (3:159).**

In this translation the Arabic word 'fuz' is translated as harsh. This does not reflect the complete meaning of this word. The root of the word 'fuz' means the water in the camel stomach. When the Arabs run out of water during their long journey in the hot desert, they used to slaughter a camel and drink the water stored in its stomach. Although this water would represent to them a life saver, they drank it reluctantly because of its awful smell and taste. So, the word 'fuz' in the verse means that if you are harsh, they will reject your advice although they fully recognize its value to them. Imagine if you are harsh in giving someone advice which he is not aware of its value to him, for surety he will not accept it. Thus, when you provide help to someone or give an advice you must provide it with mercy, kindness, courtesy and humility. This is what Islam is all about.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Unique Culture of Islam

Any culture can be defined in terms of five elements. These elements are:

1. Language
2. Beliefs
3. Organization
4. Tools
5. Customs

Every religion has contributed to the element of beliefs of its followers. However, when a religion is spread beyond its original borders, it is impacted by the other elements of the existing cultures. An example is that many pagan holidays and celebrations are incorporated and given religious significance. Unlike other religions, Islam had greatly impacted all five elements resulting in the total replacement of existing cultures with a new one.

Language is a key element of culture. Because Islam was revealed in the Arabic language, Arabic became the official language of all Muslim countries. The important of the Arabic language as the language of revelations is emphasized in many verses in the Quran such as: **"We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran, in order that you may learn wisdom," (12-2) "We have revealed it to be a judgment of authority in Arabic, " (13:37).** But now many countries such as Iran and Turkey have changed their language from Arabic to others. Even those who speak Arabic rarely understand the proper language. A Muslim's lack of understanding the Arabic language makes him vulnerable to manipulation by opportunists who provide interpretation of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet to advance their unscrupulous cause.

Regarding beliefs, pure monotheism is the cornerstone of Islam. The doctrine of God's pure unity and his divine oneness is clearly stated throughout the Quran. As an example, Allah said: **"Say: I (Mohammad) am only a human being like yourselves; it has been revealed to me that your God is one God. Whoever hopes to meet his Lord should do righteous work and not associate anyone in the worship due his Lord" (18:110)**. Allah also said in one, very short chapter in the Quran: **"Say: He is Allah, the One. He is the Eternal, the Absolute. He has not fathered anyone, nor was He fathered. And there is nothing like him" (112)**.

Islam proposes a unique organizational structure that addresses political, financial, legal, and social systems. The political system in Islam is based on the selection of the leader by the majority of people and by giving him their allegiance providing he rules according to the teachings of Islam. Currently, almost all Muslim countries are ruled by a monarch or a military dictator. The primary reason why internal conflict exists within the Middle East is that these systems are inconsistent with the Islamic principles of government. The basic rule in Islamic law is consultation and consensus. Allah ordered the Prophet to consult the believers by saying: **"Consult with them on the matter, and once you have reached a decision, then rely on God; God loves those who are reliant" (3:159)**.

The cornerstone of the Islamic financial system is the interest free concept. This means that if you borrow money or lend someone money, you cannot pay or receive any interest on that money. Extensive books have been written by Muslims on economic growth and financial institutions that are based on that system. This issue is a major source of problems within all Muslim countries on how to apply the Islamic system within the overwhelming interest based financial systems. In addition, the

concept of Zakat (poor dues), as a main pillar of Islam, provides a coherent welfare structure that ensures fairness in the society and harmony between the rich and the poor. In addition, Islam details the laws of marriage, divorce, alimony, inheritance, adoption, etc.

Islam has provided a complete code for the legal system including everything from international laws to criminal justice. The cornerstone of the legal system is the complete equality of every human being. It is an article of faith to protect individual's rights and human dignity. Allah Said: **"You who believe, do not let some men among you make fun of others, perhaps the latter are better than the former. Do not let some women make fun of other women; perhaps the latter are better than the former. You should not defame nor insult one another by using derogatory nicknames. You who believe, refrain from conjecturing too much, for in some cases conjecture is a vice. And do not spy on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs" (49:11-12).**

The basic concept in Islam for criminal law is that physical punishment is established for all major crimes. Therefore, prisons were never a problem. Currently, very few countries apply the Islamic justice system. Most Muslim countries adopted a European legal system, and they are suffering from the same problems, from increased crime to over-crowded prisons. The basis of international law is respect of other nations. Allah said: **"O mankind, We have created you from a male and female and set you up as nations and tribes, so that you may know one another and be friends of one another. The noblest among you before Allah is the most righteous" (49:13).**

One feature of Islamic laws is the doctrine of duties which are divided in two kinds: duties toward God (belief and observance of the acts of worship) and duties toward one's fellow men. The

basic distinction is that God can forgive any sin committed against Him, but He will not forgive sins committed against other human beings unless the victim forgives them or a fair compensation is paid to the victim. **"The Prophet asked his companions: Who is the broke? They said, the one who has no money. The Prophet said: No, the broke is the one who comes to the day of judgment with good deeds that can form a mountain but he committed injustice toward this person and harmed that person and said ill about that person, then his good deeds were taken from him and were given to them as compensation until nothing is left for him, then some of the victims' bad deeds were taken from them and given to him and then he was thrown in the Hell fire.**

The culture element, tools, involves issues such as education, science, technology and architecture. The first Surah that God revealed to Muslims teaches them this principle of education. Allah said: **"Read in the name of your lord who creates; He who created man from a clot. Read, for your Lord is the most generous; it is He who teaches by means of the pen; and it is He who teaches man what man does not know" (96:1-5).**

Islam challenges Muslims to know God by studying what He created. Therefore, major advances in science, medicine, mathematics, etc were made by Muslims in an attempt to seek this knowledge. Several verses in the Quran encourage study in many fields of science. In the following verses, Allah invites Muslims to the study of meteorology, botany, geology and zoology: **"Don't you see that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We bring our produce of various colors. And in the mountains area tracks white and red of various shades of color and black intense in hue. And so, among men and beasts and cattle are they of various colors. Those truly fear Allah, among His servants who have knowledge" (35:27-28).**

Islam had major influence on architecture. Because Islam requires women to cover their hair and dress in long clothes when they are seen by foreign men, homes were built with internal gardens and courtyards, so women can enjoy the outside while dressing casually. Because Muslims must wash and perform ablution on a regular basis, homes were built with internal baths instead of the public baths that were the norm in many countries.

Another important element of culture is customs that include art, dress code, greetings, holidays, celebrations, and calendar. Because Islam forbids pictures or statues of living beings, a completely new art was developed which is based on geometrical design. When Islam entered Egypt, the ancient Egyptian art of human size statues was completely eliminated and was replaced by the geometrical art. As the Egyptians deviated from Islamic teaching, the ancient art became now more common. Islam requires Muslim women and Muslim men to conceal their sexuality and attractions (except obviously from their spouses), therefore, strictly modest, straight-forward type attires evolved. Allah said: **"Tell the believing men to avert their glances and guard their sexuality; that is more chaste for them. Indeed, God is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to avert their glances and guard their sexuality and not display their charms except for what must normally appear of them"** (24:30-31).

When Islam came, all pagan holidays and celebrations were eliminated and were replaced by two celebrations. One is at the end of the Month of Ramadan in which a Muslim fasts from dawn until sunset. This is called the celebration of breakfast. The second is on the day of the pilgrimage. This is called celebration of sacrifice. However, as Islam became weak, many countries started to re-introduce their pagan holidays. Islam introduced a

standard greeting that is used by all Muslim countries. Muslims use "Al Salam Alykum" (Peace be upon you) as the standard greeting because Islam tells them that this is the greeting used by the people in Heaven. It is also an obligation on a Muslim to respond to that greeting. Islam also introduced a new calendar "the Hijra calendar" which starts by the date the Prophet emigrated from Mecca to Medina. The calendar is a lunar calendar and based on which all Muslims' celebrations are established.

The difficulty of differentiating between Islam, the religion and the culture, is attributed to the fact that Islam is an integrated system whose great impact can only be realized if it is applied in its totality. Allah has advised Muslims of this reality by saying in the Quran: **"Do you follow parts of the scripture and ignore others? The reward for those who do so is shame in this life and the most grievous doom on the hereafter. For Allah is aware of what you do" (2:85).** In order to understand the serious meaning of this verse, one only needs to compare the status of the Muslim Countries in the early years of Islam with their status now.

It is fair to say that without the proper application of Islam, none of the Muslim countries can have a harmonious culture. Therefore, a major contributor to the turmoil that currently exist in all Muslim countries can be attributed to the attempts to incorporate elements of their old culture or Western culture into the Islamic culture. In many cases, these additions/substitutions create major conflicts because of their inconsistencies and contradictions with the Islamic culture. History teaches us that no country can progress if they operate under a culture of incompatible and conflicting elements. Unfortunately, this is the current situation in all Muslim countries.

## CHAPTER 6

### **The Characteristics of the Successful Muslim**

The success of any person depends on his ability to clearly define his goals and to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to meet these goals. A true Muslim realizes that he is God's trustee on this earth and his role is to worship Allah by developing, protecting and exploiting the resources that God has created for him. This is the definition of worship in Islam; it is the hard work and not merely the religious rituals. Muslim's goals should be balanced; he must set his goals as if he will live forever and implement them as if he will face God tomorrow. This makes a Muslim sets grand, great and noble goals and works so hard to fulfill them before meeting his Lord.

To set your goals Islamicly, you must clearly define the Islamic values from which your personality evolves, and you must identify your own strengths and weaknesses. Without a clear framework of Islamic values for decision making, people tend to be pathetic, uncertain, indecisive, and inconsistent. A firm values framework should be at the very heart of each Muslim's decision-making process; it results in a sharper sense of self-identity, more self-assurance, and greater decisiveness.

Usually, a goal is selected to correct a problem or to eliminate a weakness. However, a more appropriate goal for excellence is to further strengthen an already outstanding talent. Most people know their weaknesses well, because others have been identifying them. But, they have a hard time identifying their own strengths.

Allah has created each one of us with a set of special talent to complement the talents of others and to counteract their weaknesses. If we are to fulfill our obligation, we must offer the service of these talents to others. Remember that you are going to

excel in this life by capitalizing on your strength and not by taking advantage of your weaknesses. It is absolutely necessary that each Muslim selects his goals and identifies his career based on the realization of his own strength.

Each Muslim must strive to meet his noble goals and fulfill his obligation towards Allah by serving mankind. An outstanding performance is the only measure of his success. In order to achieve this important goal a Muslim must realize the two key characteristics of the successful person. These are:

1. He must have the will to succeed.
2. He must have confidence in his ability to succeed.

This chapter presents a discussion on each characteristic and illustrates that the person whose actions and decisions are based on firm and pure Islamic values should be the master of success and the role model that all others must follow.

### **1. The Muslim Must Have the Will To Succeed**

Our responsibility as Muslims has been assigned to us by Allah who said in his Holy Book: **"You are the best nation which has been produced for mankind. You enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong and you believe in Allah" (3-110). "Thus, we have made you the best nation, so you will be the witness over other nations, and the prophet will be a witness over you" (2:143).**

The responsibility of Muslims is to follow the example of the prophet and to set the example for others. This responsibility is emphasized by the prophet's saying: **"Be the best, be the most virtuous among all people."**

Every Muslim has been honored by the responsibility to be the best among all people, so he can be worthy of setting the right example for them. This responsibility sets the ultimate test and the absolute criterion to evaluate the Muslim's actions. You are the only one who can answer this question: Am I worthy of being an example to others?

If you are going to call yourself a true Muslim and meet the responsibility that Allah has assigned to you, you must be a leader, not a follower; you must be a teacher, not a student; you must be strong, not weak; you must be a winner, not a loser; you must be a giver, not a receiver; you must be knowledgeable, not ignorant; you must be kind, not cruel; you must be generous, not greedy; you must be the best, not an average; and you must be successful, not a failure. No person is worthy of calling himself a Muslim if he does not have the firm will to succeed. Therefore, by definition a Muslim possesses the first characteristic of a successful person which is having the will to succeed.

## **2. The Muslim Must Have The Confidence In His Ability To Succeed**

To develop confidence in your ability to succeed two conditions must be met. The first is in your hand, you must do your best, your absolute best in whatever activity you are engaged in or a task assigned to you. But in reality, doing your best does not necessarily mean that you will always succeed in meeting your goal. If you do not succeed, you will not be setting a good example. Thus, doing your best is necessary, but not sufficient to ensure your success in meeting your Allah-given responsibility. Therefore, for the second condition to be met, Allah must guarantee that your superior performance will be coupled with the assurance of success. The good news is that Allah has made this guarantee. Allah said: **"Our word has already gone ahead to**

**our servants; they will indeed be supported. And surely our army will be victorious" (37:171-173).**

Allah also said: **"God has promised the believers who do righteous deeds to grant them the inheritance of power and the land" (24:55).**

And when we are faced with difficulties at first, we need to remember God's promise: **"Don't give up or fall into despair because if you are true in faith you must gain mastery" (3:139).**

Allah's support is the guarantee that our effort will be assured of success because He said: **"If God supports you, there will be no one who will overcome you; while if He forsakes you, who is there to support you" (3:160)?**

The key to success is understanding your responsibility of pursuing excellence and superior performance, and confidence in your ability to succeed. The key to gaining confidence is your commitment to the word of God and your commitment to ensure that you have a true belief in Allah. Truly, a Muslim is guaranteed success if he does his best in both action and intention. The prophet said: **"Actions are but by intentions and every man shall have but that which he intended. Thus, he whose migration was for Allah and his Messenger, His migration was for Allah and his Messenger. And he whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit, his migration was for that for which he migrated."**

So, your responsibility is to examine your true intentions for seeking success. Is it just to hold an important position and gain more wealth and power? If this is your true intention, you must reassess your motive and change your intentions for your own

sake. Allah said: **"They have forgotten God, and God caused them to forget themselves" (59:19).**

On the other hand, if your intentions are for the sake of Allah and his messenger; if your primary motive is to be a true representative of Islam and an ambassador of Allah on this earth, then you should have the confidence in your ability to succeed. Therefore, by definition a true Muslim possesses the second characteristic of the successful person which is having the confidence in his ability to succeed.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Islamic Moral Code for Business

Muslims represent a minority in the west, a growing one, but nevertheless a minority. For Muslims to maintain their moral code and be able to freely practice their religion they must be financially independent. Yes, the law in the west allows for freedom of religion and Muslims have the right to practice their own. However, the fact remains that it is difficult to do so unless a Muslim has control over his own financial destiny. Wealth can give Muslims the confidence to hold fast to their religion and feel proud of being Muslims. Wealth is very important, and a true Muslim must strive to be rich if he is to fulfill his obligation to pay the Zakat (poor-due) which is a very important pillar in Islam. A Muslim can only pay Zakat if he has enough wealth that exceeds his own and his family needs. Allah said: **"The Successful are the believers who are reverent in their prayers, who refrain from idle talk, who are working for the Zakat" (23:1-4).**

When examining this verse, we note that Allah did not say: the successful are the believers who are paying the Zakat, but He said: Who are working for the Zakat. The verse orders Muslims to work and to become wealthy to be able to pay the Zakat. Muslims must strive to establish their own business, to be wealthy.

Muslims must challenge some traditional business ideas, especially the ideas of either working in a well-established business or marketing primarily to customers of the same ethnic background. Muslims must start their own business that plug into a broader market aiming for catering to the mainstream of the west.

A Muslim businessman is a unique breed of entrepreneurs who

lives with one rule, the trust in Allah. He is also an individual who is more creative and visionary and places less emphasis on rational and quantitative analysis. Rational and quantitative analyses are surely important, but they should never be the reason for a Muslim to back away from achieving his goal because of the risks to be taken. A Muslim businessman must be able to focus on a vision, communicate that vision to others, establish trust by being reliable and consistent, and have both a positive self regard and a positive regard for others. He must prove his trust in Allah by acting as a true business leader when faced with a problem. He must be able to look beyond the immediate situation and put that situation into a broader moral business, societal and historical perspective. He has a mission in this life as Allah's trustee and he must use his imagination, wisdom, instinct and trust in Allah to accomplish it.

A Muslim businessman is wise and realizes that no business can succeed without having a moral code that serves as the foundation on which the business is established and by which each employee must live. The Islamic moral code for business is derived from the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH). This code can be stated in five simple rules:

1. Individual dignity for all.
2. Superior performance by all.
3. Leadership in customer service.
4. Allah is the center of all decisions
5. Mohammad (PBUH) is the role model to follow.

These rules must be repeated very frequently and must be proven by deeds and actions to ensure that every employee independent of his belief understands them, believes in them, and is committed to them. The belief in this code must remain as irrevocable tradition, no matter how much change occurs in business conditions.

Individual dignity must be preserved, no matter how severe the pressure of business is. Every individual must have the right to a challenging assignment, must have an equal opportunity, must be fairly rewarded for his work, and must be respected by his supervisors. Individual respect and dignity must be part of everyday relationships.

Superior performance must be pursued by everyone. Everyone must strive for the impossible, your business goal must not settle for anything below absolute perfection. The Prophet said: **“Whatever work you do, you must perfect it.”**

Leadership in customer service must be ensured by providing every employee with appropriate training and continued education. No business can succeed and grow without maintaining an outstanding customer relationship. Commitment to quality service, fair dealing and honesty are integral parts of a Muslim's character and are the key for him to gain the trust of all, the respect for himself, and the reward from Allah.

The road to business success is not always rosy, and a business that does not have Allah as the center of all decisions will crumble under the pressure of circumstances and fail in presenting the true image of Islam. A Muslim businessman should never lose sight that if he is truly fulfilling his obligation as Allah's trustee, Allah will never let him fail. Allah is The Wise who will never let his own business loose. Allah, the true owner of your business, may test you to evaluate your sincerity and true commitment, and reward you accordingly. The Prophet said: **“Be mindful of Allah, you will find Him before you. Get to know Allah in prosperity and He will know you in adversity. Know that what has passed you by was not going to befall you, and what has befallen you was not going to pass you by. And know that**

**victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and ease with hardship."**

In business dealing you will be faced with sensitive financial, marketing and management challenges that may weaken your commitment to the moral principles of Islam, you must be alert. Whenever you are faced with a difficult decision, ask yourself what Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) would have done if he was in my place. He must be your role model. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) life was guided by the Quran, and so will be your life if he is your role model. Never forget that Allah promised Muslims success in business and all aspects of life if they are true in their faith, He said: **"Don't give up or fall in despair because if you are true in faith, you must gain mastery" (3:139).**

## CHAPTER 8

### Muslims' Attitude Toward Failure

What is the primary quality that makes man different from all others of God's creations? The answer is not his ability to communicate with his intelligence. Allah said in the Quran: **"We offered the trust to Heaven and Earth, and to the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it. But man accepted it. He has been unfair (to himself) and ignorant" (33:72).**

Man was the only one of all God's creations who was willing to take the risk and accept Allah's offer to carry the trust. Thus, risk taking is the one special quality that makes man different from other creations. This is a unique quality that God has created in man. It is the one quality that makes man the holder of the source of power, the pioneer and the master of this earth. Risk taking is not easy, it is a road full of danger and potential failure. But it is also the road to success.

Many people don't want to take a risk because they are afraid of failure. Fear of failure is the worst enemy of man. There is no greater anarchy than fear because fear is contagious. People's ability to take risks depends on their attitude towards failure. People can be classified into three groups based on their attitude towards failure. Some take failure too much to heart and give up. Others expect too much of themselves and therefore hang on but take failure too much to heart and live under continuous pressure. They may succeed but never enjoy their success because they develop heart problems, use alcohol or drugs, and suffer broken families. The third group is the one who represents the true Muslims. They demand so much of themselves and they set their goals very high because they realize that they have a special

responsibility in this life. They are the pioneers and the risk takers who have developed a special reaction towards failure. Muslims understand the responsibility which Allah has assigned to them: to be the role models and to set the example for all nations. This responsibility is stated by Allah in the following verse: **“Thus we have made you the best nation, this so you will be the witness over other nations, and the prophet will be a witness over you” (2:143).**

A Muslim must be the best among all people to be worthy of setting an example to them. A Muslim must also take the prophet (PBUH) as his role model. True Muslims are always willing to take a risk against all odds; they are not afraid of failure because they develop a special attitude towards it. When we study the history of the Prophet, we can appreciate how much risk he had taken all his life. The Prophet's history also teaches us that some of his risks met with the success he anticipated and others did not.

But what was the unique and profound attitude of the Prophet and his companions towards failure? Did the failures, disappointments and hardships that the Prophet and Muslims faced let them give up and quit? The answer is No! - because they were always sure that success and greatness would be their ultimate destiny. They considered failure an important part of their learning experience, a steppingstone to success. Because the Unbelievers used to rejoice when misfortune, hardship and grief happened to the Muslims, Allah taught the Muslims how to respond to the Unbelievers. Allah said: **“Say, nothing will ever happen to us except what Allah has prescribed for us. He is our protector and on Allah alone should the believers put their trust” (9:51).**

Note the Qur’anic expression "Kataba Allah Lana" meaning "what Allah prescribed for us", and not "Kataba Allah Alina" meaning "what Allah prescribed upon us". Whenever Allah, Who is the

protector of the Prophet and the Muslims and the One on whom they put their trust, prescribes something for them it must be good, no matter how bad people may conceive it. Allah has stated this point clearly in several verses such as: **"It is possible that you dislike something which is good for you; while you love something which is bad for you. But God knows and you do not know."** (2:216) **"It may be that you dislike something in which Allah has placed a great deal of good"** (4:19).

Muslims also understood that setbacks and hardships must not be met with grief but rather with patience and praise to Allah. This unique attitude towards misfortune is derived from Allah's teaching Who said: **"We shall surely test you with some fear and hunger, and some loss in wealth, lives and the fruits of your labor. But give glad tidings to those who are patient. Who say when misfortune strikes them: We belong to Allah and to Him is our return. They are those on whom Allah provides blessing and mercy, and they are the rightly guided"** (2:155-157).

The Prophet (PBUH) directed Muslims to meet misfortune by saying: **"We belong to Allah and to him is our return, we ask you Allah to reward us in return of our loss and to give us better than that what we lost."**

The above Surah and Hadith reflect the most fundamental aspects of Islam. The statement "We belong to Allah" is a fundamental part of our belief. From it stems the Muslims' attitude toward any challenge. Since we, Muslims, belong to Allah, then we must believe that Allah will never harm his valued belongings because Allah is "The Wise". Thus, testing us with fear, hunger, poverty, death and failure should only be considered in terms of its benefits in teaching us patience and providing us with the opportunity to reap large rewards of blessings and mercy. Past Muslims have

truly believed in this and reminded each other with the Prophet's saying in case of misfortunes. The story of Um Salamah serves as an excellent lesson to every Muslim. Um Salamah was greatly grieved as a result of her husband's death. Muslims who were comforting her asked her to say what the Prophet had taught them to say when misfortune afflicts them: **"We belong to Allah and to him is our return, we ask you Allah to reward us in return of our loss and to give us better than what we have lost."**

She said: "How can I ask Allah to give me better than my husband Abou Salamah? There is no one better than him!" They repeatedly advised her to say it complying with the Prophet's teachings, and so she did. Time passed, and one day the Prophet asked Um Salamah to marry him and she accepted. After her marriage to the Prophet, people who remembered what she said at the time of her husband's death asked her, "Did Allah give you someone better than Abou Salamah?" She answered, "Indeed He did, but taking the Prophet as a husband was beyond my wildest dreams!"

Muslims are wise, when they encounter failure, they don't quit. They know that people are not remembered by how many times they fail, but people are remembered by how many times they succeed. To a Muslim, a failure is just one incident on the road to his success. After a basketball game, have you ever seen any spectator remember how many points the star of the game missed!

Instead, people only remember how many points he scored! As much as a basketball game can never be won if the players are afraid to take risks and to shoot the ball, success in life cannot be achieved without people taking risks and striving to fulfill their goals.

Man is like a torpedo with an ego. The ego serves as the target-sensing device. When the torpedo receives a signal that it is going

in the wrong direction, it will react to it in one of three ways. It can get very upset for failing to go on the right path and falls down and explodes. Or it procrastinates because it is afraid of making another error and keeps going around and around until it runs out of fuel, falls down and explodes. Or it evaluates the signal, takes another chance, changes its direction, and continues until it reaches its target. A true Muslim knows his target, and he is committed to reach it regardless of the difficulties or setbacks. The Prophet said: **"It is remarkable that everything turns out well for a believer. If happiness befalls him, he gives thanks to Allah, and it turns out to be good for him. And if misfortune befalls him, he shows endurance and it turns out well for him."**

A true Muslim never considers a hardship or setback as failure, because failure is not part of his thought. The only thought a Muslim would have is his ultimate success. This thought becomes an act; the act becomes a habit; the habit becomes a character; and the character creates his destiny which is the ultimate success. Remember that if you want to succeed you must take risks and be willing to accept interim failures or setbacks. You also need to remember that you are never out of the game until you, yourself, quit and you are never defeated until you admit your defeat. Therefore, be patient. Patience is a very important part of the Muslim's character; and our five-a-day (minimum) prayers develop this character. Allah said: **"Man has been created very impatient, fretful when evil touches him and grudging when good reaches him, except for the prayerful, who are constant at their prayers" (70:23).**

What is the relationship between prayers and patience? Prayers are the second pillar in Islam after expressing the belief in the oneness of God and the prophethood of Mohammad (PBUH). Prayers are not merely physical rituals; they represent a unique

interaction and a private meeting between man and his Creator. During this interaction you communicate with Allah verbally and physically, and He communicates with you. You do not hear or see Allah's form of communication, but your senses and your soul do, as long as you free them from other worldly interactions. This private interview with God does a lot of changes to the parts of your inner body that you don't consciously control like your soul, your feelings, and your attitude. You may think of the benefits of prayers to man like the benefits of the regular inspection of your car by its manufacturer. Early Muslims understood that prayers together with sincerity and hard work were the remedy for facing challenges and misfortunes. If people were to know that Allah is the supreme psychologist, and that prayers represent the free personal counselling sessions with Him, no one would be unhappy.

Muslims, nowadays, are in a state which is the envy of no one. Comparing us to early Muslims, we are followers - and they were leaders. We are divided, and they were united. We are ignorant, and they were knowledgeable. We are students, and they were teachers. We are weak and they were strong. We are ashamed, and they were proud. Where did we fail? The answer is simple; we find it in the Prophet's last sermon: **"O people, no prophet or apostle will come after me, and no new faith will be revealed. O people reason well and understand my words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Quran and my teachings (Sunnah; living example). Follow these and you will never fail."**

We have failed as modern Muslims because we failed to hold tight to the Quran and the Sunnah; we must change. It is true that most people fear change. Even when our minds say change is necessary, our stomachs quiver at the prospect! But for Muslims to fulfill their responsibility as leaders in this life and in the

hereafter, they have is no choice but to change! We must change to fear no one but Allah; we must change to feel proud of the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah; and we must change to regain our leadership role and achieve our full potential.

Many people you know can be described as intelligent, competent, knowledgeable, expressive, committed, responsive and enthusiastic. But few people have mastered the one quality that is unique to man, risk taking. Risk takers are the pioneers; they are the successful. In fact, risk-taking is far more important to success than knowledge. People may say that knowledge is the source of power, but if you look around, you find that the more knowledge people gain, the more cautious, sometime, they become, and the more they become unable to make decisions, and the more they are afraid of failure. Knowledge itself is not the source of power; however, applied knowledge is the true source of power. History is full of proofs that knowledge alone is not the source of power. About 290 BC, 1800 years before Columbus a scholar named Eratosthenes in Alexandria, Egypt, proved that the earth is round and calculated its circumference accurately to within 25 miles. But did he use this knowledge to discover the world? No, it was Columbus who used this knowledge and took the risk to discover the new world. Knowledge in itself is not the source of power, but applied knowledge is.

We have more knowledge about the message of God to mankind than early Muslims. We have more knowledge about Islam, more knowledge about our responsibility as Muslims and more knowledge about our destiny and our commitment than the early Muslims. Despite all this wonderful knowledge, we do not possess the true source of great power because we are afraid to apply what we know. On the other hand, early Muslims, despite their limited knowledge, were able to capture this source of great power- because they applied every piece of knowledge as soon as

it was revealed. Therefore, they were the pioneers, they took the risks, applied their knowledge and were successful. We all now have unparalleled opportunity for building a better, God conscious world, but are you willing to take the risk? Since life is short, you must act now to make your Muslim dreams come true before it is too late. You must neither jump into an opportunity without thinking nor should you spend your life studying it. Think about what you plan to do; then place your trust in Allah and proceed without delays. The Prophet (PBUH) taught us a prayer that makes risk taking and decision making easy, this is the prayer of "Istikharah". Muslims should hold fast on this prayer. It is a gift from Allah and only the unwise will not accept it.

## CHAPTER 9

### God' Gift to Man - The Human Brain

Allah's gifts to man are so many and one of these important gifts is the human brain and its unparalleled capacity. In the Quran, Allah appeals to man in about fifty verses to use this brain to think, reflect and comprehend. The Quran tells us in hundreds of verses that only through knowledge man will truly know God, admit the divine source of the Quran, recognize his role in this life, and acknowledge the reality of the hereafter. Allah said:

**"Say: are those who know are equal to those who do not know! Only those who have intellects can contemplate on this" (39: 9); "Allah will raise up in ranks those who believe and those who have knowledge" (58:11).**

**"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends from the skies and the life He gives to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the changes of the winds and the clouds they trail between the sky and the earth; Here indeed are signs for those who has intelligence" (2:164); "Have you not seen how Allah sends down rain from the sky with it We bring out produce of various colors; and from the mountains come white and red marbling in different shades as well as black obsidian. And among men, beasts and livestock are different colors as well. Yet only the scholars among His servants truly fear Allah. Allah is Omnipotent, Forgiving" (35:27-28).**

**"Don't you know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and beside Him you have neither**

**patron nor helper." (2:107); "The material things that you are given are but conveniences of this life and the glitter thereof, but that which is with Allah is better and more enduring; will you not be intelligent" (28:60); "And such are the parables that We set forth for mankind, but only those who have knowledge understand them" (29:43); "But those among them (people of the book) who are well grounded in knowledge and believers believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you" (4:162).**

How much do we know about this gift, the brain, and how can we take full advantage of it? In the late 1960's and early 1970's research by the Nobel Prize winner Dr. Roger Sperry of the California Institute of Technology on brain waves proved that the two sides of the brain, which are linked by a complex network of nerve fibers, deal with different types of mental activity.

The left side of the brain deals with academic activities such as logic, language, reason, number, analysis, etc. The right side of the brain deals with music, images, imagination, color, face recognition, dimension, etc. Research has found that the development of the two sides of the brain produces a synergetic effect in which all areas of mental performance are improved.

One may conclude that famous scientists such as Einstein are left-brain dominant, while artists like Picasso are right-brain dominant.

A more thorough investigation of the brain resulted in fascinating facts. Early in his life, Einstein failed French and mathematics at school, but was in the top of his class in violin and art. Einstein gave credit for many of his scientific insights to his imagination and daydreaming (right brain). While daydreaming on a hill, one summer day, he imagined riding sunbeams to the far extremities of the universe, and upon finding himself returned, illogically, to the surface of the sun, he concluded that the universe must be

curved. The numbers, equations and words he later developed to prove his new image gave us the theory of relativity. This is a left and right brain synthesis.

Studies of all 'great brains' have shown that they have developed both sides of the brain and combined their capacity. When we describe a person as talented in certain areas and not talented in others, we are describing the areas of his potential that he has successfully developed and the areas that could be developed with the right commitment and nurturing. We should establish an educational system for our children to ensure the full development of the two sides of their brains.

Our ability to remember can be greatly enhanced by utilizing both sides of the brain through the development of a visual picture for verbal information. When we study the Quran, we find that Allah has often presented a visual picture even for subjects that may appear to be impossible to comprehend such as the image of God Himself as presented in the following verse:

**"God is the Light of Heaven and Earth! His light may be compared to a niche in which there is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass; the glass is just as if it were a glittering star kindled from a blessed olive tree, which is neither eastern nor western, whose oil will almost glow though fire has never touched it. Light upon Light, for God guides anyone He wishes to his light" (24:34).**

Studies have also shown that between 100,000 and 1,000,000 different chemical reactions take place in our brain every minute. Also in the brain there is a minimum of 10 billion ( $10^9$ ) individual neurons or nerve cells. Each neuron can interact with another neuron in not just one but many ways. Early studies concluded that the number of pattern-making capabilities (degrees of

freedom) in the brain to store data is more than 10 followed by 800 noughts. The number of atoms in the known universe is 10 followed by 100 noughts. However, recent results of the research by Dr. Pyotra Anokin of Moscow University on information capability of the brain have shown that  $10^{800}$  is a gross underestimation. He concluded that the number of degrees of freedom in the brain is so great that it would take a line of figures, in normal manuscript characters, more than 10.5 million kilometers in length to estimate its capacity.

Allah provided mankind with a very powerful tool to realize His presence through understanding the complex world that He created for us. All what we need is to put this tool into use. No matter how hard we study, no one will ever reach the point of fully utilizing his brain. It is estimated that the most knowledgeable person utilizes only about 10% of his brain capacity. So, next time you want to give an excuse why you are not excelling in your studies or work, remember to take advantage of your 90% unutilized brain capacity.

For additional information:

Tony Buzan, "Use Your Brain," Published by the British Broadcasting Corporation, London, 1979.

## CHAPTER 10

### Study Skills for Muslim Students

Each Muslim student must recognize the value of his college years. They offer him a unique opportunity for intellectual development which is necessary if he is to meet his noble goals and fulfill his obligations toward Allah by serving mankind. An outstanding performance is the only measure of his success. In order to achieve this important goal, a Muslim student must learn and practice good study skills. You may be surprised to know that if you have practiced the true teaching of Islam, you should have mastered the good study skills identified by several studies. The Quran teaches us that many of its miracles will be discovered by non-Muslims. Allah said: **“We will show them our signs on all the horizons as well as within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that it (the Quran) is the truth” (41:53).**

Therefore, it should not be surprising to you that God has taught us in His book and through the teachings of His prophet the good study skills. The above verse is very important to all Muslim students because it encourages them to recognize the studies of non-Muslim scholars because they may reveal some of the miracles in the Quran. Remember that the Quran represents an everlasting miracle, and every generation will identify some of these miracles as proof that the Quran is the true word of Allah.

#### Importance of Time

One of the most important study skills is learning to manage time. Time is often the enemy of a student. Just look at the language used when talking about time: we fight or try to beat the clock; we race against time. In short, much of our relationship with time is largely negative. Yet, for a Muslim it doesn't need to be this way.

Here, you live in a society of "too much;" yet everyone operates with the attitude of "I don't have enough." This attitude brings about feelings of hopelessness that extend to time. The reason is that our concept of time is an obsolete obstacle that must be overcome.

Students can be grouped into two classes based on how they view and use time. The first class represents students who always need more time to meet their obligations because they schedule first and plan next. The second class represents students who know that there is only a fixed amount of time and, thus, organize activities accordingly. A student in this class always evaluates his work by asking: 1) Is this work consistent with my purpose? 2) Is it going to help me reach my goal? and 3) Can I fit it into my plan? If the answer is "Yes" to all three questions, then he schedules goal? action. This is the student who plans first and schedules second.

Your decision on doing something should not be based on time availability, but rather on its compatibility with your goals. You need to learn that the key to managing time is through prioritizing your goals. You must identify the important goals and make time to achieve them. Your success or failure in college depends directly upon your use of time. Time is worth more than money, time is life itself. The prophet said: "**On the day of judgement each one will be asked about four things: his time and how did he utilize it; his money and how did he earn it and how did he spend it; his youth and how did he use it; and his knowledge and what he did with it.**" Also, Allah reminds us to watch for time because it runs very quickly: "**And on the day when He will summon them; it will be as if they had merely been together for an hour of a day. They will recognize each other. Those who have denied meeting Allah and refused to receive true guidance will be lost**" (10:45).

## Scheduling

The difference between a good and a bad student rests in the ability of the first to gain extra time. I am sure no one can gain extra time by increasing the number of hours in a day but you can gain time by doing each job in less time than usual and by using the small blocks of time that are usually wasted. Studies have shown that the time spent by students in a typical week is divided as follows:

Activity	Hours spent
Sleep	49.3
Study	19.8
Classes and Labs	18.7
Meals	10.7
Total	98.5

This leaves 69.5 hours which are unaccounted for, or about 10 hours per day.

To fully utilize this wasted time, a schedule is required. Planning by making a schedule saves you time and energy. Remember that when people fail, it is not because they plan to fail but rather because they fail to plan. Of all students, the Muslim student should be the most proficient in planning his time and in knowing the principles of scheduling. From an early age, he learns to schedule his activities to ensure that he can perform his five prayers in their appropriate time. Also, fasting, Zakat and pilgrimage are activities that are associated with time and, therefore, require scheduling. No wonder that the early Muslims' respect for time served as a motive for them to invent the clock. It is sad to see how many Muslims treat time as if it is the cheapest thing in their lives rather than one of the most valuable.

The basic rule in scheduling is that you must develop a schedule that fits your personal needs. You should have the courage and develop the determination to stick with it and never make an exception. Side tracking, laziness, daydreaming and procrastination are the four great robbers of our time, so watch for them. Remember that the Prophet said: **“Do not delay today's work till tomorrow.”**

Here are few principles on scheduling which you may find helpful:

1. Don't pack your schedule too tightly.
2. Double your time estimates, since most people tend to underestimate time.
3. Avoid too many details and plan blocks of time in one-hour intervals of 50 minutes for study and 10 minutes for rest.
4. Discover how long you need to study. Start with 2 hrs study per 1 hr class and then adjust your study time according to your experience, preparation and the nature of the subject.
5. Eliminate dead hours.
6. Follow the prophet's teaching by establishing a well-balanced schedule. Make a plan for living, and not merely one for studying. The prophet said: **" You owe your soul some rights; you owe your body some rights; you owe your family some rights; and you owe God some rights: so give everyone his proper right."**

As a Muslim you must remember that the only way to success is by doing your best and maintaining the right intention for your action. Therefore, in making your schedule you have to realize the true priorities. You can't succeed by your effort alone: you need the fulfillment of God's guarantee to make you successful.

Always keep Allah first, and He will never let you down but will always lift you up.

## **Concentration**

Concentration is an important factor in ensuring that you remember what you study. Utilization of physical senses promotes and almost ensures concentration. Using a pen to write notes provides the necessary activity. Remember that this is something that a Muslim student should know. The first Surah that God revealed to Muslims teaches them this principle. Allah said: **"Read in the name of your lord who creates; He who created man from a clinging clot. Read, for your Lord is the most generous; it is He who teaches by means of the pen; and it is He who teaches man what man does not know" (96:1-5).**

Note-taking and listening are inseparable partners; you have to be a good listener to take good notes. Hearing and listening are two different things. Hearing is mechanical but listening requires attention and concentration. People develop the ability of good listening by practice. Muslim students should have no excuse for not mastering the talent of listening because they have a lot of practice by following God's command when listening to the Quran:

**"When the Quran is read, listen to it attentively and hold your peace, so that you may receive mercy" (7:204).**

Listening is essential if you are interested in remembering what you have heard. Studies have shown that the average student remembers 50% of a 10-minute lecture when tested immediately and only 25% when tested after 48 hrs. If you are going to be the best among the students, you must improve your ability to remember beyond these statistics. This can be achieved by avoiding bad listening habits, applying the principles of

combatting forgetfulness, and learning the effective method of taking good notes.

There are several bad listening habits which you need to recognize. These include:

1. Making an early decision that the subject is dull.
2. Establishing a negative opinion about the speaker or getting distracted by his voice or appearance.
3. Overreacting to a specific point or an emotional word in the lecture.
4. Faking attention.
5. Yielding to distractions.
6. Listening to the facts only and not caring about the evidence.
7. Being busy with form and style and missing the content.
8. Wasting the speed of your thinking. People think four times faster than they speak; therefore, unless you use the available time efficiently to consolidate the topic in your brain, the brain will daydream.

### **Enhancing Remembering**

In addition to avoiding the above-mentioned bad listening habits, you need to apply the following principles of enhancing remembering and combatting forgetting:

1. Motivation: You must have the mental attitude for wanting to remember. If you are not naturally interested, you must create an artificial interest.
2. Selectivity: The essence of genius is to know what to overlook and what to remember. You may note that the Quran skips unnecessary details when providing stories about the prophets and

emphasizes only the core message.

3. Consolidation: This is achieved by reviewing your class notes immediately after class. Studies have shown that students who spend only 5 minutes for review after class were able to recall 150% more material after 6 weeks than students who did not review.

4. Mental visualization: The brain has two halves: the right half stores visual information; and the left half stores the verbal information. Your ability to remember can be greatly enhanced by utilizing both sides of the brain through the development of a visual picture for verbal information. If you study the Quran, you find that Allah always draws a visual picture even for subjects that may appear to be impossible to comprehend. One such an example is: **"God is the Light of Heaven and Earth! His light may be compared to a niche in which there is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass; the glass is just as if it were a glittering star kindled from a blessed olive tree, which is neither eastern nor western, whose oil will almost glow though fire has never touched it. Light upon Light, for God guides anyone He wishes to his light" (24:35).** Although it is impossible to visualize God's light, Allah has drawn for us a very vivid picture. This picture and others make the Quran easy to remember.

5. Association: Establishing a link between the new and the well-established facts makes memorizing new facts easy. The Quran utilizes a very interesting approach to association by always establishing the link between two sharply contrasting or opposite pictures: day and night; good and evil; heaven and hell; believers and unbelievers; etc.

6. Distribution: Using several short sessions has been proven to be better than using one long session. We know that the Quran was

revealed in several short sessions which is different than the previous messages that were revealed in their entirety at one time.

The Prophet used to teach his companions ten verses by ten verses and he said: "**A small effort but continuous is better than over- much but irregular.**"

6. Recitation: Recitation allows the use of more physical senses than merely reading and, therefore, it promotes remembering. The rule is to spend 60-80% of the time reciting and 20-40% reading. The only proof that you know a fact is to say it. Allah orders us to recite the Quran: "**And recite the Quran distinctly**" (73:4).

7. Mnemonics: Mnemonics facilitates remembering, particularly, for the order of several facts or numbers and the difference between similar words. Examples include:

Astronomy: the name and order of planets are identified by the first letter in each word:

Men Very Easily Make Jugs Serve Useful and Numerous Purposes.

Mercury Venus Earth Mars Jupiter Saturn Uranus Neptune Pluto

Mathematics: the value of  $\pi$  to eleven places is based on the number of letters in each word:

How I wish I could determine of circle round the exact relation

3. 1 4 1 5 9 2 6 5 3 5 9

Medicine: To remember that cyanates are harmless and that cyanides are poisonous you need to note the ending of each word:

Cyanates, from I ate

Cyanides, from I died

Spelling: The difference between principal and principle can be identified by the endings:

**Principal** is a pal

**Principle** is a rule

Spelling: the rule for using ie or ei can be remembered as follows: i before e except after c or when sounding like a as in neighbor (or weight)

One approach to making mnemonics is to underline the key word in each main item or point, then write down the first letter of each key word. The mnemonics involve a word or a group of rhymed words that are formed from these first letters. I am sure you recognize the value of having rhymed verses in the Quran for making its memorization easy.

### **Principles For Taking Notes:**

Studies have shown that taking good notes during a lecture and merely a 5-minute review of these notes immediately after the lecture can dramatically improve the student's ability to remember.

There are several principles for taking good notes, the following are fifteen of them:

1. Pre-read the lecture chapter in the textbook.
2. Takes notes as soon as the lecture begins.
3. Don't write word for word; use both your own words and those of the lecturer. Also, use abbreviations.
4. Listen carefully as you take notes but do not stop to evaluate the ideas presented.
5. Make a special note of all striking words and clues (watch for words or phrases like: "This is important", or "Most students miss this point", etc.).
6. Do not use tape recorder.
7. Your notes should be legible and complete enough to make sense.

8. Make notes on the main ideas and on the sub-ideas and any examples.
9. Leave blanks for ideas that you think you missed; later, be sure to ask the instructor or a fellow student about these or about some other vague points.
10. Use a symbol to mark ideas emphasized by the lecturer.
11. If an assignment is announced, mark it clearly.
12. Review your notes as soon as you leave the lecture.
13. While walking to the next class, try to recall the main points.
14. As soon as you have a chance, review your notes carefully and fill in the gaps. Write your questions and arrange to discuss them with your lecturer. This review takes about 10 to 15 minutes per each one hour lecture.
15. Remember that note-taking improves by practice, so don't give up in your note-writing effort.

When studying for the exam, don't waste your time by reviewing what you already know. One approach that allows you to discover quickly what you know and what you don't is to arrange your notes as follows:

Main ideas/ key words (write after lecture, same day)	Textbook notes	Lecture notes
Summary: make summary for each sheet		

You also need to make a one-page summary for the whole lecture. When reviewing, start with the summary; if you remember it then proceed to the next lecture. If you don't remember the summary,

review the column containing the main ideas. If you still can't remember, then review the notes.

### **Preparing For Exams**

Knowing that you have done your best in both action and intention you should be able to face the challenges of the exams calmly. As part of your attempt to do your best you need to learn research results, hints, and tips on taking tests and exams. The day or two before the final exam has more value than any other day or two during the semester. Your preparation for the exam should begin from the first day of classes by attending all lectures, and taking notes on every lecture, taking notes on each textbook chapter or marking your textbook as you read it, and by regularly throughout the semester spending 5 to 10 minutes reviewing your notes. You should keep the days before the exam for pre-exam activities. The time before the exam should be used efficiently to consolidate facts and ideas you learned throughout the semester.

The best method to study for an exam is to consolidate your lecture and textbook notes into sets of summary sheets, and then recite them. You should try to keep the number of summary sheets to about 10 for each course. The details and background information will be in your mind, the summary sheets contain all the cues.

As you have done during the semester, you should make a schedule for the week before the finals. You should start by filling the blocks that will be taken up by prayers, family, meals, sleep, recreation, and any classes you must attend. Under no circumstances you should miss any of these. Remember that you must be in tip-top shape spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically if you are to do your best on the exams. The remaining time in the schedule should be used to study for your exams.

Before the end of the week before finals, make up another schedule for the exam week. Fill in the time for your exams and for your prayers, family, meals, sleep, recreation, and for the review of your summary notes. The less time you allow between this last review and the exam, the less forgetting will take place.

If you feel tense before or during the exam, follow the following steps: (1) breathe in until your lungs feel completely full; (2) take a sudden, quick, extra breath through your open mouth; (3) let your breath out slowly; (4) recite some verses from the Quran and remember that God will never let you down. These are hardly noticeable and you can repeat them several times.

There are additional ideas that you may find helpful in ensuring that you are fully prepared for the exams. These include:

1. Find as much as you can about each exam by asking the instructor and possibly by obtaining copies of the last semester's exam.
2. As you prepare and recite your summary sheets, ask yourself: What kind of question would I ask on this topic if I were the instructor? Write these questions on separate sheet and try to accumulate a minimum of 30 questions on each course. Answer these questions, as if they were the exam.
3. Study by rereading your lecture and textbook notes rather than by rereading the textbook.
4. On the night before the exam, take a grand tour of the summary notes by spreading them out and try to see the overall picture of the whole course.
5. On the morning of the exam, have a leisurely and nourishing breakfast and take a last tour through your notes.

For more information:

Walter Pauk, "How to Study in College," Published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1984.

## CHAPTER 11

### How to Improve Your English Language

The person's ability to clearly communicate is a key to his success.

The Quran teaches Muslims that Allah has taught us the language we use to communicate. In Surah Al-Rahman, Allah said: "**Al-Rahman (the mercy- giving) has taught the Quran, He has created man, He has taught him self-expression (language)" (55:1-4)**. The Prophet said: "**Who learns the language of other people is saved from their wickedness.**"

We all know that the miracle that was most challenging to the Arabs was the language of the Quran. It is, therefore, part of a Muslim's faith to master the talent that Allah has provided him, i.e. the language. This includes not only the Arabic language but also any other language that he feels is important to him. Mastering the English language is essential for each Muslim who lives in the Western world. It is not only important for his daily life but it is also essential if he is to fulfill his duty as a Muslim by propagating the true message of Allah. There are several keys to improve your English language. These are: vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, punctuation, and grammar. This chapter will provide you with a quick and easy way to increase your vocabulary and, thus, sets the basis for your effort to master the English language.

English has hundreds of thousands of words which would be impossible to remember individually. However, most English words are put together using three building blocks. These are roots, prefixes and suffixes. Once you learn to recognize these building blocks, many previously unfamiliar words become meaningful. Most of the roots of the English language are derived from Latin or Greek. **It will be very helpful to take a Latin course, if you can.** Example: the Latin root "sal-" means "salt";

also, the roman soldiers were given a special allowance to buy their own salt. Therefore, the root "sal-" has also the meaning of "pay". Let us review a few words that are derived from using the root "sal-": salt, saline (solution containing salt), salami (highly salted meat), salads (vegetables containing salt), and salary (payment for working).

Another example: the root "viv-" means "to live" and the root "vit-" means "life"; the prefix "re-" means "again"; the suffix "-al" means "full of or pertaining to". Notice the meaning of these words:

revive: re- vive : to live again (to bring back to life, strength, health, or consciousness). Examples: 1) The lifeguard revived the man. 2) After a hard day's work, a hot meal revived him.

Vital: vit- al : pertaining to (necessary for) life or full of life. Oxygen is vital to all animals. He is a happy, vital person.

Once you know a root and some of the words built on it, you can keep building. For example, you can build from the word "revive" the words "revival" (the act of reviving; recovery) and "revivify" (the same as revive).

The following tables provide some roots, prefixes and suffixes with their meanings and some of the words derived from them.

### ROOTS:

acu- or acr-	: sharp (acute, acuity, acrid)
ag- or act-	: to do (agenda, agent, agency, agile,
	actor)
am-	: to love (amateur, amenable, amorous)
anim-	: life; mind; soul; spirit (animal, animate)
annu- or enni-	: year (annual, annuity, centennial)
anthrop- or anthropo	: man; human (philanthropist)
arche- or archeo	: ancient (archeology)

arch- or archi-	: chief; principal (archangel, architect)
-arch or -archy	: a ruler (patriarchy)
aud- or audit-	: to hear; to inspect (audit, audience)
aut- or auto-	: self (automatic, automobile)
bene-	: well; good (benefit, beneficiary)
bio-	: life (biography, biology)
cad-, cid, cas-	: to fall; happen by chance
(casual,accident)	
cap-, ceiv-	:to take; seize (capable, receive)
cap-	: to take; to seize (capture)
ced-,cede-,cent-	: one hundred
gen-	: born
dic-	: to say (dictation)
fac-	: to do
volent-	: wishing; willing (benevolent)
-crat	: rule; power (autocrat)
-graph	: a writing (autograph)
-matic	: acting; moving (automatic)
mobile	: moving (automobile)
matri-	: mother (matriarchy)
patri-	: father (patriarchy)
tekt-	: worker (architect)
mono-	: one; single (monarch)
phil-	: love
mis-	: hate
un-	: one

### **PREFIXES:**

en-	: to make; cause to be
per-	: through
ad-, ac-:	to; upon
de-	: down
oc-	: toward

**SUFFIXES:**

-id	: having a particular quality
-mony	: quality of being
-ity	: the state, condition, or quality of being
-ience	: the state or condition of
-ion	: the act of, state of, or result of
-ure	: the act or result of
-orium	: a place for
-in	: on; upon
-ent	: a person who
-or	: a person who
-ateur	: a person who
-ist	: a person who believes in or engaged in
-facto	: a person who does
-ary	: a person connected with
-ile	: pertaining to; like; having the character of
-ial	: of; pertaining to
-al	: of; like; pertaining to; characterized by
-ive	: inclined to; tending to; having the character of
-ory	: related to; like; resembling
-ate	: having; being
-ous	: full of, having, or like
-ible	: able, capable of
-able	: able to; capable of; worthy of
-logy	: the science or study of
-graphy	: a writing

**For more information consult the following Books:**

"How to Increase Your Word Power", Published by the Reader's Digest Association, Inc., New York, 1971.

"Write Better, Speak Better", Published by the Reader's Digest Association, Inc., New York, 1972.

Robert Schleifer, "Grow Your Vocabulary," Published by Random House, New York, 1995.

## CHAPTER 12

### The Responsibility of a Foreign Muslim in the West

You, as a Muslim in this foreign land, are the image of Islam and an important part of its picture. This picture is being disfigured by many so called Muslims. I hope that you are not one of them. I also hope that your part of the picture is the most beautiful so that it can overshadow the ugly parts, so people will be attracted to know the true Islam by knowing you, will admire Islam by admiring you, will respect Islam by respecting you, and by God's will, will believe in Islam by imitating you. As a true Muslim, it is imperative that you always keep in your mind and in your heart that you, as a Muslim, are God's trustee and the one who is representing Islam. Therefore, as a prudent Muslim you must keep in mind and follow these nine commanding virtues:

1. Remember that you are a guest in this country. You must act as an honored guest, and that all your actions can be pointed out as showing ample evidence of Muslims' pride, and the highest standards of the Muslims' faith. Daily, you are being watched and weighed by non-Muslims. But even more importantly, you are always being watched by Allah himself: and you are a guest in his world! Remember, that most Americans are cynical. Consequently, if you profess to believe something, then you had better practice what you preach; otherwise, they will judge you as a hypocrite. Also, whether you like it or not, the people will judge Islam by your actions. Your actions speak louder than your words; therefore, act like a Muslim. The prophet said: **"You are a part in the picture of Islam, Don't make your part ruin the picture."**

2. Follow the true Islamic teachings: be punctual; be prompt; be honest; be fair; be appreciative of the courtesies and kindness extended to you and try to extend such graces to the lives that you touch; be impartial, be cautious and reserved on hearing disputes on controversial matters as politics and religious preferences or upon issues or situations unfamiliar or unknown to you; try to convey dignity, and hope and gladness whenever, however and wherever possible. Try to do the right things and behave and act with grace and nobility in difficult situations. Remember that the Prophet said: **"God will not show mercy to him who does not show mercy to others.";** **"Every religion has an innate character. The character of Islam is modesty."** **"All creatures are God's, and those dearest to God are those who treat his creatures kindly."**

Are you following the true Islamic teachings? Remember the sayings of the Prophet: **"There are three characteristics of a hypocrite: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he does not fulfill it; and when he is trusted, he betrays."** Allah said describing of the true Muslims: **"(The believers) are those who preserve their trusts and oaths, and those who stand by their testimony" (70:32-33).**

Remember also the saying of the Prophet when a man asked him about backbiting, the Prophet said: **"Backbiting is to mention about a man what he dislikes to hear."** Then the man said: Even if it is true? The prophet said: **"If you utter something false, then it is slander."**

3. Learn the many good points and the few bad points of the

local culture. Then try to practice these good things and even try to improve upon on them. There is much to be gained by careful application and further improvement. Do not condemn a culture by your emotionalism and refuse to learn anything from it. You will be surprised to find that many of the social teachings of Islam which are not practiced in your Muslim country are being practiced here. This should not be surprising to us because the Quran teaches us that the wisdom of God's teachings will be discovered and applied by non-Muslims proving the divinity of these teachings. Allah said: **"We will show them our signs on all the horizons as well as within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that it (the Quran) is the truth" (41:53).**

4. Avoid empty arguments and heated discussions by kindness, calmness and by your best rational, soft replies. Only a fool argues with a fool! Let your own good examples be your best arguments and advocates. There are many who would insult you, infuriate you, misguide you, and upset you. A quiet, calm, good life is your best argument, your best personal example. Always remember God's teachings: **"Respond to evil with that which is best, then the one between you and him was hatred will become your sincere friend" (41:34); "The Mercy-Giving's servants who walk modestly on earth and peacefully say: How do you do? whenever ignorant men address them."& "who will not bear false witness, and when they pass by (people) gossiping, pass by in a dignified manner" (25:63,72).** The prophet said: **"A strong person is not the person who throws his adversaries to the ground. A strong person is the person who controls himself when he is angry."**

5. Take advantage of being here to know and make friends with others. Remember, Allah said: **"We have made you nations and tribes that you know one another and be friends. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct" (49:13).**

So, associate yourself with other Muslims and also with serious non-Muslims. If you are a student, you need to work with the best students. Good learning achievement can come about by mutually discussing what you have learned and what the teacher has said and what each problem really teaches, etc. Remember the advice that Luqman al-Hakim made to his son: **"My son: Sit with the learned men and keep close to them. Allah gives life to hearts with the light of wisdom as Allah gives life to the dead earth with the abundant rain of the sky."**

6. Be aware that Westerners are always taught that it is impolite to discuss religion. So while they might bring the subject when they are alone with you, they may feel embarrassed to discuss religion in public. When you discuss religion with a Christian don't be offensive by attacking his faith and the authenticity of his bible. This approach may make you win the argument, but it will harden his heart against Islam and drives him from the truth. Your objective and approach is to touch his heart and open his mind by relying to him the truth about Islam. Although we learn that logic will always prevail, you will be surprised that in the real-world personality will always prevail. So, when you are discussing religion remember what Allah said: **"Do not argue with the People of the Book unless it is in the politest manner" (29:46).**

Don't let your strong zeal about Islam and your strong desire to invite others to It make you overbearing. Remember that Allah said: **"There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256); "You do not guide someone you love, but God guides anyone He wishes. He is quite aware as to who deserves guidance" (28:56).**

You also should be alert to avoid engagements in fruitless and heated arguments. Allah also said: **"Revile not those who pray to other gods beside Allah, lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance" (6:1108).**

7. Do not assume that all people here are good or that all people are bad. Most likely you will find that most people are much like those back home - a mixture of good and bad. Do not let fast-talking men or women pressure you into unwise or hasty decisions. The more the pressure, the more time you really need. Do not hesitate to investigate first and act later. If you don't clearly understand something, ask about it more than once, if necessary. Remember the sayings of the Prophet: **"The believer is alert and wise." and "The believer does not get bitten from the same hole twice."**
  
8. You will be faced with many temptations such as free sex, prostitution, alcohol, drugs, gambling, pornography, usury, etc. They represent a major challenge to your sincerity and a difficult test to your beliefs. Allah reminds the believers with these tests, He said: **"We will test you till We know those who strive among you as well as those who are patient." (47:31); "Did you reckon that you could enter Heaven without God testing you to show those who struggled in his cause and who have**

### **remained steadfast" (3:142)?**

You must succeed in facing these challenges and passing these tests. Be smart; don't attempt to test your will by exposing yourself to the danger; don't even come close to it; Allah said: **"Do not approach shameful deeds whether they are practiced openly or in secret" (6:151).**

If you make a mistake, admit your error and do not persist. Ask God for forgiveness and do not despair, for Allah said: **"And consider those who remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their offenses when they commit some shocking deeds or harm themselves and do not knowingly persist in whatever they have been doing, for who beside Allah can forgive offenses? The contrite and sincere penitent will have forgiveness from their Lord as their reward, plus gardens with flowing rivers to live in forever" (3:135).**

9. Certain elements are basic to human nature, and one of the most powerful elements is the sexual urge. This, probably, presents the most challenging temptation to Muslims in the west, particularly, singles. Chasing the opposite sex is not only immoral but it can also be extremely hazardous as to your future, your career, your personal health, and even to your life. Islam is a religion that does not act like an ostrich and buries its head in the sand thinking that a problem does not exist. In Islam, the subject of sex is neither considered dirty nor it is treated lightly. Allah said in the Quran: **"Your wives are (meant) for you to cultivate: so go to your cultivation whenever you wish. Send things on ahead for yourselves, and heed God; know that you will be**

**meeting him" (2:223).**

Islam has established certain principles to govern the interaction of the sexes and control sexual behavior among Muslims. The first is that free casual social mixing between men and women is not permitted. The second is that when mixing takes place, both men and women are to exercise propriety in the way they speak, look and behave. The third is that a man and woman who are not related by marriage or by a 'mahrem' relationship are not permitted alone together. The Prophet said: **"Whoever believes in God and the day of judgment should not sit in privacy with a woman without a 'mahrem' of her being present, because Satan will be the third among them."**

The fourth is that both Muslim women and Muslim men are required to conceal their sexuality and attractions (except obviously from their spouses) by a strictly modest, straight-forward type attire. Allah said: **"Tell the believing men to avert their glances and guard their sexuality; that is more chaste for them. Indeed, God is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to avert their glances and guard their sexuality and not display their charms except for what must normally appear of them" (24:30-31).**

Recognizing the strength of this sexual drive the Prophet advised Muslims to get married as soon as they are able to fulfill its financial, physical and emotional responsibilities. The Prophet advised the youth by saying: **"Whoever is capable of meeting the obligation of marriage should get married, and if he can't, he should fast, fasting is a protection for him."**

Fasting does not only strengthen the individual spiritually, but it also reduces his sexual desire by eliminating the extra energy. Since you do not live in an Islamic society and the temptations are quite severe and it is impossible to fast all the time, it is necessary to establish several lines of defense against this temptation. These should include both spiritual and physical. Spiritual defenses include fasting, association with good Muslims and writing regularly to your family. Physical defenses include fasting, sports, averting your glances, not intentionally looking, being selective of what you watch the TV, avoid situations that aggravate the problem, avoid living by yourself and select the right roommates. You should arrange your schedule and make regular sports activities an important part of your religious rituals. Although Islam emphasizes self-control, good manners and the protection by avoiding looking, it does not mean that a Muslim should look retarded by always looking at the ground. While averting lustful gazing, one doesn't have to look downwards at the ground all the time. You should practice keeping your eyes busy by looking at objects like buildings, posters, trees, cars, or whatever it takes to avoid these several difficulties. The Prophet said: **"Do not follow a look with another one. You have no control on the first look, but you are responsible for the second one."** Also remember this line of poetry: *"All accidents start with a look, and most fires start with a small spark"*.

## CHAPTER 13

### Presenting The Basics of Islam to Non-Muslims

It is the responsibility of every Muslim to inform others about Islam in a way that is consistent with the Islamic teachings. For a Muslim to select the right approach, he may ask himself the question: If I was one of those unfortunates who are born to Non-Muslim parents would I have converted to Islam? If you have difficulty answering this question, you must get on your knees and thank Allah and your parents that you did not have to make this choice. You must also feel the greatness of the responsibility to convey the message of Islam to those who are unfortunate. Place yourself in their shoes and assess your reaction to the approach that you plan to use. I am sure you will agree that attempts to invite them to Islam by emphasizing the errors in their scripture and the falsehood of their religion will only antagonize them. Also, this approach will focus the discussion on their faith rather than yours and you may miss the only chance that you have to introduce Islam to them. Therefore, this approach is not appropriate, and if it was, the prophet would have used it. The Prophet's approach was to convey Islam in the most gracious way, and this should be yours.

You may feel that your knowledge about Islam is limited and you are not qualified to explain it to others. If this is your excuse, you must realize that you know more about Islam than the Prophet did when he started preaching the message of Islam. Therefore, limited knowledge should not be an excuse, and it should not diminish your responsibility. You should, however, be aware that some people may feel embarrassed to discuss religion in public and you must respect their feelings. You also must remember the commandments of Allah on how to invite others to Islam; Allah said: **"Invite to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and the**

**most beautiful breaching; and argue with them with the ways that are the best and most gracious"(16:125); "Do not argue with the People of the Book unless it is the politest manner" (29:46).**

You also should be alert to avoid engagements in fruitless and heated arguments because Allah said: **"Revile not those who pray to other gods beside Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance" (6:108).**

To minimize your preparation, the following few chapters provide you with some basic information that you can use in your presentations on Islam.

## CHAPTER 14

### ISLAM AND MUSLIMS

Close your eyes and think of "Islam" and "Muslims", what sort of pictures do these words paint in your mind? Chances are that you think of "Islam" as a strange Middle Eastern cult, and "Muslims" as long-robed rich Arab playboys, or as fanatical men of religion. These widely-held images of Islam and Muslims are no more accurate than the images Muslims may get of Christians from the Ku Klux Klan, Bosnian Serbs, 10th-century Crusades, Nazi Germany, Northern Ireland, or South Africa. These distorted pictures of religion are born by prejudice, hearsay, and the publicized actions of a few misguided people who commit crimes in the name of religion. In this chapter and the ones to follow, we will try to dispel some of these misunderstandings.

Few Americans realize that only 15 % of the one billion Muslims in the world are Arabs. Indonesian and Malaysian Muslims outnumber the Arabs who follow the religion of Islam that was revealed more than 1400 years ago to prophet Mohammad (PBUH). It is considered by Muslims an offensive misnomer to use the word "Mohammadanism" as a synonymous to the word Islam. It would be improper to give a different name to Islam because Islam is probably the only faith whose title is contained in its scripture, the holy Quran. In the last verse that was revealed to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), God said: **"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and completed my blessings toward you, and have chosen Islam for you as your religion" (5:3).**

Similarly, it is improper to call Muslims "Mohammadans" because the title Muslims is given to them in the Quran: **"Strive for God's sake, the way He should be striven for. He has**

**chosen you and has not placed any constraint upon you concerning your religion which is the religion of your forefather Abraham. He has named you Muslims both previously and right now" (22:78).**

The word Islam is an attributive title that describes the basic nature of the faith. It is not derived from a name of person, location or race. Literally, "Islam" comes from an Arabic root that means "peace and acceptance." Thus, Islam means the religion that achieves peace through the trusting acceptance of God. Therefore, the mission of Islam is peace, both internal and external, for individuals, families, and nations. In this essence, Islam was the mission of all prophets and was only universalized through the advent of the last prophet, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). This point is clearly illustrated in the Holy Quran in several verses.

**"When Jesus became conscious of his people's disbelief, he asked, 'Who will be my supporters in the cause of God?' The disciples said, 'We are your supporters in the cause of God, we believe in God, and you bear witness that we are Muslims'" (3:52).**

**"O' People of the scripture! Why do you argue about Abraham, when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed until after him? Do you not use your reason? Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a true Muslim, and he never associated other gods with God" (3:65-67).**

For any person to become a Muslim he needs only to declare that: "There is no God but Allah and Mohammad is his messenger". Allah is not an Eastern or Arabian God, Allah is the personal name of the same God that Christians and Jews worship all over the world. In fact, Christians and Jews in the Middle East call

God "Allah". Unlike the word god which has gender "god and goddess" and is subject to plurality "god and gods", Allah is a word that has no gender and is not subject to plurality. This makes Allah an ideal word to describe the one genderless supreme being. However, the most important reason why Muslims use the word Allah is that the Creator refers to Himself by that name in the Quran: **"Verily, I am Allah. There is no god but Me, so serve me, and establish prayers for celebrating My praise" (20:14).**

We have seen that to become a Muslim is simple. However, having begun our journey as Muslims so simply, we are challenged for the rest of our lives to live according to God's law, as it is presented to us in the Quran and in the life of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

## CHAPTER 15

### MOHAMMAD, THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

To become a Muslim, you need only to say: There is no god but Allah and Mohammad is His messenger. Who is Mohammad? Before we answer this question, let us make it clear that Muslims do not worship Mohammad. Muslims worship Allah. Also, Mohammad (PBUH) is not the founder of Islam, Allah is. The Quran leaves no doubt that Mohammad (PBUH) is only a human who served two roles. First, he served as the messenger who delivered Allah's Quran to mankind. As the last of God's scriptures, the Quran is a complete code for living. Second, Mohammad (PBUH) served as a perfect example of how to live a righteous life according to the laws God revealed in the Quran. He was not only an excellent spiritual leader, he was also an able statesman, a brilliant general, and a loving husband and a kind father.

Mohammad (PBUH) was born in Mecca, in Arabia on Monday 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal of the first year of the Era of the Elephant (August 29, 570 A.D.). His father Abd-Allah died two months before he was born. Aminah, his mother, described his pregnancy with Mohammad (PBUH) as follows: "Since the day I carried my son in my womb, until I delivered him, I never suffered the least of pain. I never even felt his weight and should not have known that I was pregnant if it had not after I conceived and was about to fall asleep, an angel appeared to me and said: Do you not know that you are pregnant with the Lord of all nations, the Prophet of all the people? Know it in full." At the same time a streak of light, darting from my body went-up northwards. When the day of deliverance came due, the angel appeared to me again and said: "When you bring forth this child into the world, you must utter these words: For him, I implore the protection of Allah, the Only

One, against the wickedness of the envious, and you shall call him by the name of Mohammad (PBUH) which means the Lauded (Praised One), as he is announced in the Taurat (the old testament) and the Injil (the gospel), for he will be lauded by the inhabitants of Heaven and Earth." And for the second time, a line of light darted from her body in the direction of Syria. At the same time of Mohammad's birth, several strange things happened in the world: a violent earthquake trembled the palace of Chosroes (the emperor of Persia) shattering fourteen of its towers; the Sacred fire in Persia, kept alight for more than 1000 years, went out, and all the idols in the Kaaba were found with their head down.

After Mohammad's birth, he was given, as was the custom of the leading families of Mecca, to a family who lived in the desert to nurse him. This was custom because Mecca was a place where people from across Arabia come to visit bringing with them different customs, languages and even diseases. Therefore, rich families wanted their children to be raised in a pure environment outside the city. There are many reports on the blessing that was received by the Bedouin family that was raising him. But an incident happened that made his foster family worry about him when he was 4 years old. While he was out with his foster brother leading the flocks of sheep to the pasture, two men with white robes appeared and took him. While his foster brother was watching, one of the men held him and the other split his chest open and removed his heart. His Foster brother ran home to tell his parents that two men killed his brother from Quraish. When the parents arrived to the scene, they saw Mohammad (PBUH) setting on the top of a hill perfectly calm. They asked him what happened. He said: I saw these two white forms coming from the sky and I thought they were two birds; when they came close they were two men wearing white robes. As they approached me, I froze from fear. They seized me and one held me and the other cut my breast open. They drew out of my heart a black clot which

they cast far away; and then closed my chest and disappeared like phantoms. When they went home, his foster parents became afraid that something may happen to him and decided to return him to his family.

He returned to Mecca where he was raised by his mother under the guardianship of his grandfather (Abdul Muttalib). Two years after, when he was six, his mother died and he was taken by his grandfather to live with him. Mohammad's tribe was well respected because they were known to be the descendants of Prophet Abraham through Prophet Ishmael. Mohammad's grandfather was the guardian of the Kabbah, the place that Abraham built for the worship of God. Muslims believe that the Kabbah was first built by the angels as a place of worship for Adam and Eve upon their descent to earth.

When Mohammad (PBUH) was eleven, his grandfather died and he went to live with his uncle Abu-Talib. Having a large family, Abu-Talib's income from the management of the Kaaba was not sufficient. To supplement his income, he ran a trading business in Yemen and in Syria. When Mohammad (PBUH) was 12, his uncle was preparing to go for a trip to Syria. With the loss of his mother and his grandfather, the young boy did not want to leave his uncle. So his uncle decided to take him to Syria. On the way to Syria, a monastery was located over one of the hills where a learned monk, whose name was Bahira, lived. Looking over the road, Bahira saw this caravan and over it there was a white cloud covering it from the heat of the sun. So, he sent a messenger to invite all the travelers without any exception, the young and the old, the nobles and the slaves. The Caravan camped at the foot of the hill but because Mohammad (PBUH) was tired, he was left to sleep in the camp while the rest went to the monk. When they arrived, AbuTalib said; By Lat and Uzza (the name of the two idols that they worshiped), your conduct puzzles me. We passed

many times by your convent, and you have never showed us any sign of hospitality, so what is wrong. Bahira said, "I have my reason, but now you are my guests, so enjoy the meal. Bahira scrutinized them all looking for a certain sign. When he did find it, he asked: are you sure that all of you are present, is there anyone remaining in your camp. They said, we left a young boy who is resting. He said, bring him; you don't want him to miss this meal. So, they went and got Mohammad (PBUH). Bahira looked at the boy with great attention. Then he went to him and took him by his side and said: I have a question to ask: By Lat and Uzza, will you answer it. Mohammad (PBUH) replied: Put no question to me in the name of Lat and Uzza, there is nothing on this earth that I hate more than them. Well, then, by Allah will you answer me. He said, "By Allah I'll answer you. So, Bahira, interrogated him about many things and examined a birth mark on his back. Then Bahira took Abu Talib to the side and warned him that he must take special care and protect this boy because he is destined to play a major role in this world.

Although both the Persian and the Roman civilizations were in existence, the tribes who lived in Mecca were probably the most socially, morally and spiritually corrupt during that time. Idol worshiping, ignorance, slavery, racism, prostitution, gambling, alcohol, theft and so on represented the norms of their life. Mohammad (PBUH) was an unlettered man who did not participate in this lifestyle, and used to regularly escape this life by camping outside Mecca at a nearby mountain for meditation. He grew up to be respected in his community for his honesty and sincerity, and the people gave him the nickname "Al-Amean", the Trustworthy.

At the age of 25, a forty-year-old rich widow whose name was Khadija hired him to run her trading business. He faithfully served her, and soon afterward, she asked him to marry her and

he agreed. Throughout the 26 years of their life together he remained devoted to her; and after her death, when he took other wives, he always mentioned her with the greatest love and reverence.

Mohammad (PBUH) continued his practice to take his family to the mountain for meditation. One night when he was forty years old and while he was asleep in his cave of retreat, he heard a voice saying: "Read!" He said: "I cannot read". The voice became louder and said again: "Read!" He said "I cannot read". For the third time, the voice became more authoritative and said: "Read!" He said: "What can I read?". The voice said: **"Read in the name of your Lord who creates, creates man from a clinging clot. Read, for your Lord is the most Generous; it is He who teaches by means of the pen, teaches man what he does not know" (96:1-5).**

After the voice stopped, he ran scared out of the cave toward the tent of his family. But as soon as he went out of the cave, he heard the same voice say: "O Mohammad, you are Allah's messenger, and I am the holy spirit Gabriel". He raised his eyes towards the voice and saw the angel, in the likeness of a man, standing in the sky above the horizon. And again, the voice said: "O Mohammad, you are Allah's messenger, and I am Gabriel". He stood and wherever he turned his face from the brightness of the vision, the angel was there. He remained still until the angel vanished, then he ran to his wife in a state of great distress and was afraid that an evil spirit may have touched him. She comforted him by saying: God would not let a harmful spirit touch him, and she took him back to Mecca.

Khadija had a very old cousin, Waraqa ibn Naufal, who was a Christian scholar. She took Mohammad (PBUH) to him to seek his advice. Her cousin told them that he believed that the

heavenly messenger who came to Moses and Jesus had come to Mohammad, and that Mohammad was chosen as the Prophet of his people.

Following the first revelation, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) received orders from God to teach the message that God is One and humankind are equal in the sight of God. For twelve years, while in Mecca, the prophet and his followers suffered continuous vicious humiliation and persecution from the errant tribes in Mecca. On June 20<sup>th</sup> 622 A.D., a group representing each tribe of Mecca gathered around the Prophet's house to kill him at night. The prophet escaped the plot and left Mecca with one of his companions to Medina which is located about 200 miles from Mecca. This date is important to Muslims because it is the starting date of the Muslims' calendar. Medina was selected because two years earlier a group of 73 from Medina had come to the Prophet, accepted Islam and vowed allegiance to the Prophet, and invited him to their city. It is interesting to know the reason why the people in Medina accepted Islam so easily. A major Jewish tribe lived in Medina and the Jews used to threaten the other tribes with an upcoming Prophet in Arabia who would lead the Jews to control Arabia. So, when the tribes of Medina heard of a Prophet in Mecca they decided to go and give him their allegiance before the Jews.

The effort of the tribes in Mecca to destroy Islam continued and the first battle occurred about a year after the Prophet's immigration to Medina. This battle was a critical turning point because the Muslims, who were outnumbered by 4 to 1, won the battle. The attempts by the tribes of Mecca to destroy the Muslims continued until, in the 8<sup>th</sup> year after leaving Mecca, the Prophet accompanied by 10,000 Muslims marched to Mecca for a final victory over the Meccans. In spite of what the tribes in Mecca did, after the victory, the Prophet granted freedom and

forgiveness to all of them.

After the Prophet returned to Mecca, the revelations continued for an additional two years until the Prophet received the following revelation: **"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and completed My favor toward you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion" (5:3).**

Soon after this revelation, 23 years after the first revelation, the Prophet died at the age of 63. This is a very brief history of the life of the Prophet, but within these short 23 years Islam transformed the most backward tribes of Arabia to be the world leaders in knowledge, morality, spirituality, human brotherhood, freedom and equality. Thus, Islam opened the door for the birth of a new civilization. This civilization spread from Spain to China in less than fifty years from the first revelation and became one of the greatest civilizations in history. This is what the true Islam has done.

## CHAPTER 16

### AUTHENTIC SOURCES OF ISLAM

In order to understand any religion and establish its views on any issue, one must examine its authentic sources. Islamic views can only be derived from the two sources on which the true Islamic religion is based. The first source is the divine book, the Quran. To Muslims, the holy Quran includes the exact word of God which was revealed to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) through the Holy Spirit, the archangel Gabriel. The Quran was revealed in the Arabic Language over the period of 23 years. It contains 114 chapters (Suras), the smallest chapter contains 3 verses and the longest contains 286 verses. In the Quran, Allah offers several challenges to those who do not believe in the authenticity of the Quran. Allah said: **"Have they not seriously examined the Quran? If it had come from some other source than God, they would have found a great deal of contradictions in it" (4:82).** Allah also said: **"If you are in any doubt about what We have revealed to our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call in your witnesses beside God if you are so truthful. But if you do not - and you will never do so - then heed the fire which has been prepared for disbelievers whose fuel is mankind and stones" (2:23-24).**

Through history, God supported His prophets and messengers with miracles that suited their time. The miracle that God provided to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was the Quran itself. The miracle of the Quran is in its content, linguistic style, and its artistic and aesthetic qualities. For more than 1400 years the Quran stood in the face of all skeptics who tried to prove its human origin by attempting to duplicate its style, to discover any internal contradiction, or to identify any error or weakness in any of its scientific facts. Since the Quran was revealed in the Arabic

language, existing translations to other languages represent at best an interpretation of the meanings and, therefore, cannot be termed as Quran.

The Quran was recorded during the life of the Prophet and has been preserved to the letter for more than 1400 years. Muslims believe that the Quran will always be preserved as the exact word of God not because of their commitment to it but rather because God stated in the Quran that He will preserve it. God said: **"We have sent down this message, and We will assuredly safeguard it" (15:9).**

The second source is the authenticated actions and sayings (traditions) of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). This source is very important because the Quran states the laws and the Prophet provides examples on how to apply these laws in our daily lives. For example, in the Quran, God orders Muslims to pray, but the Quran does not include the details on how to pray. The actions and sayings of the Prophet provide these details. When reading the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet, in Arabic, one can easily recognize the dramatic difference in the linguistic style. Unfortunately, when you translate both of them to English this difference cannot be recognized.

There is one saying of the Prophet which summarizes the basics of Islam. This saying was narrated by Omar who was the second Caliph in Islam. He said: One day while we were sitting with the messenger of Allah a man appeared before us and sat down by the prophet and said: **"O Mohammad, tell me about Islam"**. The Prophet said: **"Islam is to testify that there is no God but Allah and Mohammad is His messenger, to perform the prayers, to pay the Zakat (Poor-due which is a tax levied on a man's wealth and distributed among the poor), to fast the month of Ramadan, and to make the pilgrimage to the Ka'bah**

**(Holy Mosque in Mecca) if you can afford it".**

The man said: **"Then tell me about faith"**. The Prophet said: **"It is to believe in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Day of Judgement, and to believe in divine destiny both the good and the bad"**.

The man said: **"Then tell me about sincerity"**. The Prophet said: **"It is to worship Allah as though you are seeing him, and while you do not see Him He sees you"**.

The man asked: **"Then tell me about date of the Day of Judgement"**. The Prophet said: **"The one questioned about it knows no better than the questioner"**.

When we talk about a saying of the Prophet, we mean a statement by a narrator who is stating what the Prophet said or describing what he had done. However, unlike the Quran which was documented during the life of the Prophet and is preserved to the letter until today in a single source and, therefore, accepted by all Muslims as the pure word of God, the documentation of the Prophet's sayings started about forty years after his death and were recorded in several sources. Although Muslim scholars of that time made every attempt to collect all the authentic sayings of the prophet, differences existed between them in the criterion used for characterizing the reliability and credibility of the narrator. As a result, a Prophet's saying that was considered authentic by some scholars because they believed in the reliability of all its narrators, others considered the same saying unauthentic and rejected it because they questioned the character of one of the narrators. Out of more than 300,000 sayings that were attributed to the Prophet, 7000 were considered authentic by the majority of the scholars. Out of these 7000, only 1906 were accepted as authentic by all the scholars. The authentication of the Prophet's sayings is a fascinating topic and is regarded as a very important subject for study and research in Islamic universities. This subject is also critical because it is the major cause of the difference between the

Muslim jurists.

The Quran and the sayings of the Prophet constitute the basis from which Muslims' faith and the Islamic laws are derived. In the Prophet's final sermon, he emphasized this point by saying: **"I have left amongst you that which, if you hold fast to it, shall preserve you from all error, a clear indication, the Book of Allah and the words of His Prophet. O' People, hear my words and understand."**

## CHAPTER 17

### THE NATURE OF GOD IN ISLAM

Pure monotheism is the cornerstone of Islam. The doctrine of God's pure unity and his divine oneness is clearly stated throughout the Quran. As an example, Allah said: **"Say: I (Mohammad) am only a human being like yourselves; it has been revealed to me that your God is one God. Whoever hopes to meet his Lord should do righteous work and not associate anyone in the worship due his Lord" (18:110)**. Allah also said in one, very short chapter in the Quran: **"Say: He is Allah, the One. He is the Eternal, the Absolute. He has not fathered anyone, nor was He fathered. And there is nothing like Him" (112)**.

Although the word "One" is used in both verses the Arabic text includes different words. The first verse uses the Arabic word "Wahid" and the second verse uses the word "Ahad". Both words mean "one" but there is a very distinct difference between them. If an object has multi-components but has one form you describe the object with the Arabic word "Wahid". There are a lot of things that you can describe using this word including man. On the other hand, the word "Ahad" is used if the object is composed of only one component and has only one form. It is difficult to think of any thing that can be described using the word "Ahad" and therefore this word is sometimes translated as unique. The use of this word and the presence of other verses such as **"There is nothing like Him (42:11)"** lead Muslims to the conclusion that it is improper to attempt to describe the physical nature of Allah in terms of our knowledge in this world. The Quran teaches Muslims that they are limited in their ability to understand their own nature, let alone understanding God's nature.

Muslims, however, know Allah by His attributes. Allah has 99 names describing these attributes. These names include: The Eternal, The First, The Last, The Merciful, The Holy, The Creator, The Majestic, The Compeller, The Provider, The Loving, The Wise, The Generous, The Judge, The Just, The Resurrector, The All Knowing, The Forgiver, The Acceptor of Repentance, The Patient, etc. Although it has no significance in Islam, it may be of interest to note that inscribed on everyone's right hand is the Arabic number 18 (in Arabic the number 8 is written as inverted V) and on the left hand, the Arabic number 81, these add to 99 .

The Quran is unique because it always appeals to people to use their reason and logic rather than faith alone to realize the validity of its teachings including the concept of one God. There are several verses in the Quran that give reasons why it is unreasonable and illogical to believe in the presence of more than one God.

**Allah said: "We have sent them the truth, But they practice falsehood. Allah has not chosen any son, nor there is any god along with him, otherwise each god would have taken away whatever he had created, and some would gain the upper hand over others, Glory to Allah beyond what they describe. He is the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible, and He is exalted over any thing they may associate with Him" (23:90-92).**

**Allah also said: "If there were other gods in either Heaven or Earth besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both. Glory be to Allah, Lord of the throne, beyond what they describe. He will not be questioned about what He does, while they will be so questioned" (21: 22-23).**

Islamic concept of monotheism is very strict and equates the blind

obedience to any one with associating others with God in his Lordship. This point was illustrated by the Prophet when a Christian objected to the verse in the Quran that said: **"They take their priests and monks as lords instead of Allah" (9:31)**. The Prophet said: **"don't they blindly obey them when they tell them what is lawful and what is not"**. Therefore, the blind obedience of political leaders, religious leaders, saints or even prophets is considered as a contradiction to pure monotheism. The concept of pure monotheism in Islam is not a mere dogma but it greatly influences one's outlook to life and molds one's thinking, feeling and behavior.

In Islam, all of man's action will be in vain and no one will achieve salvation if he does not believe in the true oneness of Allah. Allah said: **"Allah does not forgive anyone for associating others with Him. He forgives whomever He wishes anything beside that. Anyone who gives Allah associates has indeed invented an awful offense" (4:48)**.

## CHAPTER 18

### THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF HUMANKIND IN ISLAM

The story of the creation of Adam in the Quran provides answers to several questions concerning not only the nature and purpose of man but also the nature of the enmity between man and Satan. In (S2-V30-39), Allah said:

**"So when your Lord told the angels: I will create a trustee (the Arabic word "Khalifa") on earth. They said: will you place someone there who will corrupt it and shed blood, while we hymn Your praise and glorify You. He said: I know what you do not know.**

**He taught Adam the names of everything, then presented them to the angles and said: tell Me the name of these if you are truthful. They said: Glory be to You, we have no knowledge except whatever You have taught us, You are the All-Knowing, the Wise.**

**He said: Adam, tell them their names. Once he had told them their names, God said: Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and the earth and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?**

**So We told the angles: Bow down to Adam. They all bowed down, except for Iblis the Satan (he was one of the Jinn, S18-V50). He refused and acted proudly and so became a disbeliever. (Allah said: What prevented you from bowing down when I commanded you ? He said: I am better than him; You created me from fire, while You created him from clay. Allah said: get down from here, you have no reason to be**

**arrogant, S7-V12,13). (Iblis said: See, this creature whom You honored above me, if You postpone my punishment until the day of judgment, I shall bring all but few of them under my mastery. Allah said: Go away, any of them who follows you will have Hell as a reward, it is an ample reward for you all. S17-V62,63)**

**We said: Adam dwell you and your wife in the Garden, and eat freely from it anywhere either of you may wish. Yet do not approach this tree lest you become wrongdoers.**

**Satan made them stumble over it and had them both expelled from the garden. We said: Go down, with enmity among yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood, for a while.**

**Then Adam received words of inspiration from his Lord and His Lord turned towards him for He is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Merciful.**

**We said: get down from it together. If you should be handed guidance from Me, then anyone who follows My guidance will have no fear nor they will be saddened. While those who disbelieve and deny Our revelations will become inmates of the fire; they shall remain in it."**

Other verses in the Quran provide additional details on the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve and the nature of Satan as one of the Jinn whose name is Iblis. The Quran teaches that the angles were created from light and they are incapable of disobeying Allah, they have no choice but to be good. The Jinn, on the other hand, are created from fire and they are, like the Humankind, free agent and have been given the choice of obeying the guidance of God or disobeying it. Allah has promised the

heaven for both the believing men and the believing Jinn and promised the Hell for both the disbelieving men and the disbelieving Jinn.

When we examine the above few verses, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. God created man for the purpose of living on earth and being His vicegerent, His trustee.
2. The enmity between Man and Satan started from day one because Satan thought that he is superior to man because he was created from fire while man was created from clay. His arrogance made him believe that nobility depends on racial superiority and this led him to disobey the order of his Creator to bow to Adam. The Quran teaches us that Satan is at war against man and the only way that man can win this war is to secure God's support by following His guidance.
3. Allah promised to send revelations and guidance to man. Those who obey will be rewarded by returning to heaven and living in the company of Allah forever, and those who reject the guidance will live in the Hell fire.
4. Man is superior over God's other creations. This superiority is derived not from his racial status but from his knowledge and his mission that God selected for him. The same rule applies between humankind. A person is superior over another based only on his knowledge and his ability to fulfill his mission as God's trustee on earth. Allah said: **"O' mankind, We have created you from a single male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily, the most**

**honored of you before Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah is the Knower, the Aware" (49:13).** The Quran teaches us that Allah has created all the resources and forces in nature for the wise use of humankind. Therefore, pursuit of knowledge in all fields guided by God's moral code represents the main function of man.

5. In all verses that refer to the story of Adam and Eve in Heaven, the blame of disobeying God's command is placed on both of them. To Muslims, the argument that Eve was the responsible party for man's ouster from the Heaven is irrelevant because God created man for the purpose of being His trustee on earth. Therefore, the events that included: God's command to Adam and Eve not to approach the tree, Satan's influence on both Adam and Eve that led them to disobey God, God's inspiration to Adam on how to repent, and God's forgiveness were all intended to give a practical experience to Adam on what he and all his descendants will face on earth. These include commands from Allah, temptations from Satan, slipping of man and disobeying God's commands, Man's repentance, and God's acceptance of the repentance and His forgiveness. In that regard, Allah said: **"Anyone who commits evil or harms himself, then seeks forgiveness from Allah. He will find Allah is all forgiving, most merciful" (4:110).**

Muslims believe that after Adam and Eve descended to Earth they met at the mountain of Arafat which is located near Mecca. The name "Arafat" means the reunion, which is fitting for the reunion between Adam and Eve. Also, the angels were sent down to build a house of worship for Adam, Eve and their future generations. This house of worship was built from stones from heaven and is

located in Mecca. Allah said: **"The first house build for mankind is that at Bekka (Mecca), and this is full of blessings and guidance for all people. In it are signs manifest of the station of Abraham. And whoever enters it attains sanctuary. Pilgrimage to it is a duty men owe to Allah, this for those who can afford the journey" (3:96-97).**

As the time passed, the house was destroyed and no one lived in this area until Allah commanded Abraham to take his wife Hajar and his infant son Ishmael to this area and leave them there. After Abraham departed, with no water and her son crying Hajar ran between two mountains searching for help, but her efforts were useless. She returned desperately to her son, and to her astonishment the child had dug the ground with his heels and the water was flowing. When travelling caravans found the water well, they settled in the area and Mecca was reestablished. Later, Allah commanded Abraham to return and build the house. With the help of his son, Ishmael, Abraham built the house with material that included one remaining stone from the original stones used in building the sacred house for Adam.

As time passed, the true message of Abraham was lost, and the Arabs who were living in this area became idolaters. However, the importance of the sacred house continued, and Mohammad's family, as true descendants of Ishmael, was the guardian of it. The use of this house as a place for idol worshiping continued until the message of Islam was revealed and Mohammad (PBUH) returned victorious to Mecca. All these sites are still in existence and are part of Muslims' annual pilgrimage that traces the steps of Adam, Abraham, Hajar and Ishmael.

## CHAPTER 19

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANKIND

In Islam, the relationship between Humankind and Allah is direct and open without any intermediary. Throughout the Quran we find 17 verses that were revealed to provide the answer to questions that were either asked or were to be asked of the Prophet. These were questions concerning a variety of subjects such as liquor, gambling, the phases of the moon, charity, orphans, the Hour, inheritance and so on. In all these verses, the answer starts with the word "say" as in the following verse: **"They ask you about liquor and gambling, say: In each of them there lies serious vice as well as some benefits for mankind, yet their harm is greater than their usefulness" (2:219)**. Only in one verse, the word "say" is absent and the answer is given directly by God; this verse reads: **"When My servants ask you about Me, I am indeed near. I answer the appeal of the prayful one whenever he appeals to Me. Let them listen to Me, and believe in Me, so they may be guided" (2:186)**.

In this verse, Allah answered directly demonstrating that the relationship between Him and everyone is direct and open. Prophets and messengers are not intended to be intermediaries; they are humans that Allah selected and sent throughout the history to convey His message, exemplify it and invite humankind to it. In Islam, all prophets are humans, but they are infallible in matters of belief and moral character; they are holy but not divine. The Quran points out that the main reason why Allah sent humans and not angels as messengers is that people are humans, Allah said: **"Nothing prevents men from believing when guidance comes to them except that they say: Has Allah sent a man like us as a messenger? Say: If there had been Angels**

**living on earth, He would have sent an Angel down from heaven as a messenger for them" (17:94).**

Prophets and messengers exemplify the message of Allah, and they serve as role models for the true belief and righteousness for mankind. Therefore, Muslims reject all allegations that are made on the immorality of some of God's prophets and messengers. The Quran includes highlights on the life and the message of several prophets. It is an article of faith in Islam to believe in all the prophets and the Quran forbids the distinction between prophets in fanatical spirit. Allah said: **"Say: we believe in Allah, and in the revelations given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes. We believe in the revelation that was given to Moses, Jesus and all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between them, and to Allah we are Muslims" (3:84).** The Quran, however, indicates that some prophets were granted status higher than others due to the extent of their role.

Allah, the Merciful and the Just, informs us in the Quran that He sent messengers to every nation to warn them from Satan, and Allah never punishes without sending a messenger. So, when people follow Satan they can only blame themselves. Allah said: **"We have sent a messenger to every nation who said: Serve Allah alone and turn aside from the arrogant ones" (6:36).** Allah also said: **"Anyone who accepts guidance will have accepted it for his own benefit, while anyone who strays away will do so to his own loss. No burdened soul can bear another's burden. We never punish until We have sent a messenger" (17:15).**

Unlike all messengers and prophets, Allah selected Mohammad (PBUH) to be the seal of the prophets and the deliverer of Allah's final and most comprehensive message. His mission is for all

mankind to unite all believers in Allah into one nation. This special role of Mohammad (PBUH) has been stated by Allah in the Quran in several verses such as: **"Mohammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets. Allah is aware of everything"** (33:40); **"We have not sent you Mohammad except as a bringer of glad tidings, and warning against sin to all mankind, but most men do not understand"** (34:28).

By the mercy of Allah, the advent of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was foretold by the Prophets preceding him, so their followers can recognize him and follow him should they know of him in their life time. Allah said: **"My mercy embraces everything; I shall prescribe it for those who do their duty, pay the welfare tax, and believe in Our signs. Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find written down for them in the Torah and the Gospel, He commands them what is right and forbids them what is wrong. He will make lawful for them all good things and prohibit for them only the foul. He relieves them of their burden and the shackles that are upon them. Those who believe in him, honor him, support him, and follow the light that was sent down with him; they are the successful. Say: Mankind, I am a messenger to all of you from Allah Who holds control over the Heavens and the earth, there is no deity except Him; He gives life and brings death. so, believe in Allah and His messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, follow him so you may be guided"** (7:156-158).

Allah also makes it clear in the Quran that Islam is the only religion that He will accept from those who know about it. Allah said: **"Anyone who follows any religion other than Islam, Allah will never accept it from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers"** (3:58).

## CHAPTER 20

### EXAMPLES OF THE APPLICATION OF ISLAM IN DAILY LIFE

It is unfortunate that most non-Muslims judge Islam by the actions of Muslims rather than judging Muslims by the rules of Islam. Muslims' actions must be judged by Allah's constitution which is documented in the Quran and was interpreted and applied by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Allah knows that not all Muslims will follow His Commands and, therefore, provided in the Quran a legal system for punishing Muslims who do mischief on earth. It is interesting that non-Muslims who discredit Islam because its legal system is harsh, also discredit Islam by attributing to it the actions of those whom Islam would have justly punished. The Islamic constitution can not be applied piecemeal. It must be applied in totality if man is to fulfill his mission on this earth and be worthy of living in the company of Allah in Heaven. Muslim jurists have written books on all aspects of the application of Islam in daily life from family relationships to international relationships. The following are few verses from the Quran to highlight Allah's law in some areas:

#### Freedom of Religion:

**"Let there be no compulsion in religion. The right way has been distinguished from error" (2:256).**

#### Self Defense:

**"Those who have been wronged are permitted to fight back,.. If it were not because Allah repels some men by means of others, then cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques where God's name is mentioned frequently would have been**

**demolished"**(22:39-40).

**"Fight those who fight you along Allah's way. Yet do not initiate hostilities, Allah does not like aggressors"** (2:190).

**"A good deed and an evil deed are not alike. Respond to evil with what is virtuous, so that the one who is now your enemy may become your best friend"**(41:34).

Equality:

**"O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and set you up as nations and tribes, so that you may recognize one another. The noblest among you before Allah is the most righteous"** (49:13).

Equality Between Men and Women:

**"And the believers, men and women are protecting friends to one another. They pursue what is right and forbid what is wrong. They observe regular prayers and pay poor's tax (zakat), and they obey Allah and His messenger. As for these, Allah will have mercy on them. Verily, Allah is Mighty, Wise. Allah promises the believers, men and women, gardens underneath which rivers flow, to abide therein - blessed dwellings in Gardens of Eden. And greater than that is Allah's acceptance: that is the supreme success"** (9:71-72).

**"Verily, men and women who submit, and men and women who believe, and men and women who are patient, and men and women who are truthful, and men and women who are humble before Allah, and men and women who give in charity, and men and women who fast, and men and women who guard their chastity, and men and women who remember**

**Allah always - to them Allah has promised forgiveness and a great reward" (33:35).**

**"And whoever does good, whether male or female, and he or she is a believer, these will enter Paradise and they will not be wronged" (4:124).**

Charity:

**"Those who spend their wealth on charity night and day, both privately and publicly, will receive their earnings from their Lord. No fear will lie upon them, nor they ever feel saddened". (2:247)**

Cooperation with Others:

**"Cooperate with one another for virtue and heedfulness, and do not cooperate with one another for the purpose of vice and aggression" (5:2).**

Treating One's Wife:

**"Treat your wives politely; even if you dislike them, perhaps you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good" (4:19).**

Treating Parents:

**"Your Lord has declared that you should worship nothing except Him, and you should show kindness to your parents. Whether either or both of them attain old age while they are still with you, never say to them: "Ough" nor scold either of them. Speak to them in a generous fashion. Serve them with tenderness and humility, and say: My Lord show them mercy,**

**just as they cared for me as a little child" (17:23-24).**

Character:

**"The successful believers are those who are: reverent (humble) in their prayers; who refrain from vain (idle) talk; who are active in deeds of charity; who abstain from sex except with those joined to them in the marriage bond,...; who preserve their trusts and their pledges; and who attend to their prayers. They will be the heirs who shall inherit Paradise to live there for ever" (23:1-9).**

Economic Status:

**"Allah is the One Who has placed you as trustee on earth and raised some of you higher than others in ranks so that He may test you by means of what He has given you" (6:165).**

Bribery:

**"Do not devour one another's wealth to no good purpose, and do not try to bribe authorities with it so that you may consume a share of other people's wealth viciously while you realize what you are doing" (2:188).**

Usuary:

**"You who believe, heed Allah and write off anything that remains outstanding from lending at interest if you are true believers. If you do not do so, then be prepared to face war declared by Allah and His messenger. If you repent, you may retain your principal. Do no wrong and you will not be wronged. If any debtor suffers hardship, then grant him time till it is easy for him to repay But if you remit it as an act of**

**charity, it will be better for you if only you knew" (2:278-280).**

Evidence in the Courtroom:

**"You who believe, act steadfastly before Allah as a witness. Act for fair play even though it is against yourselves, your own parents or near relatives. Act for fair play whether it concerns a rich or a poor man: Allah stands closer to them both. Do not follow any passion, this so that you may deal justly and rightly with others. If you swerve about or turn aside, Allah is still informed about whatever you do" (4:135).**

The Right to Human Dignity:

**"You who believe, do not let some men among you make fun of others, perhaps the latter are better than the former. Do not let some women make fun of other women; perhaps the latter are better than the former. You should not defame nor insult one another by using derogatory nicknames. You who believe, refrain from conjecturing too much, for in some cases conjecture is a vice. And do not spy on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs" (49:11-12).**

## CHAPTER 21

### DO MUSLIMS BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE

It is an article of faith for Muslims to believe in all previous revelations including the Torah that was revealed to Moses and the Injeel (Gospel) that was revealed to Jesus. This belief is affirmed in the Muslim's Holy Book, the Quran, in which God revealed: **"Without any doubt, this Book (the Quran) is guidance for those who are righteous; who believe in the unseen, are steadfast in prayers and spend in charity from what We have provided to them; who believe in what We have revealed to you as well as what We have revealed before you, and they are convinced about the Hereafter" (2:24). "And in their footsteps, We sent Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming what had come before him from the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel which contained guidance and light" (5:46).**

Therefore, the question is not: do Muslims believe in the revelations that was sent with prophets Moses and Jesus, but it is: do Muslims believe that the Bible as it currently exists contains the true word of God. Muslims acknowledge that the current Bible contains three different kinds of statements:

1. Statements that can be recognized as the words of God:

*I will raise them a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put **my** words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that **I** shall command him.  
(Deuteronomy 18:18)*

*I, even **I**, am the Lord, and beside **Me** there is no saviour.  
(Isaiah 43:11)*

*Look, unto **Me**, and be ye saved,...for **I** am God, and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:22)*

2. Statements that can be classified as the words of a Prophet of God:

***Jesus cried** with loud voice, saying **Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani?** (Matthew 27:46)*

*And **Jesus answered** him, **The first of all the commandments is, Here, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord.** (Mark 12:29)*

*And **Jesus said** unto him, **why callest thou **me** good?** There is none good but one, that is God. (Mark 10:18)*

*Ye have heard how **I** said unto you, **I** go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved **me**, ye would rejoice, because **I** said, **I** go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than **I**. (John 14:28)*

***I** have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me... (John 16:12-14)*

***Jesus answered** them, **Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?** If He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; Say ye to him whom the Father sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest; because **I** said: **I am the Son of God?** (John: 10:34-36)*

*I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto **me** (David), Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. (Psalms 2:7)*

3. Statements that can be readily identified as records of Historians (eye witnesses, ear witnesses or writing for hearsay):

*And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, **he** (**Jesus**) came, if haply **he** might find anything thereon; and when **he** came to it, **he** found nothing but leaves" (Mark 11:13).*

*And **Jesus** went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel.. (Matthew 9:35)*

*It seemed good to **me** also, having a perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee.. (Luke 1:3)*

*This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and write these things; and **we** know that his testimony is true. (John 21:24)*

*And as Jesus passed forth from thence, **he** saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and **he** saith unto **him**, Follow me. And **he** arose and followed **him**. (Matthew 9:9)*

Muslims also classify their religious teachings in the same manner. The only difference is that these different classifications are contained in completely separate books. The words of God and only the words of God are documented in the Holy Quran. The words of Prophet (Mohammad) are recorded in the Books of

Tradition called the Hadith. The third kind, which includes statements made by high integrity and by lesser trustworthiness historians, exists in different volumes of Islamic history. While Christians are forced to concede equal spiritual importance and authority to the three classifications, Muslims do not equate these classifications regarding their gradation of authority. As an example, during a Muslim's prayers only God's words, i.e. verses from the Holy Quran, are recited.

Muslims believe that whatever emanates from God, whether by revelation or through inspiration, must serve one of four purposes: teach doctrine, offer corrections, reprove people from our error, and guide people into righteousness. This belief is consistent with the Bible's own teachings: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).*

Muslims are disheartened by the insistence that every word in the Bible independent of its classification is attributed to God even when these words don't achieve any of these goals and may even accomplish the opposite by condoning immorality and presenting pornography. One must ask in which category should we classify the story of the great prophet Judah, the father of the Jewish race who committed adultery with his daughter-in-law (*Genesis 38:16-18*). When Judah was told that his daughter-in-law was carrying a child by whoredom, he wanted to burn her (*Genesis 38:24*). But, when he recognized that she was carrying his child, he allowed her to bear and deliver the illegitimate children, Zarah and Pharez. Pharez is honored in the Bible as the grandfather of many great prophets including David and Jesus. This honor cannot be reconciled with the Bible's own teaching: *"A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation". (Deuteronomy 23:2)*

Also, what moral teaching can be learned from the detailed account of another incest in which the prophet of God, Lot, committed incest with his two daughters (*Genesis 19: 30-38*)? What Moral teaching can be derived from the story of Prophet David's son Amnon who seduced and raped his sister Tamar (*2 Samuel 13: 6-14*). Is it befitting for God to provide us with a detailed sexual account of the whoredom of the two sisters Aholah and Aholibah (*Ezekiel 23*)?. Since God sent prophets to deliver His message and serve as role models for mankind, what are we expected to learn from the Bible's account that Prophet David committed adultery with a married woman, the wife of Uriah, (*2 Samuel 11: 3-4*). Is it befitting or even sensible for us to believe that God has revealed that his great prophet David killed 200 men and took their foreskins as a gift to the king so he could marry the king's daughter (*1 Samuel 18:27*). The question to those who insist that every word in the Bible is God's word and that these accounts are true is: Why do they set a much higher ethical and moral standards to judge political and religious leaders than what they accept from the great prophets of God?

Therefore, Muslims believe that it is not befitting for God Almighty to present and condone these biblical stories, and their mere presence in the Bible suggests that the word of God was corrupted by the word of unscrupulous men. In addition, Muslims believe that any book containing revelations and words attributed to God must be able to survive the following criteria:

1. Rational teachings: The undistorted word of God must be rational and can be reasoned out by any unbiased mind. After all, God bestowed reason and intellect to mankind to distinguish truth from falsehood.
2. Perfection: God is all perfect, His revelation must be perfect, accurate, concise, and free from mistakes and

contradictions. True revelations must be free from myths and superstitions that degrade the dignity of God or man. Since God is all knowing, true revelations must withstand the challenge of science. Also, God is the knower of the past, present and future, thus, His words of prophecies should always be fulfilled.

3. Un-imitable by Man: True revelation is infallible and cannot be imitated by man. It should be a living miracle, challenging all mankind to see and prove.

How can we attribute to God who is all Perfect, revelations that include errors, contradictions and irrelevant details. How can we rationalize that God Almighty revealed pages that are filled with obscure names and placed more emphasis on genealogy than on the day of judgement (*Genesis 35-36, Exodus 7:14-25, Ezra 10, 1 Chronicles 1-9, Matthew 1:1-16, Luke 3:23-38*). How can we attribute to God pages full of irrelevant details (*e.g. Ezekiel 7, 1 Kings 7*). Muslims believe that the presence of these obvious corruptions and errors is a mercy from God so people who reflect and reason would realize that God must provide a new revelation that is pure; so when this revelation comes they will readily accept it. To a Muslim, this pure revelation is the Quran. The following verses from the Quran illustrates God's words on this point:

**"To thee (Mohammad) We sent the scripture in truth, confirming what is true in the scripture that came before, and standing witness over it" (5:48).** It is an article of faith for Muslims to believe in the previous prophets and in the previous revelations. Muslims believe that older revelations were corrupted and the Quran came to confirm and corroborate what remained true and intact in these revelations and set a criterion to identify and reject interpretation, commentaries and additions that contaminated the true message of God.

**"We have sent down this Message; and We will safeguard it (from alteration)" (15:9).** The purity of the text of the Quran through fourteen centuries is a foretaste of the eternal care with which God's truth is guarded in its original language through all ages. Since the Quran is the only scripture in which God has clearly stated that He will preserve it, then it is logical to conclude that there is no need for any new revelations after the Quran. Supporting this conclusion are the following verses from the Quran: **"Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you and have chosen Islam as your religion" (5:3).** This verse was the last verse revealed chronologically. It is interesting that in the Quran, God demands that we should use our intellect, logic and reason to ensure that words attributed to God is truly His. Therefore, the Quran, unlike any book that is attributed to God, demands and challenges all skeptics to seriously examine it to convince themselves of its divine origin. The following verses from the Quran illustrate this point: **"Have they not seriously examined the Quran? If it had come from some other source than God, they would have found contradictions in it" (4:82).** **"If you are in any doubt about what we have revealed to our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call in your witnesses beside God if you are so truthful. But if you do not - and you will never do so - then heed the fire which has been prepared for disbelievers whose fuel is mankind and stones" (2:23-24).**

The Quran stood for more than 1400 years in the face of all skeptics who have tried to prove its human origin. So far, no human being has been able to duplicate its style, discover any internal contradiction, or identify any error or weakness in any of its historical or scientific facts. The miracle of the Quran remains in its content, linguistic style, and its artistic and aesthetic qualities. There is no compulsion for man to accept the truth. But

it is certainly a shame upon human intellect when man is not even interested in finding truth from falsehood.

## CHAPTER 22

### SOME PROPHECIES IN THE BIBLE ON THE UPCOMING OF MOHAMMAD (PBUH)

Documented historical accounts clearly suggest that both Christians such as Khadija's cousin Waraqa ibn Naufal and the monk Bahira, and the Jews such as those who were living in Medina. It may be surprising to many to realize that the profile of Mohammad (PBUH) and several major events that occurred during his time had been predicted in the Christian and Jewish scriptures.

God Promised to make a great Nation from Ishmael Descendent, the Arabs, (i.e. Raise a major Prophet with a major message):

**"And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation" (Genesis 17: 20).**

God's selection of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), who is the only Prophet from Ishmael side, to be the seal of the Prophets and to reveal to him the universal message is a fulfillment of this promise.

The Jews expectancy of three personalities after Moses:

**"And this is the record of John when the Jews sent priests and Levities from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And He said, I am not. Art Thou that Prophet? And he answered No" (St. John 1: 19-21).**

**"Jesus later told the disciples that John the Baptist was Elias" (St. Matthew 17: 10-13).**

Moses informing the Jews of another Prophet from their Brethren:

**"And the Lord said unto me; I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and shall speak unto them all that I shall Command him" (Deuteronomy 18:18).**

Some suggest that this verse refers to Jesus, but this cannot be accurate because of the major differences between Jesus and Moses. Deuteronomy 18: 20-22 are interesting to examine because they inform the Jews not to be afraid of false prophets because any false prophet will be put to death. These verses are more befitting to describe Mohammad (PBUH) than Jesus for several reasons. Mohammad who is an Ishmaelite is a brethren of Moses who is an Israelite. Mohammad and Moses have very similar birth, death and life. In spite all attempts by the Jews to kill Mohammad, they never succeeded. Also note that every chapter in the Quran, except one, starts with the words: "In the name of God".

Jesus informing his Disciples of the Coming of a Prophet:

**"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not in me; Of righteousness, because I go to my father, and ye see me no more; Of judgement, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not**

**speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (St. John 16: 7-14).**

**"But when the Comforter is come, whom I send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me" (St. John 15: 27).**

Whom did Jesus prophesy of his upcoming in these verses? It is unfortunate that the exact name that Jesus used is lost and what we have is just an English translation of such a name. (Examples of the translation of names: the word "Christ" is derived from the Greek "Christos" which is translated from the word "Messiah" in the Aramaic language, the correct translation of Messiah is "the anointer". Another example is the name of the leading disciple "Peter" whose correct name is "Simon", Jesus told him you are like a "Kefus" which means "rock or stone", the word "rock" was translated to Greek as "Petros" which was changed in English to "Peter". This mean that during their life time neither Jesus heard the name Christ, nor Simon heard the name Peter.)

Most Christians suggest that Jesus was speaking of the Holy Ghost. This, however, appears to be inappropriate because Jesus said that "if I go not away, he will not come", and several verses in the bible suggest that the holy ghost existed with Jesus and with others before Jesus: **"Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." and "His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:42, 67).**

Also Jesus said that the Comforter will have many things to say, what things did the Holy Spirit say in the last 2000 years. Note also the use of the singular pronoun "he" which suggest that Jesus was referring to a Prophet. In the Bible the title Spirit of God or

Spirit of Truth refers to Prophets (See First Epistle of John 4:1). Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is the only Prophet that came after Jesus who testified about him, who glorified him, and who spoke only what he heard from Allah through the Archangel Gabriel. (See verses in the Quran referring to Jesus's birth, life and message).

The Escape of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina and the First Battle in Islam:

**"The burden upon Arabia. In the forest of Arabia shall ye lodge. The inhabitants of the land of Tema (Medina) brought water to him that was thirsty; they prevented with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn swords, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus has the Lord said unto me, within a year, and all the glory of Kedar (the people of Mecca who are the descendants of Kedar, the son of Ishmael) shall fail. And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar shall be diminished (Isaiah 21: 13-17).**

The Prophet's Victorious Return to Mecca with 10,000 Muslims:

**"And Moses said, the Lord came from Sinai (reference to Moses), and rose up from Seir unto them (reference to Jesus birth place), He shined forth from Mount Paran (Mecca), and he came with ten thousands saints. From his right hand went a fiery law for them. He loved the people; all his saints are in his hand: and they sat down at his feet; every one shall receive of his words" (Deuteronomy 33: 2-3).**

The Change of the Prophethood from the Israelites to the Ishmaelites:

**"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49: 10).**

**"Jesus said: Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing the fruits thereof" (St. Matthew 21: 43).**

The Quran is revealed in a language other than the Israelite language and was revealed piecemeal in 23 years rather than once:

**"For with stammering lips, and another tongue will he speak to this people. But the word of the Lord was unto them percept upon percept, percept upon percept; line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28: 11,13).**

## CHAPTER 23

### MARY AND JESUS IN THE QURAN

It may be surprising to many that it is an article of faith for all Muslims to believe in the miraculous birth of Jesus and in his special place in the history of prophethood. In addition to providing an accurate account of Jesus's birth and message, the Quran provides a detailed account of Mary's birth and upbringing which are essential to understand why Mary and her people willingly accepted the concept of virgin birth. The following verses provide the Quranic account of the birth of Mary, the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, and the miraculous birth of Jesus.

#### The Birth of Mary:

"God chose Adam and Noah, and the family of Abraham and the family of Imran above all people. Some of their offspring are descended from one another. God is alert, aware.

Behold: a woman of Imran said: "O my Lord! I have freely dedicated to You what is in my womb, solely for Your service. So, accept it from me. You are alert, aware".

When she delivered, she said: "O my Lord! I have given birth to a daughter". And God Knew best what she brought forth, for a male is not like a female (because the female child could not be devoted to Temple service under the Mosaic law, as she intended). "I have named her Mary, and ask you to protect her and her offspring from Satan, the outcast.

Her Lord accepted her right graciously and made her grow in purity and beauty, and assigned Zachariah to take care of her.

Every time Zachariah entered the shrine to see her, he found she had already been supplied with food. He said; "O Mary, how did this come to you?" She said: "It come from God; for God provides for anyone He wishes without any reckoning".

With that Zachariah prayed to his Lord, saying: "O my Lord, grant me goodly offspring, for You are the hearer of prayer."

Behold, the angels said; "Mary, God has selected you and purified you. He has selected you over all the women in the universe. Mary, devote yourself to your Lord; Prostrate and bow down in payer with those who bow down". This is some information about the unseen that we have revealed to you (Mohammad). You were not in their presence as they cast lots with their pens to see which of them would be entrusted with the care of Mary; nor were you with them when they were so disputing."

#### The Birth of John the Baptist:

While Zachariah was standing praying in the shrine, the angels called him: "God gives you glad tidings of John, who will confirm a word from God, noble, chaste, and a prophet chosen from among the righteous."

Zachariah said: "O my Lord, how can I have a son? I am very old and my wife is barren."

The angel said: "Even so, God does anything He wishes".

Zachariah said: "O my Lord, grant me a sign."

The angel said: Your sign is that you will not speak to any man for three days except with signals. Mention your Lord often and glorify Him in the evening and in the early morning hours".

#### The Birth of Jesus:

Mention in the book the story of Mary when she withdrew from her people to a place in the east. She chose to be secluded from

them. Then, We sent to her our angel who appeared to her as a man. She said: "I seek refuge with God the most gracious from you, if you fear God".

The angel said: "I am only a messenger from your Lord to announce to you the gift of a holy son".

Mary said; "How shall I have a son when no human being has ever touched me, nor I am unchaste?"

He said: thus, your Lord has said: "It is a simple matter for Me. We will grant him a sign to mankind and a mercy from Ourselves; it is a matter that has been decided".

So she conceived him, and withdrew to a remote place to deliver him. Labor pains came over her by the trunk of a palm-tree. She said; "If only I had died before this, and then forgotten and overlooked!"

Someone called out to her from below where she was: "Don't feel so sad! Your Lord has placed a rivulet beneath you. Shake the trunk of the palm tree toward you, it will drop fresh ripe dates on you. eat and drink and refresh yourself. should you see anyone, say, 'I have vowed to keep a fast to God, the most gracious, whereby I will never speak to any person today!'"

She carried him (the infant) back to her people. They said: "O Mary! you have brought something hard to believe! O Kinswoman of Aaron, your father was no evil man, nor was your mother unchaste woman". She pointed to him. They said: "How shall we talk to someone who is an infant in the cradle?" He (the infant) said; "I am God's servant. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet. He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and has enjoined on me prayer and charity so long as I live; and He has made me kind to my mother, and has not made me overbearing or miserable. Peace be on me the day I was born, and the day I shall die and the day I am raised to life again!"

Such was Jesus, the son of Mary; it is a statement of truth about which they vainly dispute.

It is not befitting to God that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him!. When he determines a matter, He merely tells it: "Be", and it is. God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him alone. This is the straight path."

## CHAPTER 24

### PEACE AND WAR - ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Peace in the Islamic faith emerges as the preamble to the principle of oneness of mankind. Because of God's wisdom, He created us with differences in gender, age, race, color, language, knowledge, talents, abilities, and in economic situation. But, our diversity is actually the cornerstone of our unity, equality and interdependence. God Said in the Holy Quran: **"Among God's signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colors. In this there are indeed signs for those who understand" (30: 22,23). "O mankind! We have created you from a single male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct, and God the Almighty is all-knowing, all-wise" (49:13).**

Islam eliminates almost all reasons that normally incite war, and forbids all wars for unjust gain and oppression. Islam, however, does not ignore the reality and as long as evil men wish only evil, it would be self-defeating for believers to tolerate oppression and injustice. Therefore, "Jihad" was sanctioned by God for three reasons: self-defense, repulsion of aggression and protection of freedom of belief. Note that the word used in the Quran is "Jihad" whose proper translation is "Armed Struggle" and not "Holy War" as mistakenly and commonly translated in the West, the Arabic word for "War" is "Harb". The following verses from the holy Quran presents the conditions for "Jihad": **"Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged and to those who have been driven from their home unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is God, and God is indeed Able to give them victory. If it were not because**

**God repels some men by means of others, cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques, where God's name is mentioned frequently, would have been demolished. God supports anyone who supports Him - God is Strong, Powerful. We (God) will give victory to those who, if we give them power in the land, would establish worship and pay the welfare tax and enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity" (22:39-41). "Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not initiate hostilities; God does not love aggressors" (2:190). "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it also, and rely on God, He is Alert, Aware. Should they intend to deceive you, let God serve as your protector" (8:61).**

In case of disputes, Islam does not hasten war "armed struggle", but rather warns the aggressor of the impact of his actions, and lays before him the ways out of his predicament. If he still insists on his aggression, and accepts nothing short of battle, then war will take place. Islam forbids taking the side of the aggressor even if the victim is one's enemy. Islam considers war against aggressors a form of reprimand and discipline, not a means for torture and revenge. God said in the holy Quran: **"Whenever, two parties had a conflict, try to reconcile them. If one of them should oppress the other, then fight the one that acts oppressively until they comply with the ordinance of God. If they should comply, then make peace between them justly, and act equitably. God loves the equitable" (49:9). "And let not the ill will toward any people, lead you to be unfair. Help one another in righteousness and piety and do not help one another in vice and aggression. Fear God, for God is strict in punishment" (5:2).**

Recognizing the inherent and manifest evils of wars, even the just ones, Islam provides rules of conduct during wars:

1. Islam forbids surprise wars and commands Muslims to warn their enemies of impending war when negotiations have been terminated. Muslim jurists have maintained that the time interval that follows the final ultimatum must be sufficient to enable the enemy to alert all sections of his country.
2. Islam entitles foreign subjects with rights that can not be violated by reasons of war between Muslims and the subjects' country of origin. They are entitled to security of life and property and to protection to ensure their safe return to their original homeland. Islam forbids setting a time limit for them to settle their financial affairs to avoid forcing them to do so under adverse conditions.
3. Islam forbids the killing of all who are not participating in combat (i.e. civilians). Muslim jurists have advocated that hostilities should cease if civilians are caught between the ranks of the fighting forces.
4. Islam forbids forcing the enemy into submission by starving the warring nation.
5. Islam forbids burning plants, cutting down trees, poisoning water, depriving civilians from their lands that lay in the path of advancing and withdrawing armies.
6. Islam commands compassion and kindness to prisoners, to the extent that they should receive a treatment equal to that of the orphans and poor. God said: **"And they feed, for the love of God, the needy, the orphan and the prisoner. And say we feed you for the sake of God only; we want no reward from you, nor any thanks" (76:8-9).**

## CHAPTER 25

### MUSLIMS VIEWS ON LIFE AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

Every one of us has four lives. The first is our life on this earth. The second is our life in the grave. The third is our life on the Day of Judgment, and the fourth life is our eternal life which we spend either in heaven or hell. The shortest and the most important of these four lives is life on earth. It is the most important because this short life determines our fate in the other lives. Our eternal happiness or our eternal misery and suffering is influenced by our actions in this life. Sayedina Ali said: **“Remember the hereafter: today is work without judgment; and tomorrow is judgment without work”**.

Yes, today is work and tomorrow is judgment. How will we as Muslims be judged? What is our responsibility in this life- that on which we are held accountable? Muslim's responsibility can be stated in few simple and concise words. This responsibility is assigned to us by Allah who said in his Holy book: **“Thus we have made you the best nation, so you will be the witness over other nations, and the prophet will be a witness over you” (2:143)**.

A Muslim's responsibility is to follow the example of the prophet and set the example for others. If we, as Muslims are going to set the example to others, we have no choice but to be the best among all people. The prophet emphasized this point by saying: **“Be the best among all the people”**.

Our accountability in the hereafter will be based on our ability to carry out this responsibility. Is this responsibility unfair? No, it is an honor that we as Muslims have lost for too long; it is time to feel proud for being chosen to fulfill it. This responsibility of

pursuing excellence and superior performance, when coupled with the assurance of success from Allah, can only result in the formation of the greatest nation on earth. Understanding this responsibility and trusting in God's promise was the reason that within the life of one generation a weak, divided, and morally corrupt nation was able to establish the most powerful and the greatest civilization ever known to man. The reason was simple. Everyone was doing his best, and everyone was confident that he would succeed. This confidence comes from their complete trust in Allah. They read Allah's word: **"Don't give up or fall in despair because if you are true in faith, you must gain mastery" (3:139)**. They also believed in Allah's word: **"God has promised the believers who do righteous deeds to grant them the inheritance of power and the land and will establish their religion that he has chosen for them. He will change their fear to confidence and security if they worship God alone and don't associate others with him" (24:55)**.

The key to a Muslim's success lies in his commitment to the word of God, the commitment that all his actions are done for the sake of God's pleasure. Simply, the key to a Muslim's success is his true belief in Allah. All Muslims have a belief in Allah, but not everyone has a true belief. You are the only one who can judge how true your belief is. Maybe the simplest way to find out is to always ask yourself, when planning to make a decision or perform an action, what is my true motive, what is my true intention? You always need to remember the prophet's sayings: **"Actions are but by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended. Thus, he whose migration was for Allah and his Messenger, his migration was for Allah and his Messenger. And he whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take some woman for marriage, his migration was for that for which he migrated."**

Can we as Muslims afford to have our intentions for other than Allah and his Messenger? I suppose we can afford it, if we want to be losers in this life and in the Hereafter. This is really the primary difference between Muslims and other people. Others can be winners in this life but losers in the Hereafter. Also, past believers, like the people of the cave and the diggers of the trench, were losers in this life, but will be winners in the Hereafter. Only for Muslims has Allah promised success in this life and the Hereafter if they follow the true faith. Allah assured them failure in this life and loss in the Hereafter if they ignore the true faith. This point can be best illustrated by Allah words: **"O you who believe, when you meet the unbelievers in combat, never turn your backs to them. If any do turn his back unless as part of the tactic of war, or to join his own troops, he draws on himself the wrath of God and his place is the Hell which is indeed an evil refuge" (8:15-16).**

It is clear that a Muslim has no choice except victory or death. Failure, retreat and defeat are not in the vocabulary of the Muslim who is seeking God's heaven. Why? Because if the Muslims are really fighting for Allah's sake, Allah himself will fight with them.

Allah never loses no matter how strong the enemy is. Listen to what Allah is telling Muslims: **"It is not you who killed them; it is God. When you threw (the sand), the results were not because of your act, but because of God's" (8:17).**

The key to ensuring that Allah is on your side is your intentions. We must learn our lessons from our own history. Even during the prophet's time, when the intentions and motives of Muslims changed from acting truly for the sake of Allah to acting for the sake of worldly gain, their victory was quickly transformed into defeat. But when they corrected their motives, God transformed their defeat into victory. This is the fact and the truth that unfortunately most Muslims do not realize. This is why the

Islamic civilization, which we inherited from the prophet and his companions, was transformed into semi-ruins. The disappointing part is that, instead of being honest and blaming ourselves, we continue, even to the present time, to deceive ourselves and blame the East and the West. Is it not time to realize that our defeat not only brings shame to everyone, but it also brings God's wrath and makes Hell our refuge? It is not time to realize that if all the world has gathered to defeat us while Allah is on our side, they will never succeed. But, if Allah is not on our side, no matter how much our wealth and our number is, even the smallest nations will succeed in defeating us. This is our fate - either to succeed in this life and win in the Hereafter or to fail in this life and to lose in the Hereafter.

The choice is ours. As Muslims, we all feel the agony of defeat in this life; we all realize that the nations of the world may disrespect, hate and use every opportunity to take advantage of us. The historical record is very clear and sad in this respect! Should we really blame anyone else other than ourselves? The true Muslim understands this fact; there is no one that can defeat Muslims except themselves. You need only to remember the saying of the Muslim commander who was leading the Muslim's army against the Romans. He said: **"I am not afraid on my army from my enemy; but I am really afraid on my army from themselves."**

In order to imagine the true Muslim nation which our beloved prophet will be proud of, you need to imagine a nation in which unity is based on having a highly valued common purpose. In this united nation everyone is exerting his utmost effort to achieve excellence and superiority and therein is fully confident of his ultimate success. Do you really believe this nation would not be but the best nation on earth? This is the nation that deserves to be and is capable of being a witness over other nations. This is the

nation that always keeps God first and God keeps them first. This is the nation that has the ability to extract extraordinary contributions from everyone by its ability to create a sense of highly valued national purpose. This is the nation that God will never let down but always lifts up. This is the true nation of Islam. This is our way to a new, modern supranational success.

Dreams and religious rituals are not going to bring Muslims their glory, power, pride, and superiority. But the true change in our belief and attitude toward God's word will do so. Allah said in his holy Quran: **"Verily, God will never change the condition of a people until they change it themselves" (13:11).**

For us as individuals, time is running out and death is very near. We must work hard to change our condition. No one should sit idle and blame others for his apathy. We are all responsible. If we keep Allah and his prophet at the center of all our actions, we will succeed in making the critical difference. It is time for every one of us to think of himself as a winner, to act as a winner, and, with God's help, to be a winner.

When our time in this life runs out and death comes near, there will be no delays, no second chances. We can only pray to Allah that he makes our best deeds our last deeds. The prophet said: **"If Allah likes a slave, he makes it easy for him to do his best deeds when death comes to him. So, he dies in a battle for the sake of Allah, or dies while he is fasting or praying or on a pilgrimage or correcting a mischief".**

When the final moment arrives and the time comes that every one of us tries to ignore, forget, or postpone, the angel of Death receives his orders to give us a personal visit. At this moment of truth, the true believer will see the angels of mercy surrounding him and the angel of death standing by his head and calling his

pure soul to come for forgiveness and happiness. While he is hearing the cries of his family and friends for a magician to restore him, he will conclude that it is time for a final parting.

The soul happily leaves the body through the mouth at ease. The angel of death holds the soul and gives it to the angels of mercy. They wrap it in a cloth of silk from heaven. The soul will have a scent which is more pleasant than anything that we smell on this earth. At this point, the angels carrying the soul start ascending to the heavens. When they arrive at the door of the first heaven, the angels in that heaven ask whose pleasant scent it is. The angels carrying the soul names him with the best names he liked in his earthly life. The same act happens again and again until the angels reach the seventh heaven and approach the throne of Allah. Allah the Mighty says: **"I want you to know that, I have accepted my slave. So show him his place in heaven and place his soul in Illiyin."** (The Illiyin is a high place in heaven where the souls of the righteous are placed until the day of judgement.)

At this point, the angels bring the soul back to earth. When they arrive, they find the family and friends are gathered around the body crying and preparing for the burial. The angels say: **"Quickly, quickly he is going to be in a state of happiness that he has never seen or known before."**

After they place him in the grave and close the gate and start departing, his soul enters his body again. He can hear the sound of their steps leaving him behind. At this point, the grave squeezes him tight to wake him to another life. When he wakes, he sees a man in a spotless white robe with a holy appearance and smiling face entering the grave. The true believer asks the man in a shaky voice, "Who are you?" This holy man answers: "I am your good deeds; I am here; and I will never leave you alone."

At this time, the grave expands to the point where you cannot see its walls and two angels enter. These two angels are Monkor and Nakeer. They look fearful and terrifying; their faces are monstrous, black and blue; their lips reach their chests, and their teeth almost touch the ground. Together they seat him and ask him, "Who is your God?". Here God gives strength to the believer, and he answers in a firm voice, "My God is Allah." Here we need to remember the word of Allah: **"Allah will establish in strength those who believe, with the Word that stands firm in this world and in the Hereafter" (14:27).**

Then they ask, "What is your religion?" He answers, "My religion is Islam". They ask him a third question, "Who is the prophet who was sent to you?" He says: "He is Mohammad, peace and blessing be upon him. I witness he came with the truth from Allah." They say, "On this faith you lived, you died, and on it you will be resurrected."

They ask him to look on his left, when he looks, he sees an opening looking over Hell with its fierce fire, black smoke, boiling water, and melting rocks. He sees nothing to refresh or please. He hears screams and cries. He looks scared and worried, but the angels say, "This would have been your place if you had rejected the true faith." Then the opening is sealed, and he looks relieved. The angels ask him to look on his right. When he looks, he sees an opening looking overflowing rivers, bright flowers, lofty mansions, beautiful gardens, and an abundance of fruits. He smells beautiful scents and hears pleasant sounds. The angels say, "This will be your place in Heaven," and then the opening is closed. He prays, "Please Allah let the day of judgement come soon, come soon." The angels say: "Not now, not now, go to sleep in your grave as happy as a new bridegroom". At this moment his soul leaves him again. The prophet (PBUH) said: **"The time that he spends in the grave will feel like the time spent in Zuhr or Asr**

prayers."

This story will be quite different for that man who is wicked and dies rejecting the faith. The angel of death comes to him in fearful look and pulls his soul without mercy while the other angels are mercilessly beating his face and his back. The Quran draws to us this picture: **"If you could only see how the angels take the souls of the unbelievers, how they smite their faces and their backs, saying: Taste the penalty of the blazing fire" (8:50).**

In the grave when he sees Monkar and Nakeer he will not be able to answer their three simple questions. And then his eternal misery and punishment start. The prophet said, **"The punishment in the grave is very real."**

When the right time comes, Allah orders the angel Israfeel to blow the trumpet declaring the end of the world. Everything on the earth will be destroyed except what Allah wants to preserve. Then Allah orders Israfeel to blow the trumpet for the second time, at this moment all the dead will come alive again.

The earth will be splitting, and the graves will be opened. At this time, you, my friend, will hear the earth shaking and see the dust falling. Everyone will be crawling out of the graves to a strange land with a sky different than our sky; the rich and the poor; the young and the old; the kings and the slaves; and the men and the women. The sun will be so close that it seems that one can touch it with his hand. Everyone will stand in sweat and fear; they will stand for a day which equals 50 thousand earthly years. There is no shade, no food, no drink, and everyone is pushing the other looking for an outlet; but there is no exit. Everyone is looking for a favorable sign, but there is no sign. Everyone is fleeing, even from his brother, his mother, his father, his wife and his children. Everyone is worrying only about himself!

Within this confusion, Allah's voice will rise saying: **"Where are those who loved each other for my sake? Today I will provide them with my shade where there is no shade but mine."** So they walk toward the shade of the throne, and that day (the 50 thousand years) will pass as quickly as if it was the time for the Zuhr or Asr prayers.

God will then ask; **"Who deserves to ask for forgiveness."** So, the people will seek the prophet Adam and ask him to ask God for forgiveness. But Adam declines and directs them to Noah. They go to Noah who also declines and directs them to Ibrahim, who directs them to Moses, who directs them to Jesus. Jesus says for them to go to Mohammad and to ask him because he is the one that Allah has forgiven all his actions. Finally, they go to Mohammad and ask him to ask Allah for forgiveness.

The prophet goes to the throne and prostrates himself in front of Allah, and God inspires him to say words of thanks and praise of Allah. Allah says, **"O' Mohammad raise your head and ask, and you will get."** The prophet will say, **"O' Allah my nation, my nation."** Then God will order the Muslim nation to come forward for their judgment.

A balance for judgement will be installed for everyone. Each tray of the balance is so large as if you can place the earth on it. God will ask, "O slave of Allah"; and the one whom Allah means will come forward. Here everyone is looking, and a man, who used to cause fear in the hearts of many and who the people would remember, comes forward. Allah will ask him, "Do you remember this sin; do you remember this transgression; do you remember the injustice that you have committed against so and so?". And the man's actions are passing in front of him as if he was watching a video tape of his life. At this time his wickedness

becomes clear. He asks Allah if he can redeem himself from the penalty by sacrificing his children, his wife, his brother, his family, and all his nation. The answer comes from Allah loud and clear. Let us listen to it: **"The sinner's desire will be that he could redeem himself from the penalty of that day by sacrificing his children, his wife and his brother, his kindred who sheltered him, and all that on earth, so it could deliver him. Of course not! For it will be the fire of Hell, tugging at his scalp" (70:11-16).**

He then receives his book with his left hand, and here Allah describes to us his condition, **"But as for him who will be given his record in his left hand, will say: It's too bad for me. If only my record had not been given to me, I would not have known my reckoning! If death had only been an end of me! Of no profit to me has been my wealth! My power has perished from me. Then (It will be said): Seize him, handcuff him; and burn him in the blazing fire: then padlock him in a chain gang seventy yards long. He did not belief in God Almighty, nor did he ever urge others to feed the needy. He has no close friends here today, nor any food except for some garbage which only sinners eat" (69:25-31).**

Let's look at another scene. This is of a man who barely passed the test and received his book with his right hand. He does not believe it, so he rejoices and shouts at everyone: **"Ah here, read my record! I always thought that I would meet my reckoning! He will be in a blissful state, in a lofty garden whose clusters of ripe fruits will hang within his easy reach" (69:19-20).**

The time gets longer and longer. The temperature gets higher and higher. And everyone is so thirsty. Allah orders a river to flow for each prophet. Muslims rush toward prophet Mohammad's river, but the angels are allowing some to pass and preventing

others from approaching. The prophet looks and says, "They are my people." But the angels answer, "No, they were your people, but later they rejected the faith and did not follow your truth." Here, we need to remember the saying of Hassan Al-Basrey: **"Dreams are destroying our nation. They are but sayings without work, knowledge without patience, and faith without belief. I see men without intellect; I hear sounds but see no friends. The people know the truth but reject it; they know what is forbidden but they do it anyway; and their religion becomes just a word on the tip of their tongue. If you ask someone: Do you believe in the Day of Judgement? While he says: yes! truly he is lying."**

Later, Allah orders the path to heaven to be opened. The first group to pass is Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and his nation. When the prophet reaches the door of heaven, he knocks. Seventy gates open; he and all the believers enter with him. Allah comes to them and asks, "Are you satisfied?" They say, "Yes". At this moment Allah reveals himself to them; for the first time they see Allah directly. This is the moment of the ultimate, absolute and eternal happiness. This is the moment that every one of us is looking forward to. Are you going to achieve this infinite happiness? You know the only way; it is in Allah's book; and in his prophet's teaching. Time is running out and death is very near! Do you wish to be visited by kindly angels and to answer their three questions rightly, or do you wish to be weighed on the terrible balance pan of God's Final Judgment?

Allah's mercy is extensive; his kindness is unlimited; his generosity is universal; his grace is infinite; and his promise is the truth. But we need to remember the time when the angel of death comes to receive our souls, the time when we enter our graves with our deeds, the time when the Day of Resurrection comes, the time when Allah calls us for the account of our deeds, and the time

when the straight path is opened and the hell calls for more; and even the prophets will be seeking God's mercy. Allah, we seek your mercy and ask your forgiveness forever and ever.

## CHAPTER 26

### PEACE THROUGH SELF-UNITY

Allah The Merciful said: **"You who believe, enter absolutely into peace! Do not follow Satan's footsteps; he is an open enemy of yours" (2:208).**

This verse orders Muslims to live in total peace. However, the most important peace is the one you make within yourself. There is no way you can live in peace with others unless you, first, live in peace with yourself. Internal peace can only be achieved when the individual's beliefs and actions are consistent, harmonious, and compatible. The Quran teaches us not to follow Satan's example when he went to war within himself. In spite of Satan's total belief and conviction in the absolute power and authority of Allah, his actions reflected the opposite of this belief by refusing to obey Allah's command to bow to Adam. Allah warned Muslims of this internal war, He said: **"You who believe, why do you preach something you are not practicing? Allah feels a strong distaste that you preach something you do not practice" (61:2-3).**

The contradiction between the belief and the deed creates an internal conflict within man and results in transforming him from the best of molds, to the lowest of the low. Allah said: **"We have indeed created man in the best of molds. Then reduced him to the dregs on the bottom, except for those who believe and perform honorable deeds" (95:4-6).** Current technology takes advantage of this internal conflict to identify truth through the use of the lie detector, a tool for measuring the disturbance in man's internal system when he tries to suppress the truth. Lying is not in the nature of man whom Allah has created in the best of molds, but truth is. Therefore, it requires a lot of effort and energy for man to suppress his nature. During interrogation, the approach

used is to weaken the person physically, by lack of sleep and lack of food, to the point that he can no longer suppress the truth within himself. Also, we know that in the day of judgement, when man no longer can suppress the truth, his sight, his hearing, and his skin will be free to speak and speak the truth.

It must be clear that for man to fulfill his noble responsibility on this earth as Allah's trustee, he must achieve his self-unity by forming congruity between his values and goals and the actions he takes to achieve them. Internal conflict starts when people attempt to rationalize and legitimize their inappropriate actions that are inconsistent with their basic values. When you succeed in achieving this self-unity, you will experience the highest form of personal productivity and achieve total peace and harmony within yourself. However, this cannot be achieved unless the individual defines his values and defines his goals that are consistent with these values. In order to achieve self-unity, one can implement the following seven steps:

1. Prepare a list of what you value most; your highest priorities in life.

Examples may include values such as: faith, family, leadership, honesty, intelligence, self-esteem, and humility.

2. Write each value as an action statement. These values are your unifying principles.

Examples are: be religious, love my family, be a leader, be honest, grow intellectually, have high self-esteem, be humble.

3. Examine your values to ensure that they represent the highest form of truth and are mutually compatible.

Let your conscience, not how you perform, determine what you list. Test your list of these values for mutual compatibility. While "self-esteem" and "egotism" are not compatible, "self-esteem" and "humility" are mutually compatible.

4. Write a paragraph of clarification under each value.

Examples:

Love my family: Build a close interpersonal relationship with my spouse and children, showing care, respect, and kindness. Take sufficient, meaningful time with them and help each one realize his maximum potential and self-fulfillment.

Be Honest: Be honest with myself and everyone around me. Free myself from any form of hypocrisy. Be open and fair with my family, friends and associates. See that justice is properly administered. See that all my business dealings are fair, completely above board, impeccable.

Have high self-esteem: Continually develop and maintain a strong sense of personal worth as I relate to myself and others.

Be humble: Free myself from boasting, arrogance, egotism, and self-centeredness and be teachable. Have a close touch with reality and know myself as I really am. Minimize my personal accomplishments in favor of building other people.

5. Prioritize your values by asking yourself the following questions:

- a. What do I value more than anything else in life?
- b. What does my conscience tell me are the highest values

of life?

c. If I could live only three values well, what would they be?

d. In a long-term perspective, which of these values will give the highest payoff to myself, my family, my friends, and my country"?

e. In what ways will I and others suffer if I don't apply each value?

6. Evaluate the consistency between your performance over the past few weeks and each value.

Example: With being Honest: you might ask yourself, "Over the past few weeks have I been completely aboveboard with my spouse, my children, my friends, and my associates? To what extent did I stretch the truth when explaining past actions?"

The idea here is to put yourself in touch with who you really are. Your attention should be concentrated on those values whose circle of impact is the widest. The most important factor for the success of an individual, an organization, or a nation, is the faithful adherence to their values. To meet the challenge of a changing world, we must be prepared to change everything about ourselves except those values. The life of the prophet and his companions give us ample examples of those who developed the best civilization known to man through their commitment to their values. No one should expect the road to be easy, but it is rewarding and fulfilling.

7. Bring your performance in line with your values. The best systematic approach to accomplish this change in behavior is to

schedule a period of solitude when you cut yourself off from all humanity and focus on the vital priorities. Remember that an unexamined life is not worth living

After establishing your unifying values, they should form the base on which you set your goals. Since most people go through life without knowing what their goals are, you must write your own goals and define specific and quantitative metrics to measure your level of accomplishment. For example, if your goal is to know Islam, your measurable metric can be to memorize the whole Quran in five years. After writing these goals, ask yourself: What specific actions must I take to achieve these goals? Then write a list of specific actions that will lead to achieving each goal. Prioritize the list, write your priorities, and always keep them with you. Look at them every morning and use them as a basis for planning your daily activities.

For more information consult the following Book:

"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," by Stephen R. Covey,  
Published by A Fireside Book.

## CHAPTER 27

### THE TACTICS OF SATAN

The story of Adam's creation in the Quran provides man with a clear warning of the animosity between him and Satan. Satan did not only express his hate and despise toward man, but he also declared a vicious war against him. Satan was, however, so arrogant and so foolish that he revealed his strategy for this war. He said, as Allah informed us in the holy Quran: **"I will wait for them on Your straight path, I will attack them from their front, from their back, from their right and from their left" (7:16).**

What did Satan mean? The obvious conclusion is that Satan is smart; he is not going to attack those who are not following Allah's path because they will join him in Hell anyway. He will concentrate his effort on those who believe in Allah and strive to follow Allah's straight path. Therefore, you will not find Satan in a bar, in a prostitution house, or in a gambling casino. You also will not find Satan in places where associates with Allah are worshiped or in houses where Allah's name is never mentioned. In summary, there are many places Satan does not go. Satan and his associates concentrate their efforts in mosques and in Muslims' homes. This is the reason we should not be surprised to see conflicts between Muslims. Because of Allah's mercy, He warned us of Satan and identified to us his characteristics and his tactics. Allah warned us not to fall as victims to Satan: **"You who believe do not follow the footsteps of Satan; he will command what is shameful and wrong" (24:21).** A clever Muslim should never imitate any of Satan's characteristic and should be able to recognize Satan's tactics and avoid falling in his trap.

We can recognize, by Satan's disobedience to Allah, that he

symbolizes anger, arrogance, hostility, haste and intolerance. If any man possesses these characteristics, he will act like Satan and be Satan's easy victim. Anger makes you very vulnerable to Satan because it makes you lose control over your rational thinking. Thus, Satan can easily influence you. The Prophet said: **"Satan is the source of anger; Satan is from fire and water extinguishes the fire, so when you get angry perform ablution."**

Arrogance is another tactic of Satan because it inhibits your ability to differentiate between truth and falsehood. Even in areas that are unfamiliar to you, arrogance will prevent you from seeking the truth from those who know best. Arrogance will lead you to ignorance. Arrogance will make it hard to say "I do not know" when you do not. It makes you invent baseless answers which can lead you and others away from the truth. Arrogance also makes you reject any sincere advice from others, not because the advice is not justified, but because those giving it may be younger or lesser in status than you.

Furthermore, Satan will always tempt man to react hastily without serious reflection. The Prophet said: **"Haste is from Satan."** Similar to anger, haste prevents you from taking advantage of your rational thinking to identify if your response is really what you want to say or do. Quickness in response without thinking will surely make you err and commit a lot of injustice if not against yourself, against others. Therefore, always reflect and think before you react.

Next to Satan's absolute enjoyment when he is informed by his associates of a person who has changed from worshipping Allah alone to taking an associate with Allah, his second most enjoyable news is the news of broken families. The Prophet said: **"Satan places his throne on water and sends his associates to tempt people. The closest associate to Satan is the one most wicked**

**in his temptations. When one of his associates informs him of his success in bringing hate between a husband and his wife and in dividing the family, Satan tells him; You are the best, and makes him one of his closest companions."** The family is the unit cell of a believing society. If the family is broken, the society is destroyed. Arrogance, anger and impatience of either the husband or the wife open the door for Satan to play his game and manipulate their lives to achieve his goal. Forgiveness, trusting others, and patience are part of the character of a true believer. These are also the basis on which a healthy family relationship is established. Be clever: when you see Satan is getting between you and your spouse and a fight is going to breakout, do what the prophet advised us to do: leave the confrontation stage, make an ablution and pray two rakka to Allah.

Satan and his associates are always watching you for any sign of weakness so that they can attack. You must always be alert. You must know Satan's strategy that follows a systematic technique of six tactics:

- 1) Satan will start by trying to eliminate you quickly and thus avoid wasting his time in a long-drawn war. He will start by seducing you to doubt in the day of judgement, in heaven and hell, and in the existence of Allah. If a person falls in this trap, he will reject all truth including the existence of Allah, and Satan will succeed in his job.
- 2) If the person does not fall in this trap and demonstrates good resistance, Satan will change his tactic and appeal to man's curiosity to figure out who is Allah, how did Allah come to existence, and how does Allah look. If the person falls in this trap and wastes his time on issues that are beyond man's comprehension, Satan will succeed because it is only a matter of time before that person will

associate others with God or deny God's existence.

- 3) If the person does not fall in this trap, Satan will change his tactics again. He will beautify for you the major sins by minimizing their effect on your belief. These sins may include ignoring the payment of Zakat, sex outside wedlock, acceptance of usury, not fasting during Ramadan, and not performing prayers in their time. He will argue that these actions were only considered major sins during the Prophet's time and they are no longer unlawful or necessary because of the nature of this age and this society. Satan will try to make it easy for you to fall in this trap by convincing you that even if you are not comfortable with his argument, it is all right to do these things as long as you believe in Allah. He may say: "Why put yourself in these hardships if Allah said that He forgives all sins except associating others with Him?" He will even encourage you to look up the verse in the Quran that reads: **"Allah does not forgive setting partners with Him but He forgives anything else" (4:48)**. If he succeeds, it will be a matter of time before your spiritual resistance is weakened and you fall in his bigger trap of associating others with Allah or denying Allah's existence. Your spiritual soul is like your physical body. Since your physical body cannot resist bacteria and viruses without proper food, your spiritual soul cannot resist Satan's temptations without prayers, fasting, and continuous remembrance of Allah.
- 4) Furthermore, if the person does not fall in this trap, Satan will beautify the minor sins or belittle their impact. The prophet warned us that some of these minor infractions can destroy a person. As an example, Satan may encourage you to be suspicious about others, even though

Allah warned us: **"O you who believe, avoid suspicion because suspicion in some cases is a sin" (49:12)**. Suspicion can lead to sins such as spying and speaking ill about others behind their back. Speaking ill about somebody behind his back is a crime even if you are telling the truth. Remember the saying of the Prophet that was narrated by his wife Aisha who once described Safia as short. In response, the Prophet said, **"you have uttered a word which if mixed with the waters of the oceans it would have polluted all of it"**. Grace be to Allah, one minor derogatory remark about another person, though true, can pollute all the oceans.

- 5) If the person is strong and does not fall in this trap, Satan will beautify actions that are allowed but which have no rewards. An example of these activities is spending your time watching TV, and I do not mean bad TV shows, but rather decent shows such as sports programs. Since time is limited, you will be distracted from working on the good deeds that build your assets for the hereafter. Also, Satan recognizes that if he cannot convince you of not doing a good deed, he will try to convince you to delay it. An example, when one is asking for a contribution for a good cause and you want to contribute to it, Satan will try to convince you that if you contribute now, in front of every one, you will be doing it to show off and Allah will not accept it from you. He tells you that it is much better to send a check, so your contribution will be truly for Allah's sake. If you fall in his trap and decide to delay it, it is most likely that you will forget about it and never do it. So, anytime the thought comes to your mind when you plan to do a good deed in the presence of others that it may not be pure for Allah's sake, realize that Satan wants to confuse you. So, do not delay it.

- 6) Finally, if the person does not fall in this trap, Satan will entice him to spend more time on work that is good and leave work which is even better. An example will be that Satan encourages you to stay home and pray by yourself rather than going to the mosque for a group prayer. Another example is when you see evil being done, you remember the saying of the Prophet: **"Whoever sees an evil must correct it with his hand, if he cannot then by his tongue, if he cannot, then by his heart and this is the weakest of faith"**. Then when you start to correct the evil with your hand, Satan comes to tell you that correcting by the tongue is better, safer, and can get the best results. When you try to correct the evil by your tongue, Satan can come and remind you that Allah said: **"Allah does not burden you over what you can bear"** (2:286). So, why should you get yourself in trouble, why don't you correct the evil by your heart, it is safer. After a while, you get used to this evil and even rejection with your heart will not happen. Satan will also try to minimize your credit during prayers by distracting you. You must not fall in this trap and be alert and always attempt to reflect on what you are reciting. If you cannot get rid of Satan, say: "I seek refuge with Allah from Satan." Prayers are very important. The Prophet said: **"Prayers are the cornerstone of Islam."** The Quran includes many verses that tie prayers to patience, belief, heaven, victory, and so on. As soon as you start your prayers, all kinds of thoughts may come to your mind. As soon as you finish, these thoughts go away. Why are prayers the one act that Satan does not want you to perform properly? The answer is very simple. Prayers are the one act during which you become in the close company of Allah to examine, treat and strengthen your

spiritual soul so Satan cannot influence it. Prayers are like the regular checkup that is required to discover any disease before it spreads to the untreatable point. Similar to your visit to the physician, if you do not listen to what the doctor tells you, you will not be treated; hence, if you do not concentrate in prayers, your spiritual soul will not respond to Allah's treatment, and this is what Satan wants.

However, if Satan fails in minimizing your good deeds and distracting you during prayers, then you will succeed and Satan may give up on you and leave you alone.

Allah has informed us that Satan will attack the believers from four directions, from the front, the back, the right and the left. Note the Satan does not attack from the top or from the bottom. In front of us is the rest of our lives; he tries to influence us to justify any action to ensure better materialistic life by accumulating more wealth and acquiring more power. Satan will try to convince you that if you stick with your Islamic beliefs, people will discriminate against you and this will impact your future and will diminish your opportunities.

The second direction for Satan's attack is from our back. In our back, his target is our children. He will influence us to justify any action to secure a better life for our children. One approach that Satan may use, when you would like to contribute for Allah's sake is to remind you of the need to save for your children's education. He probably will encourage you to invest your money in a safe investment, most likely a usury bearing account to secure a good life for them if something happens to you. He will cause you to lose trust in the true insurance that is provided by Allah. As Allah says in the holy Quran: **"Those who have fear that they will leave behind them a helpless family, they should fear Allah and speak the truth" (4:9)**. This is the best insurance policy for our children: it is a policy that is guaranteed by Allah, the

premium for it is the fear of Allah and speaking the truth.

The third direction is on the right where we find the recorder of our good deeds. Satan's strategy is to deny us the chance of good deeds. If Satan recognizes that he cannot convince you of not doing a good deed, he will try to convince you to delay it.

The fourth direction that we should expect Satan to use as a target for his attack is our left. On the left is the recorder of our bad deeds and he will ensure that we maximize them. The source of all bad deeds is indecency: Allah said: **"Children of Adam, let not Satan seduce you in the same manner he got your parents out of Heaven, stripping them of their raiment to expose their shame" (7:27).**

The two directions that Satan cannot attack from are above us and below us. Above us is Allah; if we look up to Him, Satan will have no chance, therefore he avoids this direction. Below us is where we prostrate to Allah during our prayer and Satan cannot attack us from this direction.

Now, we know Satan's strategy and tactics, but can we fight him back? The good news is that Satan is weak. Allah said: **"Fight against the friends of Satan, feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan" (4:76).** We also know that Satan is a liar. Allah said: **"Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desires, but Satan promises are nothing but deception" (4:120).**

Satan possesses, however, a very powerful characteristic: his ability to see man while man cannot see him. Therefore, we must seek refuge from a power stronger than Satan, this is the power of Allah. When you say "With Allah I seek refuge from Satan," Satan retreats leaving you alone. Allah said in the holy Quran:

**"When an impulse comes to you from Satan you should seek refuge with Allah, Allah is the all-hearing and the all-knowing" (7:200).** Therefore, every Muslim should invoke the name of Allah before starting any action to ensure that Satan is not joining him in it.

Satan is committed to lead you away from the straight path and persuade you to join him in hell. He and his associates do not give up or accept defeat easily. In fact, the only time they know that they failed and you won the battle against them is when your soul leaves your body on the witness that there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is his Messenger. It was once narrated that a good believer was in his final moments and his son was standing by him telling him to say that there no god but Allah and Mohammad is his messenger, but the man replied: get away, get away. The son begged his father to say the "shahadah," but the father continued to utter: get away, get away. This episode continued and at the end the father voiced the "shahadah" and said: there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is his messenger. But, before his soul left him, he said: "My son I have been hearing you, and each time I want to repeat the words, Satan comes to me and says don't say these foolish words, your father died on Christianity and he is in heaven, so say Jesus is my God. If you listen to your son you will go to Hell, and I was telling him get away, get away. Only after he left me, I was able to repeat the "shahadah."

## CHAPTER 28

### **ISLAM - The Religion of the Lord is not Smorgasbord**

The word smorgasbord means the freedom to pick and choose, and to indulge in one thing and ignore the other. By accepting Islam, you must embrace and follow all the divine guidance. You no longer have the freedom to use your intellect, education, passion, or customs to debate an issue on which Allah and his Prophet have made a decision. Allah said: **"It is not allowed for any believing man or believing woman to exercise his choice on any affair on which Allah and His Messenger have decided. Anyone who disobeys Allah and His Messenger has indeed seriously gone astray (33:36).** He also said: **"By the Lord, they will not believe until they accept your judgment (Mohammad) without any irritation" (4:65).**

There is no conflict in Islam between blindly accepting decisions made or upheld by Allah, the Most-Wise, the Most knowledgeable, and studying the rationale and the wisdom of these decisions. These studies make the person a much stronger and committed believer because Allah said: **"Those who fear Allah the most are the most learnt" (35:28).**

This concept of blind obedience to Allah and to His inspired Prophet should not be a cause of protest by any intellectual because we blindly follow orders given by humans when we trust their knowledge and wisdom. All you need to do is to recall the last time you questioned the doctor about what he asked you to do during your physical examination. If this is how we treat people when we trust their opinion, don't Allah and His Prophet deserve the same, even better kind of respect! Shouldn't we trust Allah when He says: **"You who believe, submit to the call of Allah and His Messenger because they invite you to what gives life"**

**(8:24).**

Islam is a coherent structure; if you remove one of its parts, it will not fulfill its function. The application of Islam, as an integrated divine system, is guaranteed to deliver the superiority in this life and the success in the hereafter. Even though the majority of its parts remain, eliminating any part of this structure will not only result in the system's failure to achieve its noble goal, but it will also guarantee shame and misery in this life and grievous doom in the hereafter for its followers. Allah said: **"Do you believe in part of the scripture and disbelieve in others? The reward for those who do so is shame in this life and the most grievous doom on the hereafter. For Allah is aware of what you do"** (2:85).

Islam, as revealed by God and implemented by the Prophet, provides a coherent, comprehensive, well integrated, self-consistent, and balanced way of life. It addresses all aspects of pure and just life, and if you indulge in few areas, you will undoubtedly ignore and do injustice to others. Islam provides a balance between the individual needs, and the society needs, and between secular needs and religious needs. Islam denounces extremism, fanaticism and radicalism. Allah said: **"Take advantage of what Allah provided for you to secure the hereafter, but do not neglect to enjoy your share in this life. Be kind, as Allah has been kind to you and do not seek corruption on this earth"** (28:77).

Allah described the Islamic nation as a moderate, balanced and middle ground nation, as He said: **"We made you a justly balanced nation to be a role model to other nations and to take the prophet as your role model"** (2:143). Can any Muslim today, in good conscience, say that we deserve to be role models

for other nations? When we examine the Muslim nation (or nations) today, we realize that Muslims have ignored many key elements of the Islamic system. Where are the examples of a Muslim nation that demonstrates excellence, tolerance, justice, confidence, humility, magnanimity, and brotherhood. Let us examine how Muslims have mutilated the element of brotherhood? The brotherhood of believers and their unity is a concept that has been an important cornerstone of Islam. Both the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet are full of statements making this principle an essential ingredient of belief. In a very simple, clear and concise verse, Allah said: **"The believers are brothers" (49:10).**

Allah did not say the Arab believers or the non-Arab believers, He did not speak of the white believers or the black believers, He did not identify the Hanbali believers or the Maliki believers, and He did not mention the hezb Al Tahreer believers or Gammal Islamiyah believers. He only mentioned one kind of believer, thus destroying all differences between believers. There is one God, one religion and one unit of believers. In a sacred (Qudsi) Hadith, the Prophet said: **"Allah will say on the Day of Judgement: Where are those who loved one another through My glory? Today I shall protect them in My shade where there is no shade except Mine."**

In this Hadith, the Prophet informs us that Allah will be addressing those who loved one another for Allah's glory, and not those who loved one another for the glory of family, country, race, color, gender, political party, or religious school. In Islam, the only common bond on which association, love, friendship and cooperation are built is the glory of Allah. Unfortunately, when we look at Muslims today, we cannot help but shed our tears on how they transformed this unique brotherhood into hatred, jealousy, division and selfishness amongst one another. They

completely disregarded Allah's command that: **"The believers, men and women, are protecting friends of one another. They enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, they establish worship and pay zakat. They obey Allah and His messenger" (9: 71).**

The Prophet has also commanded Muslims to treat each other as follows: **"Do not envy one another; do not inflate prices on one another; do not hate one another; do not turn away from one another; and do not undercut in sale one another but be brothers. A Muslim is a brother of a Muslim: he neither oppress him, nor does he fail him, he neither lies to him nor does he hold him in contempt. It is evil for a man to hold his brother in contempt. The whole of a Muslim for another Muslim is inviolable; his blood, his property, and his honor."** The Prophet also said; **"None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."** Can you commit yourself right now to uphold Allah's commandment and shed your hatred and mistrust to other Muslims and truly be brother? Let us seize this moment for the sake of Allah's glory!

## CHAPTER 29

### THE MINIMUM CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Among the wonders of the creation of Allah are the laws of nature. These are not the rules of nature as western science teaches but rather the rules of Allah in nature. One prominent law that is evident around us is that two necessary conditions must exist for any living creature to survive. These two conditions are a certain minimal state of health and a proper environment. If the environment is poisoned or heavily polluted, survival will not be assured. Muslims, as part of Allah's creation, require the same conditions to survive, grow and fulfill the purpose of their creation.

Does the condition of Muslims today meet the criterion for an acceptable minimum state of health? Let us derive the answer to this question by examining the following verses in the Quran: **"O Prophet, rouse the believers to fight. If there are twenty disciplined amongst you, they will defeat two hundred; if there are a hundred, they will defeat a thousand of the unbelievers... Now, Allah has lightened things for you because He knows how much weakness exists in you, so if there are a hundred patient men among you, they will defeat two hundred, and if there are a thousand of you, they will defeat two thousand with God's will; for Allah stands alongside those who are patient" (8:65-66).** It is clear from these verses that the minimum state of health for a true believer is measured by his ability to deliver the performance of at least two non-Muslims of equal qualification. Whatever your profession is, if you perform your job the best way you can and do it for the pleasure of none but Allah, the results of this effort will be at least twice the results produced by anyone else. This type of performance is achievable because it is guaranteed by Allah, even if you have some, yet

tolerable, weaknesses in your faith.

You know that Allah has created the divine law that exerting an effort is a necessary condition for generating results, but you also know that the quality and the quantity of the results are not necessarily proportional to the amount of that effort. The disproportional results of at least twice what is normally produced by an effort is another divine law that Allah has instituted for the believers. If this minimum acceptable level of performance superiority cannot be achieved, it indicates the weakness of the individual's faith beyond what can be tolerated by Allah. Muslims should never be arrogant to believe that they have a divine right for God's support; they should know that they must earn this divine right by purifying their faith to meet at least the minimum acceptable standard. For your own sake and the sake of everyone you love, wouldn't you want the Creator, the Lord of the universe, to be the guarantor of your success, fortune and victory. Allah said, promising those who possess true faith: **"Our word has already gone on ahead to our servants; they will indeed be supported. And surely our army will be victorious" (37:171-173)**. Allah's support is the guarantee that our effort will be assured of success because He said: **"If God supports you, there will be no one who will overcome you; while if He forsakes you, who is there to support you" (3:160)?**

When assessing the health of our personal faith, we must be honest with ourselves. The reality is that most Muslims lack the understanding of even the basic elements of Islam. Most Muslims are hung up on the limited meaning of the word "Deen" as some set of rituals, ceremonial actions, spiritual activities and moral behaviors. How many of us truly understand and internalize the meaning of "Deen" as a completely comprehensive way of living, as the core of all economic, social, political and individual activities. In the Quranic verse that commands Muslims to

perform the Friday prayer we note that Allah said: **"You who believe, when the call is made for the prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of God and suspend your sale; that is best for you if you only knew. Once the prayer is finished, then disperse through the land and seek God's bounty. Remember Allah frequently so you may prosper"** (62:9). Most people focus when reading this verse on Allah's command to perform the Friday prayer. But it is likely that they ignore that in the same verse and with the same divine authority Allah enacted another important order that is to spread through the land to secure God's bounty. Therefore, prayers and work are twins that a Muslim cannot indulge in one on the expense of the other or perform one and ignore the other. Do you consider work and study as religious obligations, or do you just do them because someone tells you? A true Muslim should not study for the mere grade or work for the mere wage, but he must do so because work is an act of worship to Allah and a fulfillment of God's command. This is affirmed by the Prophet's command to Muslims: **"If any of you holds in his hand a sapling and hears the trumpet declaring the end of this life and he has time to plant this tree, he should do so."** In spite of the fact that in this case no one will benefit from this work, the prophet teaches Muslims that it is their obligation as an exhibition of their worship to Allah to perform this useful work even if it is merely for the sake of work.

The health of our faith is not measured by the superficial acceptance of the articles of faith but by the sense of security that comes from the close relationship with Allah. Allah said: **"The true believers are those who believe in Allah and his messenger and then they have no doubt or hesitation therein, and they strive in the way of Allah in their persons and their wealth. Indeed, those are the ones who are truthful."** The Prophet identified to us the signs of faith as follows: **"There are three signs that give a person the sweet taste of faith. The first**

**is to love Allah and his messenger more than anything else. The second is to love other Muslims for no other reason than for the sake of Allah. The third is to hate going back to disbelief as much as one hates to be thrown into the hell fire."**

For Muslims to fulfill the purpose of their creation, as the true representatives of Allah on this earth and the guardians of Allah's laws and commandments, they need proper moral, spiritual and social environments. Muslims need to fulfill Allah's command and survive as a community of faith in Allah. Allah said: **"This is your community, one community, and I am your Lord so worship me alone" (21:92).**

Let us examine our own community and be honest with ourselves. Are we dealing with each other in the true spirit of Islamic brotherhood? To what extent do ethnic and linguistic differences play a role in our relationships? To what extent are the activities in our community motivated to please Allah alone and not for any personal or ethnic motives? Do we really see the true brotherhood that was evident at the time of the prophet (PBUH) between Abu Bakr the Arab, Salman the Persian, Suhaib the Roman and Bilal the Ethiopian?

It is not an acceptable excuse for any Muslim to blame his environment for the failure to properly practice Islam or fulfill Allah's commands because Allah said: **"When angles take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: In what (plight) were you? They replied: We were weak and oppressed on earth. They (the angles) say: Wasn't the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to immigrate elsewhere. Those will have refuge in Hell - what an evil refuge" (4:97).** So, if you are convinced that you cannot practice your religion in a certain place or within a certain community, remember that Allah has created for you a vast land and has insured your welfare. But

you should never take this decision to immigrate to another place without first exerting your utmost effort to transform your current environment into a pious and righteous environment.

Since our survival in this land depends on the quality of the surrounding environment, we must work to purify this environment. We must develop a means to shed this narrow, ethnic orientation and be sincere to Allah. We must establish our relationships on the basis of faith and not simply on common nationality and language. We must establish outreach groups to ensure that the message of Islam reaches the rest of the society. Let us cooperate in what we agree on and let us tolerate and excuse one another in what we may differ on. Let us base our strength on our diversity and never use diversity as a tool for division.

## CHAPTER 30

### THE NEED FOR PARADIGN SHIFT

The word paradigm, derived from the Greek word "Paradigma" means: a pattern or map of understanding and explaining certain aspects of reality. Paradigms usually explain cause-and-effect relationships that scientists use to make predictions. Scientists revise their paradigms when observations contradict these predictions. Over time, their paradigms become more reliable and their predictions become more accurate.

We also think in paradigms; our decisions are based on predictions and judgements. Our paradigms serve as mental maps that continue to evolve and hopefully become more accurate as we grow, study, travel, and reflect on our experiences and the experience of people around us. We create in our mind's paradigms of everything; people, ethnic groups, countries, government, political parties, companies, and even ourselves. Although no two people have the same paradigms due to our different experiences, we do have common elements in our paradigms. While these common elements facilitate our interaction and communication, the differences between our paradigms can make our communication and understanding less than perfect.

Prophets and messengers came to change people's paradigms. The Quran is clear on this issue because unless we are willing and capable of making this change, our condition will never improve. Allah said: **"Allah will never change the condition of a people, until they change what it is within themselves" (13:11)**. Since many of our paradigms are influenced by our background, it is sometime difficult to change because it implies that our forefathers were wrong. But remember that none of us would have been a

Muslim without a change in someone's paradigm. There are so many verses in the Quran showing that the argument always made by the unbelievers denying Islam is that Islam is not consistent with what their forefathers have been doing. Allah said: **"They say: Have you come to us so we worship God alone and give up whatever our forefathers have been worshipping" (7:70).** Therefore, we must accept the fact that our paradigms can be wrong and, in many instances, may not faithfully reflect reality. You may believe that you see the world as it is, but, in truth, you see the world as you are. When we act on the basis of a wrong paradigm, we limit ourselves. We build impenetrable boundaries and ignore all benefits that can be drawn from new experiences that happen to fall outside these boundaries.

Some of our most important paradigms are the ones that we hold concerning ourselves. These paradigms represent a social mirror reflecting how people see us, and how they respond to our thoughts and behaviors. Because people often criticize and judge more readily than they praise and support, we can end up with a distorted mirror with a one-sided picture of ourselves which emphasize the negative. We must develop new paradigms of ourselves, new ways of viewing who we are that move us beyond the limitations that the current social mirror may have shown us. Paradigms have their own evidence and filters; therefore, we may see problems that aren't there or see them bigger than they really are. It is easy for people to attribute a problem to the person's wrong attitude and assume that if he changes his attitude things will be fine. This may not be accurate; efforts on attitude may not mean much if our paradigms are wrong. We can affect other people through the paradigms that we hold of them. Having a wrong paradigm is like having a wrong map for a treasure; no matter how hard you dig, you will not find the treasure.

Many times, we fail to come up with a solution to a problem no-

matter how hard we try, but when you re-read the problem and change your approach, the solution becomes very easy. The same is true if you don't like your condition; you must make a fundamental change in your paradigms. Ineffective behaviors and attitudes are often signs of wrong and incomplete paradigms. In order to have a breakthrough in your life you must have a breakthrough within. Breaking old paradigms is not easy, because we have grown comfortable with them. While old paradigms reflect our memories and experiences, new paradigms result from our imagination and ingenuity. The two qualities of character that create a favorable climate for a paradigm shift are open-mindedness and willingness to take risk. Being open minded means, we consider new ideas freely. Being willing to take risk means we accept cheerfully the possibility that we may make mistakes.

A fundamental step for understanding what you should change in your paradigms is to examine the relationship between your principles and your values, and evaluate the effect of your current paradigms on the overlap between them. Principles are the divine laws that govern our social values that have resulted in the formation of the greatest civilization man has ever known. Principles are timeless, universal, self-validating, and self-evident.

They surface in the form of values, ideas, ideals, norms, and teachings that uplift, fulfill, empower, and inspire people. Islam did not come to change the divine principles; it came to change the values of the people. Values are beliefs that often represent our experience, and cultural and educational background. From our childhood we develop a value system; we evaluate, judge, and behave based on how we see life through these values. To illustrate the difference between a principle and a value you may recall the story of the captain of a flag ship who on a dark, foggy night saw what appeared to him as another ship in his way. Since his rank was an admiral, he shouted in his microphone and ordered the other ship to change its course. It did not. He shouted in a

higher voice that he was an admiral and demanded that the ship change its course. It did not.--- Since it became too late for him to change the course of his own ship, he hit what appeared to be a ship which turned out to be a light house. In this story the principle is that a light house will not respond to orders, and the value is that an admiral has the highest authority in the sea.

For more information consult the following Book:

"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," by Stephen R. Covey,  
Published by A Fireside Book.

## PRAYER

O' Allah we seek your mercy and ask your forgiveness.

O' Allah lead us not only away from temptation but deliver us from all sins.

O' Allah we ask you with what your beloved Mohammad (PBUH) has taught us. He said: "**The statement that there is neither will nor power except from Allah (La Hawl wala quata ila bi Allah) is a treasure from heaven.**" So, we always say there is neither will nor power except from Allah.

O' Allah we have heard the call for Islam, and we have believed. So Allah grant us what You have promised us and save us from shame in this life and loss on the day of judgement.

O' Allah forgive us, forgive our parents, and forgive all those who read this book and unite us with your prophets and messengers

O' Allah make us of those who read, listen and follow what is best.