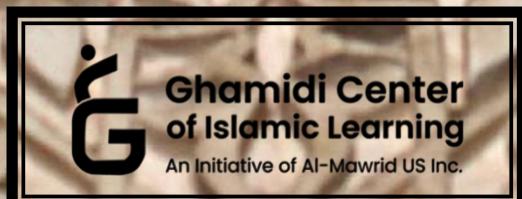


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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GUIDANCE OF HUMAN NATURE AND THE GUIDANCE OF THE PROPHETS

Syed Manzoor-ul-Hasan

Adapted from a discourse by Javed Ahmed Ghamidi

The purpose of the mission of the prophets is generally described in our tradition as follows: in the beginning, human beings were upon the right path. Gradually, however, corruption increased among them; they became estranged from religion; instead of monotheism they adopted polytheism; they began violating moral boundaries; and they initiated patterns of oppression and injustice toward others. When this moral and religious decay intensified, God took humanity by the hand and granted them His guidance. This, as commonly understood, is the general explanation for the sending of prophets and the revelation of scriptures. Shah Wali Ullah, in fact, opens his work *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* with precisely this idea:

الحمد لله الذي فطر الأنام على ملة الإسلام والاهداء، وجلبهم على الملة الحنيفية السهلة البليضاء ثم إنهم غشيموا الجهل، ووقعوا أسفل السافلين، وأدركهم الشقاء. فرحمهم ولطف بهم وبعث إليهم الأنبياء، ليخرجهم بهم من الظلمات إلى النور، ومن المضيق إلى الفضاء

All praise belongs to God, who created the morally responsible beings—humans and jinn—upon the religion of Islam and upon guidance, and fashioned them upon the straight, gentle, easy, and radiant path. Then ignorance overtook them, they fell to the lowest depths, and misery encompassed them. So God showed them mercy, bestowed His grace upon them, and sent His prophets to them so that, through them, He might bring them out of darkness into light, and from constriction into expansiveness. (1/21)

I view this matter from a somewhat different angle. In my understanding, God has embedded within the human being a foundational guidance in his *fitrah* (innate disposition). This means that the human being possesses the capacity—if he seeks his path without deviating from the illuminations of *fitrah*—to discover, at least in broad outline, the right way. On this basis, he shall be held accountable; he shall be questioned.

Thus, we know that there are many peoples throughout history to whom no prophet was sent or to whom the prophetic call never reached. The Quran states that on the Day of Resurrection some will plead that neither they nor their ancestors received any warner—that the message never came to them. I therefore accept as a principle that the directives embedded in the *fitrah* also constitute a basis for human accountability. It is not the case that one becomes answerable only after the arrival of a prophet; rather, the human being is accountable for that inspiration which God has placed within his very nature.

In Australia, for instance, large populations have lived since ancient times, untouched by the modern world. When Christian Europeans reached them, they encountered people entirely outside prophetic traditions. Similarly, in the Americas, various communities lived for centuries removed from the civilized world. Beyond these, there are many other regions where the legacy of prophets is not visible. It appears, outwardly at least, that

such peoples were left upon the guidance of *fitrah*. Their reckoning in the Hereafter will take place on the basis of this innate inspiration—examining the kind of life they lived under the direction of their *fitrah*. Those who adhered to its guidance will merit reward; those who deviated from it will be subject to accountability. Yet, because they were never enriched by prophetic guidance, they will be granted leniency. This is similar to how God takes some in childhood, others in youth, and others after long life. Each person is responsible only to the extent of the opportunity he was given.

The inspiration of *fitrah* is principal and general in nature; it does not contain details like the law (*shariah*). And because human beings do deviate from this innate guidance, God sent prophets to warn and correct them. God granted Adam this inspiration and also endowed him with prophethood; the initial human communities received through him the guidance required at that stage. The descendants of Adam carried this legacy as they spread across the earth. When disputes later arose among humankind, God sent prophets and revealed scriptures. The Quran states:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحُكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ
(*al-Baqarah* 2:213)

People were one community. Then (when differences arose among them) God sent prophets, as bearers of glad tidings and as warners, and with them He sent down the Book containing the truth, so that it may judge between the people in matters over which they differed.

The implication is that religion is not something external imposed upon human beings from above; rather, it is the very expression of their nature. If one quarrels with it, one quarrels only with oneself and deprives oneself of the hidden treasure within one's own being. When the Quran says *kana al-nasu ummatan wahidah*, it means that humanity originally possessed one religion and one guidance—the very guidance with which they came into the world. Prophetic guidance, then, is not an alien addition but a detailed elaboration of the principal guidance God has placed in human *fitrah*. The guidance of the *fitrah* is like a seed, and the guidance of the prophets is like the branches and fruits that grow from that seed. God says:

فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيْمَ

Follow the nature created by God [O Prophet!] on which He has created people. This nature created by God cannot be changed. (Surah al-Rum 30:30)

Prophetic guidance is detailed: it furnishes a complete intellectual, moral, and practical system. Most of humanity has benefited from it. There is an extensive history of prophethood: in the first phase, God sent prophets to every nation; in the second phase, He restricted prophethood to the progeny of Abraham and established centers of monotheism in the central regions of the world, conveying His message to all nations through the communities of Israelites and Ismaelites. The guidance vouchsafed through prophets is preserved in the form of their scriptures, their established practices, and the enduring traces of their teachings.

Alongside these two sources of inspiration—*fitrah* and prophethood—God has granted the human being intellect. This intellect is naturally harmonious with *fitrah*, and when exposed to prophetic guidance it uncovers the principles underlying that guidance. These principles form a coherent intellectual system. Once discovered, they remain applicable to every era and every circumstance. As new contexts emerge through the changing of times, the work of applying God's guidance to these changing situations begins. This is what we call *ijtihad*.



THE TREASURE OF PROPHETIC TEACHINGS

Muhammad Hassan Ilyas

— 1 —

Abdullah bin Masud (RA) narrates that the Messenger of God (PBUH) said: “*Whoever dies in a state in which he knowingly ascribes partners to God shall enter Hell.*” (Sahih Bukhari, No. 1168)

— 2 —

Abu Umamah (RA) once passed by Khalid bin Yazid bin Mu‘awiyah, who requested him: “Tell me the gentlest and softest admonition you ever heard from the Messenger of God (PBUH).” He replied: “I heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: “*Take heed! Each one of you shall enter Paradise—except the one who recoils and turns away from God’s obedience like a camel that bolts away from its owner.*” (Ahmad, No. 21640) (Sahih Muslim, No. 1473)

— 3 —

Abu Hurayrah (RA) narrates that the Messenger of God (PBUH) said: “*All of my community will enter Paradise, except the one who refuses.*” The people asked: “O Messenger of God, who is the one who would refuse?” He replied: “*Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise, and whoever disobeys me—he is the one who has refused.*” (Sahih Bukhari, No. 6764)



IJMA (CONSENSUS)

Javed Ahmed Ghamidi

The sole source of religion is the noble person of the Messenger of God (PBUH). From him this religion was transmitted through the consensus of his Companions and through their verbal and practical continuity, and it has reached us in two forms: first, the Quran, and second, the Sunnah. After him, religion is now derived only from these two. In addition to them, subordinately, if anything can serve as a means to discerning the will of God, it is *ijtihad*. Through it, together with many other matters, we seek to understand those rulings as well which are not stated directly in the textual sources, but which, by their very nature, are applications of those texts that have been left to people's judgement and understanding. *Qiyas* is one type of this. In the Quran, the word used for it is *istinbat*. What comes into existence through this process is referred to as *fiqh*. Its beginning lies in the *ijtihadat* of the Messenger (PBUH) himself. A large portion of solitary reports (*akhbar abad*) consists precisely of the record of this. After him, the Companions and Successors continued this tradition, but when the age of the jurists began, a fourth element was added to it: this is the consensus (*ijma*) of Muslims. From that time until now, it has generally been held that consensus is also one of the sources of Islamic Shariah.

This addition to the sources of religion is certainly a religious innovation (*bidah*). In the texts of the Quran and Sunnah, no basis can be found for it. If we examine its effects, it becomes evident that it has impaired the timelessness of Islamic Shariah and has made it difficult to establish its relevance to the modern age. The distinguished scholar and preacher of the subcontinent, Maulana Waheeduddin Khan, writes:

Generally, the jurists have regarded ijma (consensus) as an independent source of Shariah, but this is undoubtedly a baseless theory. An independent source of Shariah can only be a conclusive text (nass qat'i). In the absence of a conclusive text, to regard anything as an independent source of Shariah is undoubtedly baseless. Consensus does, without doubt, have an importance, but that importance is only that, on a particular occasion, it constitutes a practical solution to an emergent issue. This solution is undoubtedly a temporary one, not an eternal source of Shariah. (Al-Risalah, 7/2011)

Anyone who wishes to understand the reality of the arguments by which jurists seek to establish the binding authority of *ijma* should consult Imam Shawkani's work *Irshad al-Fuhul*. There it will become clear how meaningless and irrelevant these arguments are. There is, however, one verse of the Quran and one hadith on the basis of which some people may feel hesitation. We therefore clarify their reality here.

God, exalted is He, has said:

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقُ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبَعُ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، تُؤْلِمَ مَا تَوَلَّ وَتُنْصَلِمَ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَ ثَمَّ مَصِيرًا

On the other hand, those who oppose the Messenger even after the path of guidance is fully evident to them, and leaving the path of those who have sincerely professed faith in you follow some other path, We shall make them follow the path they themselves have gone to and ultimately cast them into Hell. It is a very evil abode. (Surah al-Nisa 4:115)

The jurists' line of reasoning is that adopting a way other than that of the believers incurs the threat of Hell in this verse. Its clear implication, they say, is that following their path is obligatory upon every person. Therefore, if the Muslims agree upon some opinion or point of view, it cannot be opposed; rather, it becomes obligatory for every believer to follow this consensus of theirs.

To see how baseless this argument is, one must read the verse in its context. Earlier, the secret whisperings of the hypocrites have been exposed; it is about these same people that it is now stated that those who wish to set up a separate party in opposition to the Prophet, and thus, instead of faith, are adopting the way of unbelief and hypocrisy, will be flung into Hell. The address is directed at those who, within the Muslim community, were trying to offer excuses on behalf of these hypocrites. They are warned that the “opposition” (*mushaqqa*) of those for whom they are pleading will lead them straight to Hell, because this is not the way of the people of faith. And those who, after guidance has become fully clear to them, choose the path of unbelief and hypocrisy, their abode can only be Hell. It is for this unbelief and hypocrisy that the words “*ghayra sabil al-muminina*” (“other than the path of the believers”) have been used in the verse. Here, “the believers” refers to the noble Companions, who, once they found the truth, never again adopted any attitude of disloyalty, unfaithfulness, opposition, or avoidance toward God’s Messenger (PBUH). Rather, they followed him with complete sincerity and continued to submit with full obedience to every command they were given. This very attitude of faith and sincerity, of following and obeying, of submission and yielding, is what the verse designates as “*sabil al-muminina*” – “the path of the believers”. Any way adopted in place of this is “*ghayra sabil al-muminina*” – “other than the path of the believers” – and it is those who choose this path who are threatened with Hell.

This by no means implies that one may not differ with the formulations, opinions, and *ijtihadat* of the believers, or that if they unanimously adopt some position and that position is then critically examined in the light of the Quran and Sunnah, the person doing so becomes deserving of Hell. In reality, this issue is nowhere under discussion in the verse at all. What is being asserted there is simply that once the way of guidance has become completely clear, if a person dares to oppose the divinely-sent guide and to set up a separate party in opposition to him, then this is outright unbelief, which is entirely incompatible with faith. Such people God abandons to the path they have chosen for themselves, and thus it is declared that whoever adopts this path should expect nothing but Hell.

The same is the case with the hadith. It has been attributed to the Prophet (PBUH) that he said: “*inna allah la yajmau ummati ala dalalatin* (God will not gather my community upon an error)”. This is, however, a weak report, and for this very reason it has not found any place in the principal hadith collections – Bukhari, Muslim, and the *Muwatta*. Even so, let us suppose that the Messenger of God (PBUH) really did give his community this glad tiding. Do its implications, then, include that no error at all can ever occur on their part?

The truth is that there is a world of difference between error (*khata*) and misguidance (*dalalah*), and the statement in the hadith relates to misguidance, not to error. It is impossible that the whole community should be united upon misguidance. The reason is that, in matters of religion, the distinction between guidance and misguidance has been made evident to the level of conclusive proof (*itmam al-hujjah*). Thus it is rationally inconceivable that all the scholars, jurists, and decision-makers of the community should, while regarding something as polytheism, nonetheless unite upon it; or that they should deny the status of prophethood of the Messenger of God; or that they should repudiate accountability in the Hereafter; or that they should turn away from such obligations as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, almsgiving, and sacrifice. Such matters are now among the self-evident truths (*badiliyyat*) for the community; there can be no consensus upon deviating from them.

By contrast, in those matters which are subject to reflection and *ijtihad*, mistakes in understanding can occur, and the entire community may come to share such a mistake. There is nothing in reason or revelation that would make this impossible. Therefore, even if we accept that the hadith is correctly attributed to the Messenger of God (PBUH), its wording makes clear that his glad tiding relates only to consensus upon misguidance. And with respect to misguidance, it can indeed be stated with certainty that Muslims will never be united upon it. It has nothing to do with consensus upon some error of thought, *ijtihad*, or understanding and reflection.

[2011]



THE NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENSION (ISRA AND MI'RAJ) - 5

Syed Manzoor ul Hassan

From the book Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's Stance On Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascension - Derived from a dialogue with Muhammad Hassan Ilyas. This book is part of '23 Objections Series'.

2. The Event of *Qaba Qawsayn* (The Distance of Two Bows)

وَالنَّجْمُ إِذَا هُوَيْ. مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَيْ. وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَيْ. إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوَلَّهِي. عَلَمٌ شَدِيدُ الْفُرْقَيْ. ذُو مَرْتَشِحَمْ فَاسْتَوِيْ. وَهُوَ بِالْأَفْقِ الْأَعْلَى. لَمْ نَنْتَلِيْ. فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى. قَوْحَى لِلِّي عَبِدَهُ مَا أَوْحَى. مَا كَبَ الْقُوَادُ مَا رَأَى. أَقْمَرُونَهُ عَلَى مَا بَرِيْ.

The stars, when they fall, bear witness that your companion is neither lost nor has he gone astray. He does not speak out of his own fancy. This [Quran] is but a revelation sent down to him. He has been taught by one mighty in power, towering in character and endued with wisdom. Thus, he appeared such that he was on the higher horizon. Then he drew near and bent down until he was within two bows' length or even closer. God then revealed to His servant that which He revealed. Whatever he saw was not his heart's delusion. Then will you now quarrel with him over what he is seeing with his eyes? (53:1-12)

Background

These verses from Surah Al-Najm were revealed to refute the allegations of fortune-telling that the Quraysh leaders leveled against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Whenever the Prophet (PBUH) would present the Quran to people, they would get captivated by its unique style, the inimitability of its language, and the sweetness of its articulation. Similarly, he used to share his experiences and observations about the revelations of the divine messages. Consequently, people were naturally drawn towards him. The Quraysh leaders could not endure seeing people pay attention to him and accepting his message as a divine revelation. The only path to survival for them was to cast doubts on the words that flowed from him and the divine revelation. For this purpose, they started accusing him of being a poet or a madman, and even, God forbid, labeled him as a fortune-teller or an astrologer. They based their accusations on the premise that his recitations were metrical and rhyming, carried news of the unseen, and attributed the news to the angels. Clearly, these false claims were made in light of the actions of fortune-tellers and astrologers who would chant in rhythm and rhyme, predict the future, and ascribe their conjectures to jinn or astral entities.

The Noble Quran responded to these baseless allegations by addressing the Quraysh of Mecca and demolished their false allegations with logical arguments, delineating the following facts:

The first point of clarification was addressed to the people of Mecca, stating: 'Your companion (Muhammad) has not lost, nor deviated, implying that the one who is claiming prophethood among you has spent his life with

you since birth. You know his character and history. You have always known him as truthful and trustworthy and have commended his virtues and integrity. Now, for declaring his prophethood, you accuse him of being a fortune-teller, God forbid, and claim he has lost his way or has strayed - this is a blatant accusation. Realize that he has not wandered from the truth; instead, he is firmly on the right path led by his Lord. It is you who are lost; despite knowing all, you reject his prophethood by deeming him a fortune-teller and an astrologer.'

The second argument exposed that, 'O Quraysh, the Quran that your companion recites to you originates not from his own thoughts or desires. It is a revelation meant to guide you. The Prophet receives it as divine inspiration, and he makes no modifications or additions to it.'

The third point made is that this teaching of revelation is conveyed by the noble and respected Angel Gabriel (AS). He is empowered with immense strength, possessing high attributes, extraordinary abilities, and competence. No one can intervene in his delivery or dare to corrupt it during the descent from heaven to earth. He is defined by his honesty and is both wise and knowledgeable. Owing to these attributes, he delivers the exact message, knowledge, and instructions to Allah's messenger as instructed by Allah the Almighty. He ensures the message remains unchanged. Neither angel, jinn, human, nor any other being in existence can intimidate or mislead him to err in this mission¹.

Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi writes:

...Every attribute and capability of that angel is exceedingly potent and resilient. There is absolutely no possibility that any other spirit influence or over-awe him or deceive or cause any confusion in the instruction of the book or that he himself commit any mistake or be afflicted with doubt or uncertainty. The Almighty has protected him from all such weaknesses so that he is able to discharge the responsibility entrusted to him with full honesty and sincerity. (Tadabbur-e-Quran 8/53-54)

Details

The context of this event describes the incident of Gabriel's (RA) appearance before Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his true guise for the very first time. The details of the incident as inferred from the verses are as follows:

The event started with the appearance of Gabriel the Trustworthy on the highest horizon before the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)². The narrative style of the verse suggests that he revealed himself in his authentic guise³, his complete stature⁴, and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) beheld him in entirety with his own eyes wide open while not asleep. Al-Bayan reads:

The actual words are: Al-Ufuq Al-A'la. It refers to the horizon which is directly in front of a person's line of sight. This is a mention of the first revelation and Gabriel's meeting with the Prophet (sws). The implication is that he appeared in a stark and unambiguous way the way the full moon or the midday sun appears and

¹ In Surah al-Takveer (81), the Holy Quran describes Gabriel (AS) in the following words: "That this indeed is the word brought by a noble messenger, endued with great power, held in very high honor before the Lord of the Throne. He is obeyed there and is also very trustworthy."

² It is the horizon's upper edge, which is directly above the Earth in a straight line, where the full moon appears with its entire brilliance on a moonlit night or where the sun rises at noon.

³ It was not his usual practice. Normally, he would visit the Prophet (PBUH) in human form or in some other form.

⁴ Hadith reports reveal that his stature was such that it seemed as if he encompassed the entire sky, and he had more than six hundred wings.

the Prophet (sws) saw him with his open eyes. (Al-Bayan 5/65)

Subsequently, Gabriel (AS) leaned towards the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who was on the earth. Meaning, he turned towards the Prophet (PBUH) with complete concentration, supreme regard, and absolute respect⁵. Javed Ahmed Ghamidi writes:

Then he drew near and bent down' This is a mention of the great attention and profound affection with which Gabriel (AS) taught the Prophet (sws) so that whatever guidance he is being given was fully heard and was understood by him. (Al-Bayan 5/65)

Afterwards, Gabriel came so close to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that only a small distance separated the two. Having approached this proximity, he conveyed to the Prophet (PBUH) the revelation he had brought from Allah⁶. Since the objective at this juncture in Surah An-Najm is to explain the nature and reality of the event, the details of the content of the revelation have not been elaborated upon.

From what has been recounted regarding the incident of *Qaba Qawsayn* (a distance of two bows' length), the following points are evident:

1. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not asleep.
2. He witnessed Gabriel (PBUH) emerging from a very elevated position in the sky.
3. Gabriel was in his real form.
4. He then came exceptionally close to the Prophet, so close that approximately the span of two bows' length remained between them.
5. He then imparted to the Prophet (PBUH) the part of the Quran which Allah had commissioned to him.
6. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) observed the entire event fully awake and with his eyes open.
7. The details of the event and its context make it clear that this is a complete and self-contained occurrence, uniquely transpiring on its own. It bears no connection to any other event.
8. *Qaba Qawsayn* (the distance equivalent to two bows' length) is an Arabic term denoting extreme closeness.

Aspects not cited in the account include:

1. It is not specified where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was present at the time of this event.
2. There is no indication whether the event took place during the day or at night.

⁵ Imam Ahsan Islahi has explained this verse further in the following words:

*It was not that he taught the Prophet (sws) from a distance without caring whether he had fully heard him or not and if he did, was able to understand it or not; on the contrary, with full attention and focus, he delivered the words in a manner that he be able to fully hear and understand them. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the knowledge provided by the devils of the soothsayers is mentioned in by the Quran as *Khatifa Al-Khatfah*, implying that it is a stolen piece of information which thieves and crooks have got hold of. Obviously, when the teachers are thieves, they would only be teaching their students the way thieves do. The Quran has here prominently mentioned the nature and method of teaching of Gabriel so that the difference in teaching of both is fully highlighted. (Tadabbur-e-Quran 8/54-55)*

⁶ However, since this incident is mentioned to argue for the authenticity of the Quran, the logical inference is that some part of the Quran alone was revealed on this occasion.

3. There is no detailed description of the revelation delivered to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Explanation

The salient points regarding the interpretation and explanation of the verses are as follows:

Firstly, the words *Fa-kana qaba qawsayni aw adna* have been mentioned to express the closeness and proximity of Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This implies that he drew so close to the Prophet (PBUH) that the distance between the two was no more than the length of two bows or even less⁷. The aim here is not to determine the actual distance but to convey the extreme closeness. It is stated in Al-Bayan:

This simile is in accordance with the taste of the Arabs and occurs to describe extreme proximity and nearness. The 'Aw' here is referring to the fact that the purpose is to merely allude to the proximity; the purpose is not to mention the exact distance; it could have been more or less. (5/65)

Secondly, in the words *Fa Awha Ilaa 'Abdibi Maa Awha* (God then revealed to His servant that which He revealed), it is clear that the subject of the verb *Fa Awha* is not Angel Gabriel, but Allah Almighty Himself. Since the original source and the originator of revelation is Allah Almighty, using an angel to deliver the revelation does not affect His status as the originator of the message⁸. The possessive pronoun in *Abdibi* necessarily refers to Allah Almighty. Ascribing this pronoun to Gabriel implies polytheism (shirk), which is not permissible according to the Quran. The Quran and Sunnah categorically state that the status of deity is only and solely for Allah Almighty, hence servitude is solely related to Him.

Thirdly, to describe the nature of the incident, the words *Maa Kadhab Al-Fu'aadu Maa Raa'a. Afa Tumaaroonahu 'Alaa Maa Yaraa* (Whatever he saw was not his heart's delusion. Then will you now quarrel with him over what he is seeing with his eyes?) have been mentioned. These words make it completely clear that what Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) observed was in the state of wakefulness and with open eyes. It was neither a dream shown by Allah during sleep nor an allegory etched onto His heart and mind by Allah⁹. It was a physical observation made with all outward senses and full consciousness and cognition. Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi, in his commentary on this section of the Surah, writes:

This is an affirmation and approval from Allah Almighty regarding the Prophet's observation, so that no one should construe it as a figment of the heart or a deception of the soul. The incident is not a self-deception or illusion. The Prophet peace be upon him practically experienced this observation. ...He is only informing you about what his eyes see and what his ears hear. If these things are invisible to you, it does not negate reality. (Tadabbur-e-Quran 8/55-56)

Fourthly, the incident of Qaba Qawsayn which is the appearance of Gabriel from the horizon and his coming very close to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) does not go beyond this description in these verses. The words

⁷ This is the same style as the way we speak words of 'one or two yards' to describe limited distance.

⁸ In 'So He revealed to His servant whatever He revealed,' the subject 'He revealed' might initially seem to refer to the Angel Gabriel. Based on this, some Sufis have derived the meaning that God, may He be exalted, has, God forbid, designated the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the servant of Gabriel. This is an utterly false interpretation. If one considers the context and style of the Holy Quran, there is no room for such an interpretation.

⁹ It should be noted that both of these instances, when they occurred with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), were from Allah and were based on absolute truth.

and style of the text indicate the completeness of the description. Furthermore, there is no additional or auxiliary detail mentioned anywhere else in the Quran regarding this incident. Therefore, it is obligatory to accept this as a specific, unique, and complete event and not to attempt to link any other Quranic and prophetic event to it.

Fifthly, in the mentioned verses of Surah Al-Najm, it is stated about the Gabriel (AS):

عَلِمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ دُوْ مَرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ وَهُوَ بِالْأَقْوَىٰ فَكَانَ قَابِ قَوْسَيْنَ أَوْ أَنْذَلِيٍّ.

He has been taught by one mighty in power, towering in character and endued with wisdom. Thus, he appeared such that he was on the higher horizon. Then he drew near and bent down until he was within two bows' length or even closer. (53:5-9)

Some scholars and commentators believe that these verses refer to Allah Almighty instead of Angel Gabriel. In our opinion, this is incorrect for several reasons.

Firstly, the phrases like *Dhu Mirratin Faistawa*, *Shadeedul Quwa*, and *Dana fa-tadalla* are used in such a way that does not match the grace of the Lord of the Worlds. The style of describing abilities, attributes, and actions seems more appropriate for creatures than for Allah Almighty.

Secondly, when Gabriel's capabilities are mentioned in Surah Al-Takwir, a similar style is employed. Therefore, by the principle of *Al-Quran yufassiru ba'dahu ba'dan* (parts of the Quran explain its other parts), these words of the Surah also refer to Gabriel (AS). The Quranic text is as follows:

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ . ذِي فَوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ . مُطَاعٍ لَمَّا أَمَّنِ.

That this indeed is the word brought by a noble messenger, endued with great power, held in very high honor before the Lord of the Throne. He is obeyed there and is also very trustworthy. (81:19-21)

Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi writes in his commentary on these words:

*These verses describe the attributes of the angel Gabriel (AS) who imparted this message to the Prophet, peace be upon him. He is referred to as *Shadeedul Quwa* signifying that he possesses all noble qualities and capabilities to the highest degree, and each of his traits and capacities is exceedingly robust and steadfast. No other being is capable of influencing or daunting him, of betraying him, of causing any perplexity in his teachings, of missing any detail, or of being swayed by any insinuation. The Almighty Allah has safeguarded him against all such frailties so that he can carry out the task assigned to him with utmost sincerity and reliability, free from any corruption or disruption. In Surah At-Takwir, this angel is commended as follows: *Innahu laqawlu rasulin karim. Dhi quwwatin 'inda dhi al-'arshi makin. Muta'in thamma amin.*" *Dhu mirratin*, implying that he is firm in both intellect and character, incapable of being beguiled or bribing someone, or of being bribed or swindled himself. This term connotes moral and intellectual excellence. (Tadabbur-e-Quran 8/53-54)*

Thirdly, the conclusion of the discussion on the introductory paragraph of Surah Al-Najm ending with verse 18 makes it evident that these observations, like all the others that have been mentioned, pertain to the signs of Allah. They are not about the person of Allah Himself. The Almighty says:

لَئِذْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ أَيْلَتْ رَبِّهِ الْكُفَّارِيٍّ.

He has seen his Lord's great signs.

Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi explains the verse in the following words:

This explicates the experiences of the Prophet (PBUH) during this particular event. It has been stated that he witnessed some of the magnificent signs of his Lord. No detailed description of the signs has been provided as

neither words suffice to describe them nor human intellect can grasp them. However, the use of the word Kubra suggests that these signs were of a magnitude greater than those observable in the horizons and within oneself by any discerning person. ... Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the Prophet (PBUH) only saw the signs from his Lord, not the Almighty Allah in person. (Tadabbur-e-Quran 8/57)



TAFHEEM AL-ATHAR (UNDERSTANDING THE TRADITIONS)

Dr. Ammar Khan Nasir

Dialogues between the Persian Commanders and the Companions

(14)

(1)

عَنْ كَرْبَ بْنِ أَبِي كَرْبِ الْعَكْلَىٰ - وَكَانَ فِي الْمُقَدَّمَاتِ أَيَّامَ الْقَادِيسِيَّةِ - قَالَ ... بَوَاعِثَ سَعْدٌ عَيْوَنًا إِلَى أَهْلِ الْحِيرَةِ ، وَإِلَى صُلُوبَا لِيَعْلَمُوا لَهُ خَبَرَ أَهْلِ فَارِسَ ، فَرَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِ بِالْخَبَرِ بِأَنَّ الْمَلِكَ قَدْ وَلَى رُسْتَمَ بْنَ الْفَرْخَرَادَ الْأَرْمَنِيَّ حَرْبَهُ وَأَمْرَهُ بِالْعَسْكَرِ ، فَكَتَبَ بِذَلِكَ إِلَى عُمَرَ ، فَكَتَبَ إِلَيْهِ عُمَرُ : لَا يُكْرَبَنَّكَ مَا يَأْتِيكَ عَنْهُمْ وَلَا مَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِهِ ، وَاسْتَعِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ ، وَابْعِثْ إِلَيْهِ رِجَالًا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَنْظَرَةِ وَالرَّأْيِ وَالْجَلْدِ يَدْعُونَهُ ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ جَاعِلٌ دُعَاءَهُمْ تَوْهِيْنَا لَهُمْ وَفَاجَأَ عَيْنَمْ

Karb bin Abi Karb al-Ukli – who was in the vanguard during the days of Qadisiyyah – relates: ... Saad bin Abi Waqqas sent scouts to the people of Hirah and to Suluba in order to obtain intelligence about the Persians. They returned with the report that the king (Yazdegerd) had appointed Rustam bin Farrukhbad al-Armani over the war and had ordered him to mobilize the army. Saad wrote this news to Umar, who wrote back to him: 'Do not let what reaches you about them, nor what they themselves bring to you, distress you. Seek help from God and put your trust in Him. And send to him men who possess dignity of appearance, sound judgement and physical strength, that they may invite him (to Islam), for God will make their invitation a cause of weakening them and a means of victory over them.' (Tarikh al-Tabari 3/495)

Lexical Explanation

“فَاجَأَ” (falajan): that is, dominance and success over one's opponent. The winner in a gambling game is called *falij*: “الفَالْجُونَ: الغَالِبُ فِي قَمَارِهِ” (Lisan al-Arab 2/348).

Explanation and clarification

1. In 7 AH, the Prophet wrote a letter to the Sasanian emperor Khusraw Parwēz, inviting him to accept Islam and stating that if he refused, the sin of the Magians would rest upon him. Khusraw, enraged by the contents of the letter, tore it up and expelled the Prophet's envoy, Abdullah bin Hudhafah, from his court. The Prophet thereupon supplicated against the Persians, praying that their empire be torn to pieces (Bukhari, No. 4424). On several occasions he also foretold that the Muslims would conquer the lands of Persia and that the treasures of Kisra would be spent in the path of God (Bukhari, No. 3400; Muslim, No. 2900).

After receiving the Prophet's letter, Khusraw instructed his governor in Yemen, Badham (or Badhan), to send men to seize the letter's author and bring him in chains before Khusraw. When Badham's envoys arrived in Madinah, the Prophet told them: “Come to me tomorrow.” When they came the next day, he informed them that God had set Khusraw's son, Shiruyah, over him, and that Shiruyah had killed his

father on a certain night in a certain month. The envoys returned to Badham with this news; once the report had been independently confirmed, Badham regarded it as proof of the Prophet's truthfulness and embraced Islam (Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wal-Nihayah* 4/267–269).

2. In light of the Prophet's letter and his prophecies, the Companions began military expeditions into the territories of the Persian empire in the caliphate of Abu Bakr. Under the leadership of Khalid bin al-Walid and Iyad bin Ghanm, Muslim armies conquered parts of Iraq. Thereafter, Muslim attention shifted primarily to the Syrian front, while internal political turmoil continued to plague Persia. In 13 AH, when Umar assumed the caliphate, he received reports that the Persians were both fomenting unrest in the Muslim-held areas of Iraq and gathering a large military force with the intention of launching a decisive offensive against the Arabs.

In this context, he dispatched a large Muslim army under the command of Saad bin Abi Waqqas to face the Persians. Saad encamped at Qadisiyyah, where, in 14 AH, the first major battle between the Arabs and the Persians took place – the famous Battle of Qadisiyyah. On this occasion, prior to the actual fighting, a number of dialogues occurred between Yazdegerd, the Persian king, and his commander Rustam on the one side, and various Companions on the other. The report under discussion mentions the background of one of these dialogues.

3. Umar (RA) instructed Saad to select from the Muslim army a delegation of dignified and intelligent men to be sent to Yazdegerd in order to present the call of Islam before him. Presenting Islam and laying out the available options before the enemy prior to battle was, in accordance with the practice established by the Prophet, a religious requirement. Umar also expected that, by clarifying the Muslims' position and resolve in this formal manner, the determination and morale of the Persians would be weakened, and in consequence this would become a means for securing victory. According to al-Tabari's report, in compliance with Umar's instruction Saad formed a delegation under the leadership of Numan bin Muqarrin, which included notable and judicious men such as Busar bin Abi Ruhm, Hamlah bin Juwayyah al-Kinani, Hanzalah bin al-Rabi al-Tamimi, Furat bin Hayyan al-Ijli, Adi bin Suhayl, Mughirah bin Zurarah bin al-Nabbash bin Habib, Utarad bin Hajib, al-Ashath bin Qays, Harith bin Hassan, Asim bin 'Amr, 'Amr bin Ma'di Karib, al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah, and al-Muthanna bin Harithah.

Another historian, al-Mada'ini, gives a list that differs partially from this; in place of some of the above names, he mentions Tulayhah bin Khuwaylid, Zahrah bin Juwayyah, Labid bin Utarad, and Sharhabil bin al-Simt (al-Kalai, *al-Iktifa bima Tadammanahu min Maghazi Rasul Allah wal-Thalathah al-Khulafa'* 2/445). On the face of it, the inclusion of al-Mughirah bin Shubah and al-Muthanna bin Harithah in al-Tabari's list does not seem accurate, since al-Muthanna had already passed away by this time, while al-Mughirah bin Shubah is mentioned in most reports as one of those who conversed not with Yazdegerd but with Rustam – a dialogue that will be discussed in subsequent reports.

Referencing and Variance in Narration Chains

This incident is also transmitted via the report of Sayf bin Umar in al-Kalai's *al-Iktifa* (2/445). Al-Kalai additionally records at length the text of Umar's letter, though he does not specify its source. The text is as follows:

وكتب إليه عمر: أتاني كتابك تذكر مكان عدوك ونزلوك حيث نزلت، ومسافة ما بينك وبين ابن كسرى، وأنه من يرد الله

أن يهدى يشرح صدره للإسلام، فأرسل إلى ابن كسرى من يدعوه إلى الإيمان أو إعطاء الجزية أو الحرب، فإن أسلم فله ما لكم وعليه ما عليكم، وإن اختار إعطاء الجزية ولم يسلم فله ما كسب عليه ما اكتسب وقد حقن دمه وأحرز أرضه، ولا سبيل عليه إلا في حق عليه، فإن أبي الإسلام وإعطاء الجزية فلا يعظم عندك حربه ولا يكربنك ما يأتيك عنهم، ولا ما يأتوك به، فاستعن بالله واستنصره وتوكل عليه

Umar wrote to Saad: 'Your letter has reached me, in which you mention the position of your enemy and the place where you have encamped, and the distance between you and the son of Kisra. Whomever God wills to guide, He opens his breast to Islam. Therefore, send men to the son of Kisra to invite him either to faith, or to the payment of jizyah, or to war. If he accepts Islam, he will enjoy the same rights and bear the same obligations as you. If he prefers to pay jizyah without embracing Islam, then his good and evil deeds are upon himself; his blood and his land will be protected, and no action will be taken against him except in respect of a right due from him. But if he refuses both Islam and jizyah, then do not regard the prospect of war against him as something great, and let not what reaches you about them or what they themselves bring to you distress you. Seek help from God, implore His victory, and place your trust in Him....'''

(2)

عمر بن محمد، عن الشعبي، وطلحة عن المغيرة، قالوا: فخرجو من العسكر حتى قدموا المدائن احتجاجاً ودعاه ليزدجرد، فلقوه رسم حتي انتهوا إلى باب يزدجرد، فوقفوا على خيول [عرايب] معهم جنائب، وكلها صهال، فاستاذوا فحيسوا، وبعث يزدجرد إلى وزرائه ووجوه أرضه يستشيرهم فيما يصنع بهم ويقول لهم، وسمع بهم الناس فحضره هم ينظرون إليهم، وعليهم المقطاعات والبرود، وفي أيديهم سياط دقاد، وفي أرجلهم التعل، فلما اجتمع رأيهم أذن لهم فادخلوا عليه.

Amr bin Muhammad, from al-Shabi, and Talhab from al-Mughirah, relate: These men (i.e. the delegation selected by Saad bin Abi Waqqas) departed from the army and made for al-Mada'in, intending to establish proof against Yazdegerd and to call him to Islam. They passed by Rustam and continued until they reached the gate of Yazdegerd's palace. They halted there, mounted on fine Arab horses, and with spare mounts (janaib) alongside them; all of the horses were neighing loudly. They requested permission to enter, but were made to wait. Yazdegerd summoned his ministers and the leading figures of his realm to consult them as to how he should deal with these Arabs and what he should say to them. When news of their arrival spread, people gathered to see them. They were wearing patched garments and coarse striped cloaks, holding thin whips in their hands and simple leather sandals on their feet. After the Persians had agreed among themselves, permission was granted, and the delegation was ushered in to Yazdegerd." (Tarikh al-Tabari 3/497)

Lexical Explanations

“جَنَابٌ”: plural of *janybah*, which denotes a horse without a rider led alongside one's own, kept for baggage or for riding when needed.

Explanation and Clarification

The elaborate arrangements made by the Persian grandees for this interview with the Arabs, together with the keen curiosity of the general populace, reveal the anxiety and fear that had taken hold of Persian hearts. As will become clearer from the following reports, one cause of this was the emergence of the Arabs as a unified political power, something wholly unexpected from the Persian perspective. In addition, internal political strife within Persia, the Arabs' success in conquering part of Iraq, and their determination to continue their campaigns all combined to heighten Persian fear and unease.

Umar (RA) was also fully aware of this situation. It was for this reason that, as a matter of strategy and psychological pressure, he decided that a dignified Arab delegation should appear before the ruling elite and populace of the Persian empire, explain the true nature of the situation, and thus both complete the argument against them and undermine the resolve they were seeking to muster for resistance.

Referencing and Variance in Narration Chains

This incident too is transmitted via Sayf bin Umar (RA) and is quoted by al-Kalai (al-Iktifa 2/446). There are some differences in wording between the texts. For example, al-Tabari's wording *khuyulu arawaatin* yields no intelligible sense, whereas the wording cited by al-Kalai, *khuyulu irabin*, clearly denotes "Arab horses" and has accordingly been adopted in the text.

(3)

عَنْ بَنْتِ كَيْسَانَ الْحَسَنِيَّةِ، عَنْ بَعْضِ سَبَّابِيَا الْقَادِسِيَّةِ مِنْ حَسْنِ إِسْلَامُهُ، وَحَضَرَ هَذَا الْيَوْمُ الَّذِي قَيْمَ فِيهِ وُفُودُ الْعَرَبِ، قَالَ: وَأَئِبِ الْيَوْمِ النَّاسُ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْهِمْ، فَلَمْ أَرِ عَشَرَةً قَطْ يَعْدُلُونَ فِي الْهَمَةِ بِالْفَغْرِيْبِ هُمْ، وَخَلَّهُمْ تَحْبِطُ [أَوْبُو غُرْ] بَعْضُهَا بَعْضًا،] وَجَعَلَ أَهْلُ فَارِسٍ يَسُوءُهُمْ مَا يَرَوْنَ مِنْ خَالِهِمْ وَحَالَ خَلِيلِهِمْ. فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يَزِدْجَرْدَ أَمْرَهُمْ بِالْجُلُوسِ، وَكَانَ سَبَّيِ الْأَدَبِ. فَكَانَ أَوْلُ شَيْءٍ دَارَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ أَمْرَ النَّرْجُمَانَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهُمْ، فَقَالَ: سَلَّهُمْ مَا يُسْمُونَ هَذِهِ الْأَرْدِيَّةِ؟ فَسَأَلَ النَّعْمَانَ — وَكَانَ عَلَى الْوَفْدِ — مَاذَا شُنَّى رِدَاءَكِ؟ فَقَالَ: الْبَرْدُ، فَقَطَّرَهُ وَقَالَ: بُزْدُ جَهَانَ. وَتَغَيَّرَتِ الْوَانُ فَارِسٍ وَشَقَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: سَلَّهُمْ عَنْ أَحْذِنِهِمْ، فَقَالَ: مَاذَا تُسْمُونَ هَذِهِ الْأَخْنَيَّةِ؟ فَقَالَ النَّعْمَانُ، فَعَادَ إِلَيْهِمْ فَقَالَ: نَالَهُ نَالَهُ فِي أَرْضِنَا. ثُمَّ سَأَلَهُ عَمَّا فِي يَدِهِ فَقَالَ: سَوْطٌ، وَالسَّوْطُ بِالْفَارِسِيَّةِ حَرِيقٌ. فَقَالَ: أَحْرَقُوهُمْ فَارِسَ، أَحْرَقُهُمُ اللَّهُ! وَكَانَ تَطَيِّرُهُ عَلَى أَهْلِ فَارِسِ، وَكَانُوا يَجْدُونَ مِنْ كَلَامِهِ

Bint Kaysan al-Dabiyyah relates from one of the captives of Qadisiyyah – a woman whose Islam later became excellent, and who was present on the day when the Arab delegation came to Yazdegerd's court. She said: People rushed towards them to see them. I have never seen ten men whose outward bearing equaled that of a thousand others. Their horses were striking the ground with their hooves and some of them were rousing the others (wa yugbiru baduha badan) (as if eager for the battlefield). The state of the Arabs and their mounts greatly disturbed the Persians. When the Arabs entered before Yazdegerd, he (despite his generally ill-natured character) ordered them to sit. The first thing that transpired between him and them was that he told the interpreter who stood between them: 'Ask them what they call these cloaks they are wearing.' The interpreter asked Nu'man – who was the leader of the delegation: 'What do you call your cloak?' He replied: 'Al-burd.' Yazdegerd took an ill-omen from this and said: Burd jahan (the world has been taken away).' The colour drained from the faces of the Persians and this weighed heavily upon them. Then he said: 'Ask them about their shoes.' The interpreter asked: 'What do you call these shoes?' Nu'man answered, and Yazdegerd once again interpreted this as an omen and said: 'Nalah nalah in our language (weeping and wailing in our land).' Then he asked him about what was in his hand. Nu'man said: 'A sawt (whip).' In Persian, sawt corresponds to hariq (fire). Yazdegerd therefore exclaimed: 'They have burned Persia – may God burn them!' All of his auguries fell against the Persians, and they were distressed by his words." (Tarikh al-Tabari 3/498)

Explanation and clarification

Among the Persians, omens and augury were widespread practices. Yazdegerd asked for the names of some of the items worn or carried by the Arabs in order to draw omens from the sounds of those words. In Arabic, a striped cloak is called burd. Hearing this, Yazdegerd construed from it the Persian phrase burd jahan ("he has taken away the world"), implying that the Arabs had prevailed over the Persians' realm and "carried it off". In Arabic, sandals are called na'l. Yazdegerd interpreted this through the Persian nalah ("lamentation"), and drew

the ill-omen that crying and wailing would now fill Persia. Likewise, he associated the Arabic *sawt* ("whip") with the Persian *sukht* ("burning"), taking from it the omen that these people would burn the Persians in the fire of war. The fact that he construed all three words in such a pessimistic way itself reflects the fear and anxiety that had seized the Persians in those circumstances.

Referencing and Variance in Narration Chains

This incident too is transmitted by al-Kala'i from the report of Sayf bin Umar (al-Iktifa' 2/446). There are some differences in wording. For example, al-Tabari's text has *wa yu'idu baduha badan*, whereas al-Kalai records *wa yughiru baduha badan*, which has been adopted in the text above as it gives a clearer sense.

(4)

عن الشعبى: ... ثم قال الملك: سلهم ما جاءكم؟ وما دعاكُم إلى غزوتنا واللوّع ببلادنا؟ أمنْ أجلَّ أنا جمّناكم وسألاعُنا عُنكم اجترأتم علينا؟ فقال لهم التعمان بن مقرن: إن شئتم أجبت عنكم، ومن شاء أترته فقالوا: بل تكُل، وقلوا للملك: كلام هذا الرجُل كلامنا فتكلم العمّان فقال: إن الله رحمنا فارسل إلينا رسولاً يذلّنا على الخبر وأيّمنا به، ويعزّفنا الشّرّ وينهانا عنه، ووعدنا على إجابته خير الدنيا والآخرة، فلم يدْع إلى ذلك قبِيلَةٌ إلّا صاروا فرقَتَين: فرقَةٌ ثقَارِيَّة، وفرقَةٌ ثُبَاعِدُ، ولا يدخل معه في دينه إلّا الخواص، فمكثَتْ بِذلِكَ ما شاء الله أن يمكّن، ثم أمرَ أن ينْدَى إلى من خالفه من العرب، وبَدَا بهم فعلَ، فدخلوا معه جميعاً على وجهين: مُكْرَهَةٌ عليه فاغْتَبَطَ، وطَائِعَةً فارْدَادَ، فعرَفُنا جميعاً فضلَ ما جاء به على الذي كُنَّا عليه من العذاؤة والضيق، ثم أمرَنا أن ننْدَى بمن ليَّنا من الأمم فندعُوهُم إلى الانصاف، فلَحُنْ دُعُوكُم إلى ديننا، وهو بين حسن الحسن وقبح القبح كله، فإنَّ أبِيئُمْ فَأَمِرَ من الشّرْ هو أهونُ من آخر شرٍ منه: الجراء، فإنَّ أبِيئُمْ قَالْمَانَجَرَهُ، فإنَّ أجيئُمْ إلى ديننا خَلَفَا فيكم كتاب الله، وأفتقنَاكم وشأنكم وبِلادكم، وإن أتَقْيَنَاكم بِالْجَرَاءِ فَلَنَا وَمَنْعَلَكُمْ، وإنْ فَلَنَاكم قال: فتكلّم بِرَدْجُرُدَ فقال: إيه لا أعلم في الأرض أمةً كانت أشقي ولا أسوأ ذات بين منكم، قد كُنَّا نُوكِلُ بِكُمْ فرِي الصَّوَاحِي فِي كُوكُونَاتِكُمْ، لا تَغْزُونَ فَارسَ ولا تَطْمِعُونَ أَنْ تَقْوُمُوا لَهُمْ، فإنَّ كَانَ عَدُدُ لَهُقَّ فَلَا يَعْرَنَكُمْ مَذَا، وإنْ كَانَ الْجَهَدُ دَعَاكُمْ فَرَضَنَا لَكُمْ قُوتَنَا إلَى حَصِّيَّكُمْ، وأكْرَمَنَا وْجُوهُكُمْ وَكَسْوَنَاتِكُمْ، وَمَلَكَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ مَلِكًا يَرْفُقُ بِكُمْ فَأَسْكَنَتِ الْقُرْمُ، فَقَامَ الْمُغَيْرَةُ بْنُ رُزَارَةَ بْنِ التَّبَاشِ الْأَسَبِيَّ، فقال: إيهَا الْمَلِكُ، إنْ هُوَلَاءُ رُؤُوسُ الْعَرَبِ وَوُجُوهُهُمْ، وَهُمْ أَشَرَافُ يَسْتَحِيُونَ مِنَ الْأَشَرَافِ، وإنَّمَا يَكْرُمُ الْأَشَرَافُ الْأَشَرَافُ، وَيُعْظِمُ حُقُوقَ الْأَشَرَافِ الْأَشَرَافُ، وَيُفْخِمُ الْأَشَرَافَ الْأَشَرَافَ، وإنَّمَا أَرْسِلُوا لَهُ جَمِيعُهُ لَكَ، وَلَا كُلُّ مَا تَكْلَمْتُ بِهِ أَحْبَلُوكَ عَلَيْهِ، وقد أَحْسَنُوا وَلَا يَحْسُنُ بِمَثْلِهِمْ إلَّا ذلِكَ فَجاوَنِي لِأَكُونَ الَّذِي أَتَلَعَّكَ، وَيَسْهُدُونَ عَلَى ذلِكَ إِنَّكَ قَدْ وَصَفْتَنَا حَسَفَةً لَمْ تَكُنْ بِهَا عَالِمًا. فَلَمَّا مَا ذَكَرْتَ مِنْ سُوءِ الْحَالِ فَمَا كَانَ أَسْوَأَ حَالًا مَنْ، وَأَمَّا الْمَنَازِلُ فَإِنَّمَا هي طهْرُ الْأَرْضِ، وَلَا تَبْلِسُ إِلَّا مَا غَرَّنَا مِنْ أَوْتَارِ الْأَبِلِ وَأَشْعَارِ الْعَقْمِ. ديننا أن يقتل بعضنا بعضاً، وَيُغَيِّرَ بعضاً على بعض، وإنْ كانَ أَحَدُنَا لِيُدْفَنَ اِنْتَهَى وَهِيَ حَيَّةٌ كَرَاهِيَّةٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ مِنْ طَعَامِنَا فَكَانَتْ حَالَنَا قَبْلَ الْيَوْمِ عَلَى مَا ذَكَرْتُ لَكَ، فَبَعْثَتِ اللَّهُ إِلَيْنَا رَجُلًا مَعْرُوفًا عَرَفُتُ سَبَبَهُ، وَنَعْرَفُ وَجْهَهُ وَمَوْلَدَهُ، فَأَرْضَهُ خَيْرٌ أَرْاضِيَّنا، وَحَسَبُهُ خَيْرٌ أَحْسَابِيَّنا، وَبَيْهُ أَعْظَمُ بَيْوَنَتَنا، وَقِيلَلُهُ خَيْرٌ قَبَائِلَنَا، وَهُوَ بِنَفْسِهِ كَانَ خَيْرَنَا فِي الْحَالِ الَّتِي كَانَ فِيهَا: أَصْدَقَنَا وَأَخْلَمَنَا، فَدَعَانَا إِلَى أَمْرٍ فَلَمْ يُجْهِنْهُ أَحَدٌ قَبْلَ تَرْبَ كَانَ لَهُ وَكَانَ الْخَلِيفَةُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ، فَقَالَ وَصَدَقَنَا وَكَبَّنَا، وَرَادَنَا وَنَفَقَنَا، فَلَمْ يَقُلْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا كَانَ، فَقَدَّتِ اللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِنَا التَّصْدِيقُ لَهُ وَأَتَيَّاعُهُ، فَصَارَ فِيمَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، فَمَا قَالَ لَنَا فَهُوَ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ، وَمَا أَمْرَنَا فَهُوَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ

فَقَالَ لَنَا: إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ يَقُولُ: إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ يَلْهُو لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، كُنْتُ إِذْ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْءٌ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ لَا وَجْهَهُ، وَإِنَا حَلَقْنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ، وَإِلَيْهِ يَصِيرُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ، وَإِنَّ رَحْمَتِي أَدْرَكَنَّكُمْ فَعَنِتَ الْكُلُّ هَذَا الرَّجُلُ لَأَدْلَكُمْ عَلَى السَّبِيلِ الْأَنْجَى الَّتِي بِهَا أَنْجِيْكُمْ بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ مِنْ عَذَابِي، وَلَا حَلْمَنَّ دَارِي دَارُ السَّلَامِ. فَنَسِهَدْ عَلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ جَاءَ بِالْحُقْقِيْمِ مِنْ عِنْدِ الْحَقِّ، وَقَالَ: مَنْ تَابَعَكُمْ عَلَى هَذَا فَلَمْ مَا لَكُمْ وَعَلَيْهِ مَا عَلِيْكُمْ، وَمَنْ أَتَى فَأَعْرَضُوا عَلَيْهِ الْجَرْبَيْةُ، ثُمَّ أَمْتَعُوهُ مِمَّا تَمْتَعُونَهُ أَنْفُسَكُمْ، وَمَنْ أَتَى فَقَاتِلُوهُ، فَإِنَّ الْحَاكمَ بَيْنَكُمْ: فَمَنْ قُتِلَ مِنْهُمْ أَنْدَلَّتْهُ جَنَّتِي، وَمَنْ بَقَى مِنْكُمْ أَعْبَثْتُهُ النَّصْرَ عَلَى مَنْ نَوَّأَهُ. فَأَخْتَرْ إِنْ شِئْتُ الْجَرْبَيْةَ عَنْ يَدِيْ وَأَنْتَ صَاغِرُ، وَإِنْ شِئْتُ فَالسَّيْفَ، أَوْ شَلْعَمْ فَتَنْتَجِيْ فَنْسَكَ

فَقَالَ: أَسْتَفْلِي بِمِثْلِ هَذَا؟ فَقَالَ: مَا أَسْتَفْلِي إِلَّا مِنْ كَلْمَنِي، وَلَوْ كَلْمَنِي غَيْرُكَ لَمْ أَسْتَفْلِي إِلَيْكَ بِهِ: فَقَالَ: أَلُوَّا أَنَّ الرَّسُولَ لَا يُقْتَلُ لَقَاتِلَكُمْ، لَا شَيْءٌ لَكُمْ عِدْنِي. وَقَالَ: أَتُوْنِي بِوْقِرٍ مِنْ ثَرَابٍ فَقَالَ: أَحْمَلُوهُ عَلَى أَشْرَفِ هُوَلَاءِ ثُمَّ سُوقُوهُ حَتَّى يَخْرُجَ مِنْ بَابِ

المُدَائِنِ. ارْجُعُوا إِلَيْيَ صَاحِبِكُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوهُ أَنَّى مُرْسِلُ الْيَمْ رُسُمٌ حَتَّىٰ [يَدْفُهُهُ وَجْدَهُ] فِي خَدْقَ الْفَالِسِيَّةِ، وَيُنْكِلُ بِهِ وَيُكْمِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ نَمَّ اُورَدَهُ بِلَاكُمْ، حَتَّىٰ أَشْغَلُكُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ بِأَشَدِ مِمَّا نَالُكُمْ مِنْ سَابُورِ نَمَّ قَالَ: مَنْ أَشْرَقَكُمْ؟ فَسَكَتُ الْقَوْمُ، فَقَالَ عَاصِمُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو — وَأَفْنَاتِ لِيَأْخُذُ التُّرَابَ — أَنَا أَشْرَقُهُمْ، أَنَا سَيِّدُ هُولَاءِ فَحَمَلَنِي، قَالَ: أَكَّدَاهُ؟ قَالُوا: نَعَمْ، فَحَمَلَهُ عَلَى عَنْقِهِ، فَخَرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الْأَيُّوْنَ وَالْدَّارَ حَتَّىٰ أَنَّ رَاحِلَتَهُ فَحَمَلَهَا عَلَيْهَا، [فَقَالَ لَهُ أَصْحَابُهُ: حَمَلْتَ تُرَابَاهَا؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ، الْفَالُ، فَدَأْكَنَمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ أَرْضِهِمْ] نَمَّ اُنْجَدَبَ فِي السَّيْرِ، فَأَنْوَاهُ بِهِ سَعْدًا، وَسَبَقَهُمْ عَاصِمٌ فَمَرَّ بِبَابِ قُدَيْسٍ فَطَوَاهُ، قَالَ: بَشِّرُوا الْأَمْيَرَ بِالظَّفَرِ، ظَفَرُنَا إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ، نَمَّ مَضَى حَتَّى جَعَلَ التُّرَابَ فِي الْحَجَرِ، نَمَّ رَجَعَ فَدَخَلَ عَلَى سَعْدٍ، فَأَخْبَرَهُ الْخَبَرَ، قَالَ: أَبْشِرُوا فَقَدْ وَاللَّهِ أَعْطَانَا اللَّهُ أَفَالِيَّةً مُكْلِمُهُمْ وَجَاءَ أَصْحَابُهُ وَجَعَلُوا يَرْدَادُونَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ قُوَّةً، وَيَرْدَادُ عَوْهُمْ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَهُنَّا، وَانْتَدَ مَا صَنَعَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَصَنَعَ الْمَلَكُ مِنْ قُبُولِ التُّرَابِ عَلَى جُلُسَاءِ الْمَلَكِ، وَرَاحَ رُسُمُ مِنْ سَابِطٍ إِلَى الْمَلَكِ يَسِّلَّهُ عَمَّا كَانَ مِنْ أُمْرِهِ وَأُمْرِهِمْ، وَكَيْفَ رَأَهُمْ، قَالَ الْمَلَكُ: مَا كُنْتُ أَرَى أَنَّ فِي الْعَرَبِ مِثْلَ رَجَالٍ رَأَيْتُهُمْ، دَخَلُوا عَلَيَّ وَمَا أَنْتُ بِأَعْقَلِ مِنْهُمْ وَلَا أَحْسَنُ جَوَابًا مِنْهُمْ. وَأَخْبَرَهُ بِكَلَامٍ مُكْلِمِهِمْ، وَقَالَ: لَعَذْ صَدْقَنِي الْقَوْمُ، لَعَذْ وُعْدُ الْقَوْمِ أَمْرًا لِيَدِرَكَهُ أَوْ لِيَمُوْتَنَ عَلَيْهِ، عَلَى أَنِّي قَدْ وَجَدْتُ أَصْلَهُمْ أَحْمَقَهُمْ، لَمَّا نَذَكَرُوا الْجَزِيَّةَ أَعْطَيْنَاهُمْ تُرَابًا فَحَمَلَهُ عَلَى رَأْسِهِ، فَخَرَجَ بِهِ، وَلَوْ شَاءَ أَنْقَى بِعِيْرَهُ، وَأَنَا لَا أَعْلَمُ، قَالَ: أَيْهَا الْمَلَكُ، إِنَّهُ لَا يَعْقُلُهُ، وَتَطَيَّرَ إِلَى ذَلِكَ وَأَبْصَرَهَا دُونَ أَصْحَابِهِ وَخَرَجَ رُسُمُ مِنْ عَنْدِهِ كَثِيرًا عَضْبَانَ، وَكَانَ مُنْحَمًا كَهَائِنًا، فَبَعَثَ فِي أَثْرِ الْوَفْدِ، وَقَالَ لِيَقْتَهِ: إِنَّ أَدْرِكُمُ الرَّسُولُ ثَلَاثِيَّاً أَرْضَنَا، وَإِنَّ أَعْجَزُرُهُ سَلَبَكُمُ اللَّهُ أَرْضَكُمْ وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ. فَرَجَعَ الرَّسُولُ مِنَ الْحِيَّزَةِ بِقَوْاتِهِمْ، قَالَ: دَهَبَ الْقَوْمُ بِأَرْضِكُمْ غَيْرُ ذِي شَكٍّ، مَا كَانَ مِنْ شَانِ اِنْ الحَجَامَةِ الْمُلَكُ! دَهَبَ الْقَوْمُ بِمَفَاتِيحِ أَرْضِنَا! فَكَانَ ذَلِكَ مِمَّا رَأَدَ اللَّهُ بِهِ فَأَرِسَ غَيْطَا

Al-Sha'bi relates: Thereupon the king (Yazdegerd) said (to the interpreter): 'Ask them: What has brought you here? What has driven you to attack us and to al-wulu' bi-biladina (intrude and plunge into our lands)? Is it because we left you in peace and were occupied with other enemies that you have now dared to proceed against us?'

Nu'man bin Muqarrin said to his companions: 'If you wish, I will answer him on your behalf, and if anyone else prefers to speak, I will give him precedence.' They replied: 'Rather, you speak.' They then said to the king: 'Whatever this man says will be our statement.' So Nu'man began: 'God showed mercy to us and sent to us a Messenger who guided us to what is good and commanded us to do it, and who made us recognise what is evil and forbade us from it. He promised us that if we responded to him, we would receive the good of this world and the next. No tribe did he call to this message but that it became divided into two groups: one who drew near to him, and one who turned away. Only select individuals (al-khawass) entered his religion with him. Matters continued thus for as long as God willed. Then he was commanded to openly confront those Arabs who opposed him; he began with them, did so, and in the end all of them entered his religion in one of two ways: some under compulsion, then they found themselves rejoicing in it; and some willingly, and they found their joy increased. We all came to recognise the superiority of what he brought over the enmity and constriction we had previously lived in. Then he commanded us to begin with those nations near to us and invite them to justice. Thus we now invite you to our religion, a religion that declares all good to be good and all evil to be evil. If you refuse, then there remain before you two evil options, one of which is less bad than the other: al-jiza' (the payment of tribute). If you refuse this as well, then it is to be open fighting between us and you. But if you respond to our religion, we will leave among you the Book of God, establish you upon it so that you judge by its rulings, and then we will withdraw from you, leaving you to your own affairs and your own land. And if you seek to shield yourselves from us by paying jizyah, we will accept this, and in return we will protect you. Otherwise, we will fight you.'

Yazdegerd then spoke and said: 'I do not know of any nation on earth that was more wretched, fewer in number, or more internally divided than you. We used to entrust your affairs to the villages on the fringes of our realm, and they sufficed to keep you in check. You neither raided Persia, nor did you ever aspire to stand up to her. If your numbers have now increased, let not this deceive you about us. And if hardship has driven you (to attack us), we will assign you provisions until abundance returns to your lands; we will honor your leaders, clothe you, and appoint over you a king who will deal gently with you.'

*The delegation remained silent. Then al-Mughirah bin Zurarah bin al-Nabbash al-Asidi stood up and said: 'O King, these men are the chiefs and notables of the Arabs. They are nobles who refrain, out of a sense of honor, from rough speech with other nobles. Nobles are honored only by nobles; the rights of nobles are magnified only by nobles; nobles are aggrandized only by nobles. They have not conveyed to you every point for which they were sent, nor have they answered you concerning everything you said. They have conducted themselves well, and nothing but such conduct befits men of their rank. So respond to me, that I may be the one to convey your reply to them, and they may testify to its accuracy. You have described us in a manner of which you are not fully aware. As for the wretched condition you mentioned – indeed, there was no people worse off than we were. And as for our hunger – it was a hunger that hardly resembled the hunger of other nations: we used to eat beetles (*al-khanafis*), dung-beetles (*al-ju'lān*), scorpions, and snakes, and we regarded that as our food. As for our dwellings, they were nothing but the surface of the earth, and we wore nothing except what we spun from the hair of camels and sheep. Our "religion" was that some of us killed others and some raided others; a man might even bury his own daughter alive out of dislike for her sharing in our food. Such indeed was our condition before this day, exactly as I have described it to you. Then God sent to us a man whom we knew well: we knew his lineage, we knew his face and his birthplace. He was from the best of our lands, of the noblest of our lineages, from our greatest household, and our finest tribe. And he himself was the best of us in the state in which we then lived – the most truthful among us and the most forbearing. He called us to a matter; no one responded to him before a close companion of his, who later became his successor. He spoke, and we spoke in return; he told us the truth, and we denied him; he gave to us generously, and we tried to diminish his share. Yet he did not utter a single word but that it came to pass exactly as he said. God then cast into our hearts the readiness to believe in him and follow him, and he became, as it were, an intermediary between us and the Lord of all worlds: whatever he says to us is God's word, and whatever he commands us is God's command.*

*He told us that your Lord says: "I indeed am God alone; I have no partner. I was when nothing else existed, and everything will perish save My Face. I created all things, and to Me all things will return. My mercy has encompassed you, so I have sent to you this man to show you the path by which I will save you, after death, from My punishment and settle you in My abode – the Abode of Peace." We testify that he has brought the truth from the One who is the Truth. He has said: "Whoever joins you in this (religion) will have whatever you have and bear whatever is upon you; whoever refuses, then offer him jizyah, and thereafter protect him from whatever you protect yourselves from; and whoever refuses that, then fight him. I shall be the Judge between you: whoever among you is killed, I shall admit him to My Garden; and whoever remains alive, I shall grant him victory over his opponents." So choose, if you wish, jizyah paid by your hand while you are humbled; or, if you wish, the sword; or else, accept Islam and thereby save your own soul.' Yazdegerd exclaimed: 'Do you address me, a sovereign such as I am, with words like these?' Al-Mughirah replied: 'I have addressed only the one who addressed me. Had someone other than you been speaking to me, I would not have spoken such words to you.' Yazdegerd said: 'Were it not that envoys are not to be killed, I would have had you all put to death. You have nothing from me.' Then he ordered: 'Bring me a load of earth.' When it was brought, he said: 'Place it upon the one among them who is most noble, then drive him forward until he exits through the gate of *al-Mada'in*. Return to your commander and inform him that I am sending Rustam against you so that he may [يُدْفَنَهُ وَجْنَدَهُ] bury him and his army in the trench of *Qadisiyyah*, and make of him and of you, thereafter, an example for others. Then I shall send him into your lands until I occupy you with your own misery more than you were ever afflicted by *Sabur*.' Then he asked: 'Which of you is the most noble?' The delegation remained silent. 'Asim bin 'Amr – stepping forward to seize the earth – said: 'I am the most noble among them; I am the leader of these men, so place it*

upon me.' Yazdegerd asked: 'Is it indeed so?' The members of the delegation replied: 'Yes.' So 'Asim took the load of earth upon his neck and departed with it from the iwan and the palace until he reached his mount and loaded it upon her. [His companions said to him: 'You have gone and carried soil?'] He replied: 'Yes, it is a good omen (*al-fa'l*): God has already granted you power over their land.] He then set off at speed. The rest of the delegation followed, bringing the news to Saad, while 'Asim outpaced them. Passing by Bab Qudays, he called out: 'Give the commander glad tidings of victory; we have, God willing, prevailed!' He then went on until he placed the soil in a stone container (so that it would not be scattered and lost). Then he returned to Saad and related the entire incident. Saad said: 'Receive glad tidings, for by God, He has already given us the keys of their kingdom!'

*His companions (from the delegation) also arrived, and from that day the Muslims grew stronger with each passing day, while their enemy grew weaker day by day. What had taken place – that the Muslims accepted the soil and that the king had given it to them – weighed heavily upon the king's courtiers. Rustam left Sabat for the king to ask him what had transpired between him and the Arabs and how he had found them. The king said: 'I did not think there were men among the Arabs like those whom I saw. They entered before me, and you are neither more intelligent than they nor better in reply than they are.' He informed Rustam of what the spokesman of the Arabs had said and added: 'These men spoke nothing but the truth. They have been promised something that they will either attain or else die upon. Indeed, I found the best among them to be the one I thought the most foolish: when they mentioned jizyah, I gave him a load of earth, and he carried it upon his head and left. Had he wished, he could have had it placed on someone else and saved himself, for I did not know (who among them was their chief).' Rustam replied: 'O King, he was the wisest of them all; he perceived in that act an omen and grasped its significance in a way his companions did not.' Rustam left the king distressed and angry. He himself was an astrologer and soothsayer. He sent a messenger after the delegation and said to his trusted confidant: 'If the messenger catches up with them (and brings back the earth), we will have saved our land; but if they elude him, then know that God has taken from you your land and your sons.' The messenger returned from al-Hirah, having failed to overtake them. Rustam said: 'These men have without doubt gone away with your land! Kingship was never the affair of "the cupping-woman's son" (*ibn al-hajjamah*)! The men have gone off with the keys to our lands!' This was among the things by which God increased the rage of the Persians. (Tarikh al-Tabari 3/498-502)*

Lexical Explanation

Al-Wulugh: literally, an animal's dipping its mouth into a vessel. The expression "*al-wulugh bi-biladina*" means that the Arabs "want to push their mouths into our fertile lands" – i.e. to intrude and feed off them. *Ajmannakum*: derived from *jimam*, meaning to rest and recuperate after toil or exhaustion. Here it conveys: "We did not annex your territory into our empire and left you to live in peace and security." *Al-khanafis wa al-julan*: *khanafis* (from *khanfasa*) and *julan* (from *jual*) denote different types of dung-beetles. *Kaeeban*: from *ka'abah*, meaning sorrow and dejection whose effects are visible upon the face. *Ibn al-Hajjamah*: *hajjamah* is the procedure of cupping, by which blood is drawn from the body as a form of treatment. Rustam uses this expression for Yazdegerd in a disparaging tone, implying that he has behaved in a manner unbefitting a royal prince – such conduct might be expected only from the son of a cupping-woman.

Explanation and Clarification

1. In his concise speech, Numan bin Muqarrin alluded to the Prophet's mission among the Arabs, the subsequent submission of all the tribes of Arabia to Islam, and the responsibility of *shahadat 'ala al-nas* (bearing witness over humankind) placed upon the Arabs to present Islam to surrounding nations. Yazdegerd dismissed all this and, by rehearsing the Arabs' earlier conditions, sought to suggest that, as in the past, they had now come to Persian territory driven by famine and economic distress. From this he argued that, if they would agree to withdraw, the Persians could provide them with provisions and means for a suitable period. In response, al-Mughirah bin Zurarah explained even more clearly that the condition of the Arabs in the past had indeed been worse than Yazdegerd had described, but that after the Prophet's mission the nature of the situation had fundamentally changed. The Arab armies had not come in order to secure sustenance from Persian resources, but to fulfil the responsibility laid upon them by God's Messenger. Al-Mughirah made it clear that they desired nothing of the Persians' material resources: if the Persians accepted the Prophet's call and agreed to judge their affairs according to the Book of God, the Muslims would not interfere in their political sovereignty and would depart, leaving their kingdom to them. If they did not accept this, then they would have to relinquish sovereignty and enter under Muslim suzerainty, paying *jizyah* in return for Muslim protection.
2. Al-Mughirah's speech also shows that, had the Persians accepted Islam, they would not thereby have been required to merge their kingdom into an "Arab empire" or to recognise Arab political rule as such. Their political independence would have remained intact as before; the only obligation would have been to govern in accordance with the Book of God. In that case, the Companions would have done no more than send some teachers to instruct them in religion. The letters the Prophet wrote to rulers beyond the Arabian Peninsula likewise indicate that, if they embraced Islam, they could retain their independent political status. The situation was different, however, for tribes and groups living within the bounds of the Arabian Peninsula: they were required to accept the political authority of the Islamic state in Madinah and to pay *zakah*. They were not permitted to maintain or establish independent political entities, as will become clear in subsequent discussions of the Companions' actions against those who withheld *zakah*.
3. The detailed presentation of Islam made before Yazdegerd by Numan bin Muqarrin and al-Mughirah bin Zurarah was not a first introduction to which the Persians were entirely strangers. Khusrus Parwez had already received the Prophet's letter during his lifetime, and, under Abu Bakr, the Companions had launched campaigns into Iraq on precisely the terms laid out in this speech. On this occasion, the Prophet's mission and message were restated both as a matter of completing the proof against them and, in line with Umar's stated strategy, to ensure that the Persian rulers and populace properly understood the situation and to expose, in their presence, the misrepresentation of the Arabs' motives by the Persian ruling class, whose aim was to inflame the Persian public for war.
4. Yazdegerd's reference to Sabur (*Sabur*) is an allusion to Sabur bin Hurmuz, who became ruler of the Sasanian empire in the fourth century CE while still very young. Taking advantage of his minority, various Arab tribes launched raids and plundered parts of Iraq and other regions within the empire, and the tribe of Iyad even took up residence in parts of Iraq. When Sabur came of age, he sent out his armies and inflicted large-scale massacres on these tribes, especially on Banu Iyad, whose survivors were forced to flee into Roman territories. His particular method of punishment was to have people's shoulders dislocated, and for this reason he became known as Sabur Dhu al-Aktaf ("the one with the shoulders"), i.e. the dislocator of shoulders (Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh 1/358–359).

Referencing and Variance in Narration Chains

This incident too is reported by al-Kala'i on the authority of Sayf bin Umar (al-Iktifa 2/446–448). In several places the wording differs. For example, al-Tabari's text has *al-wulu biladina*, which would suggest “being enamoured of our land”, whereas al-Kala'i records *al-wulughu biladina* (“dipping their mouths into our lands”), whose meaning is clearer and has therefore been adopted. Likewise, al-Tabari's text contains *hatta yadfikum wa yadhibi*, which would literally mean “until he warms you and warms him in the trench” – i.e. “roasts you in the fire of battle” – whereas al-Kala'i's *wording hatta yafanahu wa jundabu* (“until he buries him and his army”) is more transparent and contextually appropriate, and has therefore been used in the text. Similarly, al-Kala'i's version of Asim bin Amr's words includes the additional sentence cited above in brackets, which throws clearer light on his intent:

فَقَالَ لَهُ أَصْحَابُهُ: حَمَلْتَ ثُرَابًا؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ، الْفَلْ، دَدْ أَمْكَنْتُمُ اللَّهَ مِنْ أَرْضِهِمْ.

“His companions said to him: ‘You actually went and carried soil?’ He replied: ‘Yes, it is a good omen; God has already given you power over their land.’”

[To be continued...]



SIR SYED'S THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT AND METHODOLOGY: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY - 2

Waris Mazhari

The 'Point of View' column is reserved for writings by various thinkers. The institution is not necessarily in agreement with the views expressed in the articles published therein.

The Concept of Reason

From an epistemic perspective, Sir Syed accords priority to *'aql* over *wahy*, even though he does not explicitly acknowledge this in so many words. Giving precedence to reason over revelation has several aspects. One general aspect relates to the problem of rational *husn* and *qubb* in things, which the Mu'tazilah upheld – that is, the ultimate criterion for the goodness or badness of anything is reason, not the Shariah. In this respect, Sir Syed appears fully aligned with the Mu'tazili position. However, the most significant dimension of this priority is that he takes modern science – grounded in physical observation and experiment – to be the fundamental point of reference for human reason. In contrast, he regards ancient science or Greek philosophy as mere conjecture and surmise. That said, in those questions which do not lie within the operational scope of science, he does attempt to buttress his position by appealing to classical philosophical principles and technical terms. He treats science as such a normative standard of human reason that his stance effectively reaches the point of scientism – which, in the modern West, is among the most extreme of anti-religious tendencies.

A second important point is that Sir Syed assigns no significance to *wajdan* (inner intuition), even though its importance has been acknowledged in both pre-modern and modern philosophical traditions. It seems that in his view, two factors principally obstruct the recognition of *wajdan* as a legitimate source of knowledge. The first is precisely this scientism; the second, which is in one respect derivative of the first, is the exaggerated Sufi notion of personal experiential knowledge – a notion that manifests itself in the form of mystical claims about spiritual unveilings. In Sir Syed's eyes, such claims are "nothing but imaginings – pure imagination and nothing more." He does not differentiate between *kashf* (mystical unveiling) and *wajdan*. There is no doubt that Sufi *kashf* is indeed one particular form of *wajdan*, and it can certainly be subjected to criticism or even denial. However, to reject *wajdan* altogether on the basis of arguments against *kashf* is in fact a consequence of that scientism which had taken firm hold of Sir Syed's mind.

The philosophical account of *wajdan* as presented by al-Ghazali has, of course, always been subject to questioning, and in this matter Sir Syed is not alone. Yet the manner and style in which he attempts to dismiss it entirely attests to the particular cast of his temperament and to a certain stylistic severity. Sir Syed maintains that human beings have been made morally responsible (mukallaf) on the basis of reason, and therefore it is inconceivable that the matters in which they are held responsible should fall outside the ambit of their reason. In principle, no one disputes this. The problem arises at the level of particulars, where Sir Syed tries to apply this principle in a manner that, as Muhsin al-Mulk rightly objects, is simply untenable. To claim that all the principles

and doctrines of religion can be demonstrated strictly in accordance with modern science and the laws of nature is both futile and unnecessary.

By contrast, Ibn Rushd – who is often regarded as a precursor of Islamic modernism and whose thought exerted a profound influence on Sir Syed – acknowledged the limitations of reason. He regarded ‘aql as the most important means for understanding the revealed texts and, in that respect, an essential instrument for apprehending reality. However, he kept firmly in view the distinction that reason is incapable of grasping all realities. In this way, *wahy* constitutes a complementary extension of reason:

’كُلُّ مَا عَجَزَ عَنِ الْعُقْلِ افْدَاهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَّا إِنَّمَا مِنْ قَبْلِ الْوَحْيِ’

Every matter of which reason falls short, Allah Most High grants knowledge of it to the human being by means of revelation.

Therefore, in all such cases we are required to refer back to the Shariah (جَبُّ أَنْ تَرْجِعَ فِيهِ إِلَيِّ الشَّرِيعَةِ). What revelation provides is knowledge of the unseen (*‘ilm al-ghayb*). The unseen realm (*‘alam al-ghayb*) and the visible realm (*‘alam al-shahadah*) differ from one another in their very essence and quiddity, and thus the unseen cannot be analogically reduced to the seen. In this way, Ibn Rushd seeks to draw a line of demarcation between religious and philosophical truths. In his view, the real difficulty arises when these two domains are conflated; each has its own proper sphere of operation and must be considered within that sphere.

By contrast, the way in which Sir Syed conceives of reason and its functioning, in an abstract and technical manner, appears to be largely alien even within the Islamic rational tradition itself. Among the philosophers, the *mutakallimun* and the *usuliyyun*, there is a substantial discourse concerning ‘aql, its modes of operation and its criteria, and the various classifications of reason that flow from these. Sir Syed’s mental horizon seems almost entirely untouched by these discussions. In his view, after the fourteenth century a new epoch began in which reason attained absolute sovereignty over knowledge of the realities of things. Now, whatever lies beyond the range of reason is to be deemed unacceptable.

A Critical Look at the Theological Thought and Method of Sir Syed

In the foregoing pages we have attempted to examine Sir Syed’s theological contributions and, in that connection, his thought and method, while also indicating certain lines of criticism. The present discussion has thus sought to cast a critical eye over his intellectual project as a whole.

The intellectual climate of his time unquestionably demanded the project of constructing a new *‘ilm al-kalam* which Sir Syed undertook; yet it would be inaccurate to claim that, in the broader Muslim world, he was the sole pioneer of such an approach. It is true, however, that the storm of opposition which arose against him made his name and work a particular focal point of attention in this connection. Nor can it be denied that his efforts stirred the otherwise quiet theological atmosphere of the Indian subcontinent.

Sir Syed’s theological thought displays both strengths and weaknesses. His admirers and his critics have both tended to excess – the former in praise, the latter in censure. Some critics have not even refrained from declaring him outside the fold of Islam, while some admirers have left no room for moderation in lauding him. In the view of Shaykh Muhammad Ikram, “Perhaps the only ‘fault’ of Sir Syed was that, compared to other ‘ulama’, he was more far-sighted and more penetrating in his vision.” The truth is that, while Sir Syed was indeed endowed with a remarkable, even extraordinary, mind and personality, the psychology of intellectual self-assurance that underpinned his scholarly persona prevented him from successfully traversing the thorn-strewn path of renewing Islamic theological thought. Under the banner of scientific thinking, he made an abstract, rational standpoint the foundation of his argumentation – a standpoint which the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has called

instrumental reason, and against which, as early as the eighteenth century, reactive currents had already begun to emerge within the West itself in the form of Romanticism and other movements. According to Taylor, this *instrumental reason* is one of the three major “malaises of modernity” that afflict contemporary Western modernity.

Sir Syed’s engagement with the Islamic intellectual tradition was neither particularly deep nor wide-ranging – as the author of *Nuzhat al-Khawatir* has also observed, although many of his other allegations against Sir Syed are unwarranted. It was more a matter of his native ingenuity that, from partial or inadequate material, he could derive seemingly “complete” and highly striking conclusions. That said, he did study al-Ghazali and Shah Wali Allah in some detail and benefited from them, and he appears to have been especially influenced by Shah Wali Allah. In many of his ideas and principles, one can clearly hear the echo of Shah Wali Allah’s thought.

Like the medieval Muslim philosophers before him, Sir Syed was intellectually deeply impressed and affected by modern science. The philosophers had regarded acceptance of virtually all the principles and universals of Greek philosophy as a precondition of rationality; Sir Syed, by contrast, took modern science to be the foundational basis of Islamic thinking. In his own age, al-Ghazali had shattered the mould of that mentality which was captivated by Greek philosophy, but in more recent times no comparable work has emerged over the past three centuries that could provide a robust defense against the challenges that modern science poses to religion.

Yet Sir Syed did not possess, to any adequate degree, the capacity to read and understand directly and in their original sources the very currents of thought from which he sought to protect religious belief. One major reason for this was that he knew no Western language that would have enabled him to study Western thought first-hand. Moreover, his reading of Western thought was highly one-sided. He remained largely unfamiliar with the internal critiques and counter-currents that had arisen within the West itself against the very scientific mentality which outwardly seemed to undermine religious transcendence. In defending religious belief, he tended to attribute virtually unlimited capacities to human reason. Had he, for instance, studied Kant – whose intellectual influence was very much alive in Europe at the time – he might not have been so ready to grant reason such boundless authority in matters of religion. He was influenced by the naturalist movements of Europe, but nowhere in his writings do we find clear references indicating what his primary sources were on these questions. My own view is that, in attempting to grasp Western scientific thought through secondary sources, he fell into errors similar to those of Ibn Sina, which Ibn Rushd later criticized in *Tahafut al-Tabafut*.

Another key point is that Sir Syed never undertook a principled study of the very nature of science itself and of its precise scope – issues that are now treated within the philosophy of science. From his conception of science, he tried to extract something that science, in fact, does not itself claim. Furthermore, in his doctrine of “nature” (*fitrat*) he uncritically accepted the prevailing interpretations of *fitrat* without reflecting that these interpretations are mutable rather than absolute. The laws of nature, as we understand them, are grounded in human cognition and experience – and human cognition and experience are subject to constant growth and development.

In formulating the premises of his theological thought, Sir Syed deployed a number of principles, several of which are highly significant and testify to the creativity of his mind. Yet some of the key principles on which he sought to erect his intellectual edifice are extremely weak; no solid theoretical structure can be built upon them. For example, in his correspondence with Maulana Qasim Nanawtawi, Sir Syed stated fifteen principles; the ninth was as follows:

A human being cannot be held responsible (mukallaf) for anything beyond human capacity; hence, if he is charged with faith (iman), it is necessary that faith and those injunctions on which salvation depends should not lie beyond human reason.

Maulana Nanawtawi raised two objections to this. First, that the negation of *taklif ma la yutaq* (imposing duties beyond capacity) concerns actions (*a'mal*), not faith (*iman*). Second, that “action depends on the operative faculty, not on the rational faculty, such that lack of awareness of its inner rationale and wisdom would prevent moral responsibility.” Many elements and components of faith and practice, and the underlying purposes which they serve, are not fully accessible to human reason. Maulana Nanawtawi also raised the question of the status and standard of reason itself, considered in terms of its operations – a question that is fundamentally sound. The theological issues on which Sir Syed took up the task of inquiry demanded very deep and sustained reflection, but it appears that, entangled as he was in numerous practical engagements, he lacked the time for the level of deliberation they required.

The greatest difficulty with Sir Syed’s theological thought is that the principled framework within which he conducts his discussion is, on the one hand, based on a complete rupture from the tradition, and, on the other, not particularly coherent or internally organised with respect to its relevant dimensions. By contrast, Husayn Afandi al-Jisr (d. 1909), for example, placed emphasis on general principles. In discussing the theory of evolution, he adopted the principle that if any scientific finding should attain the level of demonstration and certainty, then recourse to figurative interpretation (*ta’wil*) of scriptural texts becomes possible. He writes:

لو فرض ان ادلةكم على النشوء بلغت الى درجة اليقين و هي يتم الى اعتقاد دين محمد الذى اساسه ان لا خالق لشىء الا الله تعالى فلا حجر عليكم فى تأويل تلك النصوص و صرفها عن ظاهرها و تطبيقها على مقامات عليه الادلة قاطعة من النشوء مع اعتقاد انه بخلق الله تعالى ولا ينافي ذلك

If it be supposed that your evidences for evolution have reached the degree of certainty, and that you are guided to belief in the religion of Muhammad – whose foundation is that there is no creator of anything other than Allah Most High – then there is no hindrance upon you in interpreting those (scriptural) texts, diverting them from their apparent meanings, and applying them to that which has been firmly established by conclusive evidences of evolution, provided that you simultaneously maintain the conviction that this too is by Allah’s creative act, and that there is no contradiction in this.

Similarly, Farid Wajdi (d. 1954) took the view that attempts to align the Quran’s statements about cosmic phenomena with scientific theories are mistaken, because the Quran is not concerned with the precise factual nature of such phenomena. Its purpose is rather the moral and spiritual training of the human self and to impel it toward reflection on the universe.

Ibn Taymiyyah, in *Dar’ ta’arud al-‘aql wa-l-naql*, sought to establish general principles on this question, principles which later figures such as Maulana Thanawi built upon in their own efforts at systematization. Ibn Taymiyyah posits four possible configurations of conflict between reason and revelation and, within this principled framework, seeks a reconciliation between the two. Although there is room for discussion in these principles and generalizations – and they cannot be deemed final – they nonetheless provide fundamental and practically useful guidance for resolving apparent conflicts between reason and the scriptural texts. In contrast, the foundational framework which Sir Syed outlines is very loose, and its weakness is further exposed by the fact that he does not respond with intellectual seriousness to the objections raised against it.

Summary of the Discussion

The period in which Sir Syed Ahmad Khan attempted to formulate his theological thought was one of intense turmoil for Islamic intellectual life. Not only in the Indian subcontinent but also in the central lands of Islam, the horizons of Islamic thought were overshadowed by the clouds of imitation and stagnation. In response to this, two fundamental tendencies emerged within the Muslim world. One tendency sought, from within the Islamic intellectual tradition itself and through its internal resources, to confront the rational challenges facing Islamic thought and to benefit from the breadth, diversity and richness of that tradition. In the Indian context, this tendency is represented by Shibli. The second tendency, which also arose in this region, tried to spread a new intellectual canvas in order to meet these challenges, largely setting aside the distinctive features of the Islamic intellectual heritage. This latter approach is represented by Sir Syed and the cohort of thinkers associated with him – such as Chiragh Ali and Amir Ali – with Sir Syed at their head.

Although the foundational principles on which Sir Syed sought to build his theological edifice were weak and marked by fissures, his project nonetheless helped to open up previously closed intellectual pathways, much as the emergence of Mu'tazili thought once provoked and energized the theological reflection of Ahl al-Sunnah scholars. The theological thought and method of Sir Syed have had far-reaching effects, which may be assessed on both positive and negative grounds. Yet the positive effects are by no means negligible, and in the Indian subcontinent they may be discerned, in varying degrees, in the intellectual and scholarly endeavors of Shibli, Iqbal and the Farahi school.



A VISIT TO THE CEMETERY

Saqib Ali

A few days ago, I had the opportunity to visit a large cemetery in which the inhabitants of several surrounding villages bury their deceased. As I walked through it, I began to read the inscriptions on some of the gravestones. On several of them, the date of death showed that forty or fifty years had already passed. I found myself reflecting that these people have been lying beneath the earth for almost half a century.

My eye fell upon one grave whose inscription stated that it was the resting place of a certain Major. Next to it was the grave of his wife, and immediately beside that, the grave of their son, who had himself served as an officer. On further inquiry I discovered that there were many such graves in this cemetery where several members of the same household or family were buried side by side. On some stones the word "Haji" appeared, on others "Raja," and on others various worldly titles and offices—yet all of them now lie alike beneath the soil.

It was a powerful reminder that whether a person is a king or a beggar, fair-skinned or dark, male or female, no matter how accomplished and expert in their profession, death is the great leveller that comes to all. If we look around us, we will find cemeteries everywhere in which people of every kind are buried together.

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) himself used to visit the graves. He said that one should visit graves, for they remind one of death. In a narration of Tirmidhi it is related that when Uthman bin Affan (RA) would stand at a grave, he would weep until his beard became wet. Someone asked him: "You do not weep when Paradise and Hell are mentioned, yet when you see a grave, you weep?" He replied that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "The grave is the first stage of the Hereafter; if a person is saved at this stage, what follows will be easier for him, but if he does not find salvation here, then the stages that come after it are even more severe." He then added: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: I have never seen anything more terrifying than the grave."

Cemeteries impress upon us that every moment of life is precious: it should be lived in full awareness that this world is a test, and that one must prepare for death. They remind us of Allah and of our own mortality, of the fact that life is transient and that, sooner or later, we too must face death.

WHO IS THE SUBJECT OF ‘‘ABASA WA TAWALLA’? - IN THE LIGHT OF A NEW EXEGETICAL STUDY

Dr. Muhammad Ghatrif Shahbaz Nadwi

The ‘Point of View’ column is reserved for writings by various thinkers. The institution is not necessarily in agreement with the views expressed in the articles published therein.

At the beginning of Surah ‘Abasa, all exegetes regard the subject (fa'il) of *Abasa wa tawalla* as the Noble Prophet (PBUH). Among the later scholars, however, one hadith expert, Allamah Dawudi, considered the subject to be a disbeliever. This is most probably Shaykh Abu al-Hasan Abd al-Rahman bin Muzaffar al-Dawudi. Ibn Hajar has cited this opinion in *Fath al-Bari*. Throughout *Fath al-Bari*, he mentions Imam Dawudi on many occasions: sometimes he accepts his explanation, sometimes he refutes it, and sometimes he merely says, *wa qad aghraba al-Dawudi wa qal ...* (Dawudi has here expressed a singular, isolated view) and moves on. From this one may infer that he was a hadith scholar and alim of considerable stature. In the present age, the same exegetical view has also been adopted by Allamah Shabbir Ahmad Azhar Mirathi. For discerning readers, we quote below the relevant passage from his *tafsir*. He writes:

“This surah is also Makkhan. Its very first word has been taken as its title. It was most probably revealed after Surah al-Nazi‘at. Its subject matter is the same as that of Surah al-Nazi‘at and the general nature of its themes is also almost identical. In Surah al-Nazi‘at, a past rebel—Pharaoh—has been mentioned, and it has been stated that the end of rebellion is Hell. At the beginning of this surah, one of the arrogant rebels of Makkah is mentioned.

Background: Ibn Umm Maktum was a noble, early convert among the blind Companions. His mother, whose *laqab* ‘Umm Maktum’ became attached to her, and whose actual name was Atika bint Abd Allah, belonged to the Banu Makhzum, and she was the maternal aunt of Khadija Siddiqah (RA). The name of Umm Maktum’s husband has been given by some as ‘Amr and by others as Abd Allah (*Tafsir Khazin*). It is likely that, owing to the relationship of first cousins, Khadija encouraged this righteous, blind young man to accept Islam. After embracing Islam, he would often be present in the service of the Prophet, occupied in memorizing and reciting the Quran, and he would also go out among his visitors, acquaintances and relatives to preach.

One day he went to meet a man from among the unbelievers of Makkah, a person accustomed to associating with the wealthy, who did not deign to attach any importance to the admonition of the caller to truth. Ibn Umm Maktum had, in all likelihood, gone to him for purposes of da‘wah. Because of his blindness, that man pulled a face when he arrived, showed great distaste, did not speak to him properly and turned his back on him. On this conduct, God condemned that arrogant man, exposed his lack of insight, and reproved his ingrained flattery of the rich and his worship of wealth. What was the name of that arrogant man? Neither the Quran mentions it, nor any sound hadith. There was no need to mention his name, nor are we required to investigate it. The Quran is a book of guidance and moral reform. The names of those individuals whom it does mention are given for that

purpose, and where this purpose is not tied to a person's name, the names are not provided. Rather, their praiseworthy qualities are described in a manner of commendation, or their blameworthy traits in a manner of censure. Thus it is said:

عَيْسَ وَ تَوْلَى. أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى. وَ مَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعْلَهُ يَرَكِي. أَوْ يَذَكُرُ فَتَنَقْعَدُ الْذَّكَرُ. أَمَّا مَنْ اسْتَغْنَى. فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدِّى. وَ مَا عَلِيكَ أَلَا يَرَكِي. وَ أَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى. وَ بُو يَخْشِي. فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهِي. كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذَكَّرَةٌ. فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ.

He scowled and turned away, because the blind man came to him. And what do you know? Perhaps he was seeking purification. Or that he might take heed, and the reminder would benefit him. As for him who deems himself self-sufficient, you attend to him. Yet it is no concern of yours if he does not seek purification. But as for him who comes to you striving, while he fears (God), you neglect him. Never so! Indeed, this is a reminder. So whoever wills may bear it in mind." (Surah 'Abasa, 80:1-12)

Consider now the following lines of commentary on these verses:

أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى

Since the words are 'al-a'ma' ("the blind man"), this indicates reference to a particular blind person, and among the emigrant Companions there was no other blind man apart from Ibn Umm Maktum (RA). Hence the exegetes have unanimously taken him to be the one meant in this verse.

A person who comes to meet you is, in effect, a guest. To treat a guest in this manner is gross courtesy. Had the visitor been someone who had previously harmed him, or from whom harm was now feared, there might have been some excuse for such rudeness. But that arrogant man had committed this shameful baseness merely because the one who came to him was blind. A human being ought to seat the one who comes to him with dignity, inquire as to the purpose of his visit—especially when he already knows him—and listen to what he has to say, for it may be that by his presence some benefit comes to him, and that by listening to his words he gains some advantage. Thus, addressing that arrogant man, it was said:

وَ مَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعْلَهُ يَرَكِي. أَوْ يَذَكُرُ فَتَنَقْعَدُ الْذَّكَرُ

And what do you know? Perhaps he was seeking purification. Or that he might take heed, and the reminder would benefit him.

That is, since he had deliberately come to meet you, it was incumbent upon you to seat him honourably and to converse with him in a manner befitting humanity. You ought to have reflected that perhaps this person is of good character and upright conduct, and that his sitting with you would bring you benefit—for the company of a virtuous person is a mighty elixir—or that perhaps he possesses the capacity to accept admonition and to listen attentively to what is good. In that case, by virtue of your kinship you might have conveyed some beneficial counsel to him and he would have benefitted from your words. In short, by talking with him you would have discovered whether he was a source of benefit for others or himself benefited by others. But you saw that he was blind and turned away coldly from that poor man. Reflect on how deplorable your conduct was. As for the wealthy man, you are eager to meet him; you go to him, and his bad character and bad conduct cause you no concern. And yet when a person of good character, who fears God, comes to you seeking your well-being, you treat him with neglect! Thus it is said:

أَمَّا مَنْ اسْتَغْنَى. فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدِّى

As for him who deems himself self-sufficient (and whose wealth prevents him from coming to you), you attend to him,...

that is, you present yourself at his door, you are eager and keen to catch a glimpse of him in the marketplace, at gatherings or on social occasions, and you remain his ardent admirer.

وَمَا عَلِيكَ أَلَا يَرْكُ.

“Yet it is no concern of yours if he does not seek purification.”

That is, his wealth draws your attention away from his faults; his riches blind you to his moral defects.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْتَعْلِي. وَهُوَ يَخْشَى. فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلْهُ.

“But as for him who comes to you striving, while he fears (God), you neglect him,”

That is, you turn your attention away from him and busy yourself with someone or something else!

كُلًا لَنَّهَا تَذَكِّرَةٌ. فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ.

“Never so! Indeed, this is a reminder. So whoever wills may bear it in mind.”

That is, God has sent down the Quran for all His servants, without distinction between rich and poor, disabled and able-bodied, male and female, young and old, Arab and non-Arab. This speech of the Lord of all worlds is for everyone. Whoever commits it to heart and acts upon it will become deserving of God’s mercy.

A few points of clarification:

1. In *‘la allabu yazzakka aw yadhakkaru’*, the particle ‘aw’ (“or”) is for “preventing exclusion” (man‘ al-khuluw). When a person comes to meet you, there are three possible cases: (1) you derive moral benefit from him, which will be the case if he is of good character and noble disposition—for the company of a righteous and upright person is greatly beneficial; (2) he derives moral benefit from you, if he is receptive to admonition and inclined to listen with acceptance to what is good; (3) you suffer moral harm from him, if he is of bad character and satanic disposition. Now, that man knew full well that this blind person did not fall into the third category; he was of the first or the second kind. Rational propriety therefore required that he seat him honourably and converse with him.
2. The feminine pronoun in *‘innaha’* and the masculine object pronoun in *‘dhakarahu’* both refer to the Quran. The feminine pronoun is used because what is intended there are the verses (ayat) of the Quran. In contexts of admonition and counsel, it is not the whole Quran that is recited, but only those verses suited to the occasion. The masculine pronoun in *‘dhakarahu’* is used because here the reference is to the Quran as a whole, which is what must ultimately be remembered and internalised.
3. The majority of exegetes, both early and later, have taken the subject of *“abasa wa tawalla”* and the addressee of the subsequent second-person pronouns to be the Prophet himself (PBUH). This view rests on a mistaken narrative. They say that one day several noblemen of Quraysh were with the Messenger of God, and he was calling them to the truth, when the blind Companion Ibn Umm Maktum (RA) arrived and said: “O Messenger of Allah, teach me something” (*‘allimni mimma ‘allamaka Allah* or he said: *arshidni*—guide me). The Prophet did not answer Ibn Umm Maktum, but continued speaking to those men. Ibn Umm Maktum repeated his request, but the Prophet did not respond and continued talking to them. When Ibn Umm Maktum again spoke, his interruption and insistence displeased the Prophet, and the effect of this displeasure showed on his blessed face. Thereupon this surah was revealed, and from *“abasa wa tawalla”* to *‘kalla innaha tadhkirah’* God reproached the Prophet, saying that he ought not to have acted thus. He should have broken off his conversation with the Quraysh nobles and reassured Ibn Umm Maktum, who was a sincere seeker and God-fearing—why had he preferred the chieftains of Quraysh over him? They go on to say that afterward, whenever Ibn Umm Maktum came into his

presence, the Prophet honoured him and would say: “*Marhaban bi-man ‘atabani fibi rabbi*” (“Welcome to the one because of whom my Lord reproached me ...”).

But this story is quite baseless. Neither al-Bukhari nor Muslim has transmitted it; nor even Abu Dawud, al-Nasa’i or Ibn Majah. Only al-Tirmidhi has reported it, and he has made clear that its chains contain disagreement and disturbance. Some narrators have treated it as a statement of the Successor ‘Urwah bin al-Zubayr, while others as a statement of the Mother of the Believers, Ayesah (RA). Al-Tirmidhi has transmitted it in the following wording:

“Aisha (RA) relates: ‘Abasa wa tawalla was revealed concerning Ibn Umm Maktum, the blind man. He came to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and kept saying: ‘O Messenger of Allah, guide me,’ while a man from among the great chiefs of the idolaters was sitting with the Messenger of Allah. So the Messenger of Allah turned away from him and turned towards the other and said to him: ‘Do you see any objection in what I am saying?’ and he replied: ‘No.’ It was in this connection that these verses were revealed.’ Al-Tirmidhi then says: ‘This hadith is hasan gharibin’ And some narrators have transmitted this hadith from Hisham bin ‘Urwah from his father, who said: ‘Abasa wa tawalla was revealed concerning Ibn Umm Maktum,’ and in this version there is no mention of Aisha.” (Tirmidhi, Abwab al-Tafsir, Surah ‘Abasa)

As readers can see, this narration mentions that a wealthy and influential idolater was sitting with the Messenger of Allah and that the Prophet was engaged in addressing him, and it explicitly states that this idolater was being affected by his exhortation.

Now reflect carefully: if this incident had actually occurred, Ibn Umm Maktum would have been the one deserving rebuke and censure. Readers can see that in “*abasa wa tawalla. an ja’abu al-a’ma*” God has mentioned a person who, because a blind man came to him, scowled and turned away. Then in ‘*wa ma yudrika la’allahu yazzakka aw yadhakkaru fa-tanfa’abu al-dhikra*’, He addresses this person who scowled and turned away and exposes his lack of insight. To fawn upon the wealthy and to interrupt the bearers of the call to truth while they are addressing you is blatant bad manners—especially when the Prophet was engaged in preaching and admonition. Ibn Umm Maktum ought to have exercised patience and, once the Prophet had finished, then asked for instruction and guidance.

Furthermore, the narration in Tirmidhi mentions only a single idolater present with the Prophet and the Prophet being occupied in advising him. Yet some have added that it was not one but several Quraysh notables: Abu Jahl, ‘Utbah bin Rabi’ah, Ubayy bin Khalaf, and some even included in that gathering the Prophet’s uncle, Abbas bin Abd al-Muttalib. Thus Ibn Jarir al-Tabari has recorded this story with the chain: *haddathani Muhammad bin Saad qal: thani abi qal: thani ‘ammi qal: thani abi ‘an abihi ‘an Ibn Abbas* (Tafsir al-Tabari, Surah ‘Abasa). But for scholars this chain has always remained an unsolved puzzle. Ibn Jarir has transmitted many reports with this chain, and scholars have been able to call it nothing but an “obscure chain” (*isnad muzlim*).

The editor of Imam Abu Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabi’s well-known work *al-‘Awasim min al-Qawasim*, Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, writes:

Isnad: haddathani Muhammad bin Saad ... ‘an Ibn Abbas, yajhal ‘ulama’ al-jarh wa-l-ta‘dil asma’ aktharihim fadlan ‘an an ya’rifu shay’an min ahwalihim.

That is, in this chain, the majority of the names are unknown to the critics of transmitters; to speak of their detailed states is out of the question.

I have consulted many learned men of my own time about this puzzle; none had a solution. The exegetes, however, have taken this baseless story and lavished their exegetical skill upon it. Truly:

Haqiqat kharafat meñ kho ga'i ("Reality has been lost amid fables")

Ye ummat rivayat meñ kho ga'i ("This community has lost itself in tales and reports.")

4. The meaning of 'suhufin mukarramah' and 'bi-aydi safarah. kiramin bararah' has also been explained in a strange and untenable fashion by some scholars. The most erroneous and far-fetched view is that of Maulana Maududi, who writes that the 'safarah' are those angels who were writing down the Quranic scrolls in accordance with God's direct instruction, safeguarding them and conveying them intact to the Messenger of Allah (see *Tafsir al-Quran*, Surah 'Abasa, vol. 6, Idarah Tarjuman al-Quran, Lahore).

Someone should explain: was the Quran revealed to the Prophet in the form of written scrolls? If so, what became of those scrolls which the angels supposedly brought to him? Where did they go? The Prophet never at any time showed anyone any such written scroll.

We see with our own eyes the transformative impact of the Quran: whoever truly believes in it becomes purified of sins, free of deviant thinking and unsound belief, and a doer of good. It is for such a person that reproof is directed if he shows aversion and neglect. How, then, can it be correct to treat the Prophet himself as the addressee of this condemnation? In reality, had it not been for that narration transmitted by Tirmidhi and Tabari, no one would even have thought of this misinterpretation. That very report has blocked the correct understanding of these verses.

5. As for the verb "abasa wa tawalla", I have taken its subject to be a disbeliever. It pleased me greatly to learn that centuries before me a renowned scholar had written the same in his commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari. Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani writes in *Fath al-Bari*: "Lam yakhtalif al-salaf fi anna fa'il 'abasa' huwa al-nabi (PBUH), wa aghraba al-Dawudi fa-qal: huwa al-kafir." (9/521) "The early generations did not differ that the subject of "abasa" is the Prophet (PBUH), and al-Dawudi expressed a singular view, saying: 'It is the disbeliever.'"



SALAT AL-TASBIH: IN THE LIGHT OF FIQH AND HADITH - 3

Dr. Amir Gazdar

Critical examination and Takhrij of the Traditions of the Chapter in Light of the Principles of the Science of Transmission

Concerning Salat al-Tasbih, what has been transmitted in some of the hadith and athar compilations under the attribution to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) consists of certain *verbal* reports ascribed to him. No *practical* report, however, has been transmitted anywhere in this chapter under his attribution which would state that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) ever actually performed this prayer of Salat al-Tasbih. Verbal reports on this subject have been transmitted from several Companions. In what follows, a critical study of these reports is presented to the reader in the light of the principles of hadith science. We shall first present the takhrij and evaluation of the hadith narrated from Abu Rafi al-Qibti (RA).

1. The hadith of Abu Rafi (RA):

عَنْ أَبِي رَافِعٍ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِلْعَبَّاسِ: يَا عَمَّ، أَلَا أَحْبُوكَ، أَلَا أَنْفَعُوكَ، قَالَ: بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: يَا عَمَّ، صَلَّى أَرْبَعَ رَكَعَاتٍ تَقْرَأُ فِي كُلِّ رَكْعَةٍ بِفَاتِحَةِ الْكِتَابِ وَسُورَةٍ، فَإِذَا أَنْفَضْتَ الْقِرَاءَةَ، فَقُلْ: اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، حَسْنَ عَشْرَةَ مَرَّةً قَبْلَ أَنْ تَرْكَعَ، ثُمَّ ارْكَعْ فَقْلُهَا عَشْرًا، ثُمَّ ارْفَعْ رَأْسَكَ فَقْلُهَا عَشْرًا، ثُمَّ اسْجُدْ فَقْلُهَا عَشْرًا، ثُمَّ ارْفَعْ رَأْسَكَ فَقْلُهَا عَشْرًا قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقْرَأَ، فَقِيلَ حَمْسٌ وَسِبْعُونَ فِي كُلِّ رَكْعَةٍ وَهِيَ ثَلَاثُ مَائَةٍ فِي أَرْبَعِ رَكَعَاتٍ، وَلَوْ كَانَتْ دُوْنُكَ مِثْلَ رَمْلِ عَالِجٍ عَفَرَهَا اللَّهُ لَكَ، قَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَكَ، وَمَنْ يَسْتَطِعُ أَنْ يَقُولَهَا فِي يَوْمٍ، قَالَ: إِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ أَنْ تَقْرَأُهَا فِي جُمْعَةٍ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ أَنْ تَقْرَأُهَا فِي جُمْعَةٍ فَقْلُهَا فِي شَهْرٍ، فَلَمْ يَرَنْ يَقُولُ لَهُ، حَتَّى قَالَ: فَقْلُهَا فِي سَيْنَةٍ.

Abu Rafi' (RA) relates that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said (to his uncle) Abbas (RA): 'O uncle, shall I not join ties with you? Shall I not show you affection? Shall I not benefit you?' He replied: 'Indeed, O Messenger of Allah.' The Prophet said: 'Uncle, perform four rak'ahs of prayer in such a manner that in each rak'ah, after reciting Surah al-Fatihah and any surah, when you finish the recitation but before going into ruku', say fifteen times: "Allahu akbar, al-hamdu li-llah, subhana llah, la ilaha illa llah." Then go into ruku' and there say these same words ten times. Then raise your head, and while standing upright say these words ten times. Then go into sujud and say these words ten times. Then raise your head from prostration and repeat these words ten times. Then go into the second prostration and say these same words ten times, and when you raise your head from that prostration, before standing up (while still sitting), again repeat these words ten times. In this way, in each rak'ah the repetition of these words will amount to seventy-five, and in four rak'ahs the total number will be three hundred. Then, even if your sins are as numerous as a mound of sand, Allah will forgive them for you.'

He (Abbas) submitted: 'Who is capable of reciting so many words (of glorification) every day in prayer?' The Prophet replied: 'If you are unable to recite them daily, then perform this prayer every Friday; and if you

cannot do it every Friday, then perform it once a month.' He continued thus, until he finally said: 'Then perform it once in a year.'"

The text of this report has been taken from the Sunan of Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 AH), no. 482.

The Sources of the Hadith of Abu Rafi'

The other chains (turuq) of the above-mentioned hadith of Abu Rafi', as taken from Sunan al-Tirmidhi, with slight variations in wording, are transmitted in the following primary sources, listed here in chronological order:

1. al-Sunan of Ibn Majah (d. 273 AH), no. 1386.
2. al-Musnad of al-Ruyani (d. 307 AH), no. 699.
3. al-Mu'jam al-Kabir of al-Tabarani (d. 360 AH), no. 987.
4. al-Sunan al-Sughra of al-Bayhaqi (d. 458 AH), no. 831.
5. Shu'ab al-Iman of al-Bayhaqi (d. 458 AH), no. 602.

A consideration of the dates of these sources makes three points clear:

First, that among the *primary* sources of hadith and athar, only the aforementioned five works contain a takhrij of the hadith of Abu Rafi'. In other words, the remaining primary sources are entirely devoid of any mention of this report.

Second, that up until the middle of the third century AH, this report of Abu Rafi' had not been recorded in any book of hadith or athar.

Third, that in the middle of the third century AH, al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah transmitted it; towards the end of that same century, al-Ruyani transmitted it; in the fourth century AH, al-Tabarani transmitted it; and in the fifth century AH, only al-Bayhaqi recorded it. Thus, out of the many hadith scholars of these three centuries, only five scholars deemed this report worthy of inclusion in their compilations.

Critical assessment of the chains of transmission and legal ruling on the report From the critical examination of the chains (asanid) of the aforementioned routes (turuq) of the hadith of Abu Rafi', it becomes evident that, in the view of the experts of rijal, all these chains—including the route found in al-Tirmidhi—contain several narrators who have been subjected to criticism (majruh). However, in terms of the principles of hadith evaluation, decisive weight in determining the ruling on these chains belongs to the following two unreliable narrators:

The first is Musa bin 'Ubaydah al-Rabadhi, who is deemed by the leading hadith authorities to be *munkar al-hadith* and an extremely weak transmitter.

The second is Sa'id bin Abi Sa'id al-Ansari. In the view of the scholars of rijal, he is *majbul*, that is, an unknown narrator. Apart from the route in Shu'ab al-Iman of al-Bayhaqi, this unknown narrator occurs in the chains of all the remaining routes of this hadith cited above.

In light of the presence and status of these two narrators in its chains, it is established, from the standpoint of hadith science and in the judgment of the experts of rijal, that this hadith ascribed to Abu Rafi' (RA)—along with

all its aforementioned routes—is extremely weak (shadid al-da‘f) and unreliable. Accordingly, the hadith of Abu Rafi‘ can in no way be adduced as a proof for affirming, on the authority of the Prophet’s words, the legitimacy or recommended status (istihbab) of this prayer in religion.

2. The hadith of Abdullah bin Umar (RA)

The second verbal report regarding Salat al-Tasbih is narrated from Abdullah bin Umar (RA). In the hadith literature, this report appears for the first time towards the end of the fourth century AH when al-Hakim (d. 405 AH) recorded it in his work al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-Sahihayn, no. 1196. After al-Hakim, only al-Bayhaqi (d. 458 AH) mentions this report in the fifth century AH in his work al-Da‘awat al-Kabir, no. 445. Apart from these two works, all other hadith compilations are altogether devoid of the report of Abdullah bin Umar (RA) on the subject of Salat al-Tasbih.

Text of the Report

In *al-Mustadrak* of al-Hakim, no. 1196, the report is transmitted in the following wording:

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ، قَالَ: وَجَهَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ جَعْفَرَ بْنَ أَبِي طَالِبٍ إِلَى بَلَادِ الْحَشَّةَ، فَلَمَّا قَدِمَ أَعْنَتَهُ وَقَلَّ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: «أَلَا أَهْبُ لَكَ، أَلَا أَبْشِرُكَ، أَلَا أَمْنَحُكَ، أَلَا أَنْجِفُكَ؟»، قَالَ: نَعَمْ، يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: «صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَرْبَعَ رَكَعَاتٍ تَقْرَأُ فِي كُلِّ رَكْعَةٍ بِالْحَمْدِ وَسُورَةٍ، ثُمَّ تَقُولُ بَعْدَ الْقِرَاةِ وَأَنْتَ قَائِمٌ فَلَلِ الرُّكُوعِ: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَلَا أَكْبَرُ، وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ حَمْسَ عَشْرَةَ مَرَّةً، ثُمَّ تَرْكَعُ فَتَقُولُهُنَّ عَشْرًا تَمَامَ هَذِهِ الرَّكْعَةِ بِالرَّكْعَةِ الْثَّانِيَةِ، تَقْعُلُ فِي التَّلَاثَ رَكَعَاتٍ كَمَا وَصَفْتَ». أَلَّا حَقِّي ثُمَّ أَرْبَعَ رَكَعَاتٍ

“Abdullah bin Umar (RA) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) dispatched Jafar bin Abi Talib to the land of Abyssinia. When Jafar bin Abi Talib returned and came to meet the Prophet, he embraced him and kissed him between the eyes. Then he said: ‘Shall I not give you a gift? Shall I not convey to you glad tidings? Shall I not grant you something? Shall I not present you with a precious offering?’ He replied: ‘Certainly, O Messenger of Allah.’ The Prophet said: ‘You shall perform four rak‘ahs of prayer in such a manner that in every rak‘ah you recite al-Hamd (Surah al-Fatihah) and a surah, then after the recitation, while you are still standing and before going into ruku‘, you say fifteen times: “Subhana llah, wa-l-hamdu li-llah, wa la ilaha illa llah, wa llahu akbar, wa la hawla wa la quwwata illa bi-llah.” Then you bow and say these phrases ten times in the state of ruku‘. Before you begin the second rak‘ah, you complete the entire first rak‘ah by repeating these phrases at each posture in the manner I have described. You do likewise in the remaining three rak‘ahs until you complete four rak‘ahs.’”

Critical assessment of the chains of transmission and legal ruling on the report. With regard to the chain (isnad) of this report, al-Hakim has shown evident laxity, for after transmitting it he writes: **هَذَا إِسْنَادٌ صَحِيحٌ لَا عَيْنَارَ عَلَيْهِ** “This is a sound chain with no blemish upon it.” The reality, however, is otherwise. In both of the chains for this report, there are, in the judgment of the leading hadith scholars, two narrators who are unreliable:

The first is Ishaq bin Kamil al-Mu‘addibin. No authoritative act of accreditation (*tawthiq*) is established for him from the experts of *rijal*; rather, some of them explicitly state that it is not even known whether a narrator by this name ever actually existed. Abu Sa‘id bin Yunus al-Misri says concerning him: **لَمْ يَتَابِعْ فِي حَدِيثِهِ مَنْكِيرٌ** that is, he is a solitary (*mutafarrid*) narrator, no other transmitter is found to support or corroborate his reports, and there are *munkar* narrations in what he transmits.

The second is Ahmad bin Dawud Abd al-Ghaffar al-Harrani. Numerous authorities of *rijal* have described him as a *kadhdhab* (liar) and a fabricator of hadiths ascribed to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). Indeed, it is

established that senior pre-Hakim authorities such as Abu Hatim al-Razi, Ibn Hibban and Imam al-Daraqutni have all said about him: “يضع الحديث” “He used to fabricate hadith.”

In light of the foregoing details, it becomes plainly obvious that both of the chains for this hadith attributed to Abdullah bin Umar (RA) are, according to the principles of hadith science, *mawdu‘* – that is, fabricated. The distinctive nafl prayer called Salat al-Tasbih therefore cannot be established at all on the basis of this report either.

3. The Hadith of Jafar bin Abi Talib (RA)

The third report regarding Salat al-Tasbih is narrated from Jafar bin Abi Talib (RA) himself. This is transmitted only in the following two hadith works: In *al-Musannaf* of Abd al-Razzaq al-San‘ani (d. 211 AH), no. 5004, dating from the late second or early third century AH. In *Akhbar al-Salah* of Abd al-Ghani al-Maqdisi (d. 600 AH), no. 81, compiled in the late sixth century AH.

Text of the Report

The report attributed to Jafar bin Abi Talib (RA) is transmitted in *Musannaf* Abd al-Razzaq, no. 5004, in the following wording:

عَنْ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَهُ: «أَلَا أَهْبِطُ لَكَ؟ أَلَا أَمْنَحُكَ؟ أَلَا أَحْذُوكَ؟ أَلَا أُوْثِرُكَ؟ أَلَا؟»، حَتَّىٰ طَنَّتِ أَنَّهُ سَيَقْطَعُ لِي مَاءُ الْبَحْرَيْنِ، قَالَ: «تُصَلِّي أَرْبَعَ رَكَعَاتٍ تَقْرَأُ أَمَّ الْقُرْآنِ فِي كُلِّ رَكْعَةٍ وَسُورَةً، ثُمَّ تَثُوِّلُ: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، فَعُدَّهَا وَاحِدَةً حَتَّىٰ تَعْدَ خَمْسَ عَشَرَةَ مَرَّةً، ثُمَّ تَرْكُ فَقْتُولُهَا عَشْرَةً وَأَنْتَ رَاكِعٌ، ثُمَّ تَرْفَعُ فَقْتُولُهَا عَشْرَةً وَأَنْتَ رَافِعٌ، ثُمَّ تَسْجُدُ فَقْتُولُهَا عَشْرَةً وَأَنْتَ سَاجِدٌ، ثُمَّ تَرْفَعُ فَقْتُولُهَا عَشْرَةً وَأَنْتَ جَالِسٌ، ثُمَّ تَسْجُدُ فَقْتُولُهَا عَشْرَةً وَأَنْتَ سَاجِدٌ، ثُمَّ تَرْفَعُ فَقْتُولُهَا عَشْرَةً وَأَنْتَ جَالِسٌ، فَذَلِكَ تِلْكُ تِلْكُ مَائَةٌ مَحْمُوعَةٌ، وَإِذَا فَرَقْتَهَا كَانَتْ أَلْفًا وَمِائَتَيْنِ، تَصْنَعُهُنَّ فِي يَوْمَكَ أَوْ لَيْلَاتِكَ، أَوْ جُمُعَتَكَ، أَوْ فِي شَهْرٍ، أَوْ فِي سَنَةٍ، أَوْ فِي عُمْرِكَ، فَلَوْ كَانَتْ ذُنُوبُكَ عَدَدُ نُجُومِ السَّمَاءِ، أَوْ عَدَدُ الْقَطْرِ، أَوْ عَدَدُ زَمْلَكَ عَالِجِ، أَوْ عَدَدُ أَيَّامِ الدَّهْرِ، لَعَفَرَهَا اللَّهُ لَكَ».

It is narrated from Jafar bin Abi Talib (RA) that the Prophet (PBUH) said to him: ‘Shall I not give you something as a gift? Shall I not grant you something? Shall I not clothe you (with something precious)? Shall I not give you preference over others? Shall I not? Shall I not?’ (Jafar (RA) says:) He continued thus until I thought that he would allot to me the water of the two seas. Then he said: ‘You shall perform four rak‘abs of prayer. In each rak‘ab you recite Umm al-Quran (Surah al-Fatihah) and a surah, then you say: “al-hamdu li-llah, wa subhana llah, wa llahu akbar, wa la ilaha illa llah,” and count this as one, until you have counted it fifteen times. Then you bow and say them ten times while you are in ruku‘; then you rise and say them ten times while you are standing upright; then you prostrate and say them ten times while you are in sujud; then you rise and say them ten times while you are sitting; then you prostrate again and say them ten times while you are in sujud; then you rise and say them ten times while you are sitting. Thus (in every rak‘ab) these phrases are repeated seventy-five times. In the remaining three rak‘abs you do likewise. In this way, the total number amounts to three hundred when taken collectively; and if you separate the individual words (or phrases), they come to one thousand and two hundred. You may perform these four rak‘abs in your day or in your night, or on the day of Friday, or once in a month, or once in a year, or once in your lifetime. After that, even if your sins are as numerous as the stars in the sky, or as the drops of rain, or as the grains of sand in a great sand-hill, or as the days of time itself, Allah will surely forgive them for you.’

Critical assessment of the chains of transmission and legal ruling on the report

In *Musannaf* Abd al-Razzaq, no. 5004, there are two major defects (*‘ilal*) in the chain of this report:

1. Within it is a narrator named Ismael bin Rafi al-Ansari, who, in the view of the experts of rijal, is wholly unreliable. Several authorities of rijal have declared him weak (daif), while many eminent hadith scholars have described him as *munkar al-hadith* or *matruk al-hadith* (abandoned in hadith).
2. There is also an instance of *inqita'* (discontinuity) in this chain, meaning that the sequence of transmitters is not fully connected but is broken. The detail is that this aforementioned narrator, deemed *matruk al-hadith*, namely Ismael bin Rafi' al-Ansari, belongs to the seventh generation of transmitters (the *tabaqah* of the *tabi' al-tabi'in*), whereas in this chain he is shown reporting directly from Jafar bin Abi Talib (RA), the paternal cousin of the Prophet (PBUH), who was martyred in the eighth year after the Hijrah. It is therefore immediately apparent that this isnad is *munqati'* (disconnected), and the direct transmission of a report by Ismael from Jafar (RA) cannot in any way be accepted.

The second route of the hadith of Jafar, which is transmitted in the work *Akhbar al-Salah* by Abd al-Ghani al-Maqdisi, is even weaker and more dismissible than the first route in *Musannaf Abd al-Razzaq*. The reason is that, in addition to the two aforementioned defects, this chain contains yet another criticized narrator, whose kunyah is Abu Ma'shar and whose name is Najih bin Abd al-Rahman al-Sindi. The leading hadith scholars have graded him weak (daif) and a transmitter of *munkar* reports.

Besides this, there is a further discontinuity in this chain: the author, Abd al-Ghani bin Abd al-Wahid al-Maqdisi, was born in 541 AH, yet he is shown as transmitting this report directly from Said bin Mansur al-Khurasani, who died in 227 AH. It is thus evident that the chain is not broken in just one place but in two. Owing to this initial break in the chain, it becomes clear that, in terms of hadith methodology, this report is *mu'allaq* and is therefore to be rejected.

From the study of both chains of this hadith attributed to Jafar bin Abi Talib (RA), it is established that, in accordance with the principles of hadith science, this report too is extremely weak and unworthy of consideration. Consequently, it is by no means permissible to cite this report as a proof for the establishment of Salat al-Tasbih.

[To Be Continued]



A STUDY OF THE MUSNAD AHMAD - 3

Dr. Ammar Khan Nasir; Dr Muti Syed

The Musnad of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (RA)

Muti Sayyid: *Musnad Ahmad* opens with the narrations of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (RA). His transmitted reports are very few. The explanation one commonly hears is that, since he did not have much time after the death of the Prophet (PBUH), he did not get the opportunity to narrate many hadiths. However, he did in fact live for two and a half years thereafter, and his caliphate was a period of highly significant events. From that perspective, there should have been a large corpus of his narrations. In your view, what was the real reason that so few hadiths are reported from Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (RA)?

Ammar Nasir: There are two aspects to this. One is indeed what you have mentioned: after the Prophet (PBUH), he only had a span of about two and a half years. And even in that period his primary preoccupation was not teaching the religion to people or narrating hadiths. He was engrossed in fulfilling the responsibilities of the caliphate, administering the affairs of the polity, and consolidating the community. He was not fundamentally oriented toward scholarly activity, and in that respect it is natural that his narrations would be few.

The second point is that the leading Companions as a matter of principle did not regard it as their method to narrate hadiths in great abundance. Their practice was not to transmit every hadith they knew. Rather, the senior Companions would narrate a hadith only when a concrete need arose—for example, when a question was raised on some matter regarding which they knew of a prophetic hadith, they would then cite it in response. This was also the stance of Abu Bakr (RA). In particular, he was extremely averse to writing down hadiths for preservation. According to some reports, on one occasion he did have a number of important hadiths compiled, but later he burned that collection.

Muti Sayyid: If we look at the content of his narrations, they seem to concern rather simple matters. For the most part, he transmits words of counsel or supplications. On specific or sensitive issues his narrations are very few, even though, in principle, Abu Bakr (RA) could have been more knowledgeable of them than anyone else.

Ammar Nasir: I do not think that is quite correct. Many important issues arose before Abu Bakr (RA), and in dealing with them he did narrate hadiths. For instance, in the question of the caliphate being restricted to Quraysh, he cited the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) before the Ansar. When the question arose as to where the Prophet (PBUH) should be buried, it was Abu Bakr who reported the hadith that “a prophet is buried where he passes away,” and on that basis the burial place was chosen.

Later, when Fatimah (RA) came with a claim to the inheritance of Fadak and other landholdings, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (RA) refused her request, again on the basis of a hadith of the Prophet (PBUH). Further, when he decided upon warfare against the apostates, the famous hadith “*umirtu an uqatila al-nas*” came under detailed discussion. When he appointed Khalid bin al-Walid (RA) as commander in the campaigns against the apostates, he invoked the prophetic description of Khalid as “*sayf min suyuf Allah*” (“a sword from among the swords of God”).

Several important events of the Prophetic period are also transmitted on his authority. For example, al-Bara bin Azib specifically heard from him the account of the hijrah journey. Likewise, he is the one who narrates that at the hajj of year 9 AH, the Prophet (PBUH) first instructed him to make certain key proclamations concerning

the polytheists, but later sent Ali (RA) in his stead to carry them out. The incident of the stoning of Ma'iz is likewise narrated by him.

As for the prescribed rates of zakat on livestock, the Prophet (PBUH) had laid these down in detail, and Abu Bakr (RA) had them formally written out for his governors in the form of an official document. The hadith concerning people on the Day of Resurrection going to various prophets seeking intercession is transmitted at length from Abu Bakr (RA). The prophetic prediction that the Dajjal will emerge from Khurasan is also among his narrations. When he appointed Yazid bin Abi Sufyan as governor of Syria, he particularly conveyed to him the saying of the Prophet (PBUH) regarding the responsibility of a ruler. All of these narrations are related to major events and critical issues.

Muti Sayyid: It is reported that Abu Bakr gave a sermon in which he said: “You recite this Quranic verse and take from it an incorrect meaning:

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفَسُكُمْ ۝ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ۝ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبَّئُكُمُ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۝ (المائدہ ۵: ۱۰۵)

whereas we heard from the Prophet (PBUH) that when people see an evil and do not forbid it, it is near that Allah will encompass them all in His punishment.” Here Abu Bakr, in the light of the hadith, has made it clear that condemning evil is obligatory, but he has not explained how exactly people were misunderstanding the verse. What mistake were they making in taking its apparent meaning at face value?

Ammar Nasir: The apparent meaning people were taking from it was that a person should only worry about himself; if other people are committing evil, then objecting to that is not his responsibility. Clearly, that is not what the verse intends. Forbidding evil is an obligation in its own right; but once one has fulfilled that duty and people still do not reform and persist in wrongdoing, then the responsibility for that does not fall on those who have discharged their obligation.

Abu Bakr, by citing the hadith, is precisely correcting this misunderstanding. If we look at the verse in its textual context, it is not suggesting that believers have no responsibility with respect to enjoining right and forbidding wrong, or that they need not be concerned about those who fall into misguidance. In the preceding verse, the obstinacy of the disbelievers is highlighted: instead of accepting the word of God and His Messenger, they insist upon following their forefathers. In this context, the believers are told that, after conclusive communication of the truth, if these people still refuse to believe, then that is not the believers' liability, for the believers—at least in their own persons—have accepted guidance and are bound only to its requirements. God has not placed upon them the duty of dragging others by force onto the path of guidance.

Muti Sayyid: Fatimah (RA) came to Abu Bakr in Madinah and claimed the landed properties in Madinah and Fadak as part of the Prophet's (PBUH) estate. He refused and replied: إِنَّمَا يُكَلِّلُ الْمُحَمَّدَ فِي هَذَا الْمُلْكِ, meaning that from these properties the needs of the *Al Muhammad* will indeed be provided for, but they will not be distributed to them as inheritance. From this it is quite clear that he is taking *Al Muhammad* to mean the family of the Prophet (PBUH). Yet I have heard some people say that in the Ibrahimī salah (the Abrahamic formula of blessings) in which '*Al Muhammad*' occurs, what is meant is all Muslims. What is your view?

Ammar Nasir: The term *al* is in fact quite broad. It can apply to close family members, it is also used in the sense of offspring or progeny, as in the Quranic expressions *Al Imran* and *Al Ibrahim*, and it can be employed for followers as well, as in *Al Fir'aun* in the Quran. However, when used for followers, it is a kind of extended usage that requires a contextual indication. From a linguistic point of view, the primary usage of *al* is for one's immediate family—that is, spouse and children—or for subsequent generations, i.e. descendants. In the Ibrahimī salah, *Al Ibrahim* refers to the progeny of Ibrahim. By this analogy, *Al Muhammad* likewise refers to the

Prophet's own family and descendants. In some narrations, in place of *Al* we find the wording 'azwjahu wa dburriyyatuhu' ("his wives and his progeny"), which further clarifies this meaning.

Muti Sayyid: According to one report, when Abu Bakr, by citing the Prophet's (PBUH) statement, made it clear that these lands would not be distributed as inheritance, Fatimah (RA) responded that this was acceptable—since he had heard such a statement from the Prophet (PBUH), he knew the reality of the matter better. Yet another report states that even after this prophetic statement was presented, she did not withdraw her claim; rather, she was displeased with Abu Bakr's refusal and did not speak to him again until she passed away.

Ammar Nasir: Yes, these are two mutually conflicting accounts. The report about Fatimah (RA) that appears in al-Bukhari indicates that she did not accept Abu Bakr's clarification and was in fact angered by it to the point that she discontinued speaking to him. The details of why she was not satisfied are not before us, because the report preserves Abu Bakr's reasoning in a very clear way, but it does not convey what precisely Fatimah found unconvincing, or why she not only disagreed but became displeased.

However, in the *Musnad Ahmad* report you referred to, it is stated that Fatimah apparently accepted Abu Bakr's argument. Some other reports also mention that Abu Bakr succeeded in reconciling with Fatimah before his death. If this is correct, the difficulty is removed.

The Prophet's wives likewise initially considered claiming shares in these properties, but when Ayesah (RA) cited the same prophetic statement and advised them not to pursue it, they accepted her word. If Fatimah did, in the first instance, make such a claim, that is understandable; but if she remained displeased even after the hadith was brought to her attention, that does certainly give rise to a problem. Since the reports do not transmit the reasoning of the Ahl al-Bayt, it is outwardly difficult to understand how, despite this statement of the Prophet (PBUH), they continued to regard themselves as entitled heirs to these properties. It is possible that Fatimah differed with Abu Bakr not over the wording of the hadith but over its interpretation and application, and did not see it as excluding the distribution of those properties as inheritance.

After her, Abbas (RA) and Ali (RA) once again brought the same demand before Umar (RA). This also indicates that they did not agree with the stance of the caliphs. Yet from one of the great figures of the Ahl al-Bayt, Imam Zayd bin Ali, it is reported that he said: if I had been in Abu Bakr's position, I would have judged regarding Fadak exactly as he did.

Muti Sayyid: These lands were in two or three different locations: Khaybar, Fadak, and some lands in Madinah. Umar handed over the lands in Madinah to Ali and Abbas, but did not transfer Khaybar and Fadak. Were the caliphs unclear about the status of these lands, or were they making decisions based on their own *ijtihad*? If the lands in Madinah could be placed under the control of the Ahl al-Bayt, why could Khaybar and Fadak not also have been given to them?

Ammar Nasir: No, Umar did not transfer even the lands in Madinah to them as private property. In reality, after the death of Abu Bakr, both Ali and Abbas went to Umar, perhaps hoping that his assessment of the issue would differ. But he too refused on the same basis as Abu Bakr. Then Ali and Abbas proposed that in that case the lands would remain part of the public treasury (*bayt al-mal*), but their administration should be entrusted to them, and that they would manage them according to the established practice. On that condition, Umar placed the management of the Madinan lands in their hands: they were to continue providing for the needs of the Prophet's household from their yield, and whatever surplus remained was to be given in charity.

Later, disagreements arose between Abbas and Ali over the administrative handling of these lands, so they again brought the dispute before Umar, accompanied, as it were in the role of mediators, by a number of prominent

Companions, including Uthman and Abd al-Rahman bin Awf. In the course of this dispute, Abbas spoke very harshly about Ali—understandably, since he was his elder—and demanded that, because conflict had arisen between them, Umar should divide the lands between them for purposes of administration. Umar rejected this demand, fearing that such a division would in practice amount to recognizing those lands as privately owned property, apportioned as inheritance between the two.

Muti Sayyid: You mentioned that the claim to inheritance was not unique to Fatimah or Ali (RA); the Prophet's wives also expressed the same claim. Yet this aspect is generally not discussed.

Ammar Nasir: Essentially, any person who could reasonably have been regarded as a potential heir of the Prophet (PBUH) initially had this impression: that the lands from whose produce their needs were being met would, after his passing, devolve to them as their property. Hence the wives also intended to send a message asserting their claim, but Ayesah (RA) restrained them and explained that such property would not be theirs. Similarly, Fatimah came, and Abu Bakr gave her the same reply: that her understanding of the legal nature of these lands was not correct; they had not been granted as private property but as a means of providing for the Prophet (PBUH) and his household. The lands themselves remained part of the *bayt al-mal*, and from their yield their expenses were covered. Whatever surplus remained, the Prophet (PBUH) used to give in charity, and we too will continue to give it in charity. This was Abu Bakr's position. Thus, after initially making the claim once, the wives did not repeat it; they relinquished it. Because they did not persist and no political faction later formed itself around their names, they are rarely mentioned in this controversy. Had some political partisanship in the ummah crystallized around the claim of the Mothers of the Believers as well, we would no doubt still be debating today whether they had been deprived of their rightful share.

Muti Sayyid: It is reported of Umar bin Abd al-Aziz that he restored Fadak. To whom did he restore it?

Ammar Nasir: What Umar bin Abd al-Aziz actually did was to reverse the decision of Mu'awiyah and to reinstate the status of Fadak that it had possessed in the time of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. The reports state that Mu'awiyah had allotted the Fadak lands to Marwan. From Marwan they passed successively to his sons Abd al-Malik and Abd al-Aziz, and from there to Umar bin Abd al-Aziz. When this happened, he investigated what the status of this land had been in the Prophet's time and, having ascertained that, decided that he would not keep it as his personal property but would return it to the public treasury as state land.

Muti Sayyid: Can we then say that Umar bin Abd al-Aziz regarded the decision of Mu'awiyah (RA) as wrong or illegitimate and therefore reversed it?

Ammar Nasir: No, from a strictly legal perspective one cannot describe the act of allotting it as unlawful. It was land belonging to the *bayt al-mal*, and as ruler he possessed the administrative discretion to grant such land to whomever he wished. The Prophet (PBUH) himself had allotted many pieces of state land to individuals. What is reported from Umar bin Abd al-Aziz is that he said: in the Prophet's own lifetime, Fatimah (RA) had requested this land from him, but he did not grant it to her and kept it as part of the *bayt al-mal*; and thereafter the caliphs also maintained that status for it. From this angle, Umar bin Abd al-Aziz felt that if the Prophet (PBUH) himself had not given this land to Fatimah, then he too had no moral claim to it, and that it was better to preserve it as public land of the *bayt al-mal*, just as the Prophet (PBUH) had done.

[To be continued]

Naeem Ahmad Baloch

With the launch of the journal *Mithaq*, Maulana Islahi acquired an excellent platform through which he could both offer constructive critique and present proposals for the moral and intellectual betterment of the community. In its editorials, he articulated his vision with great clarity, and in this connection, he wrote a number of seminal essays. Among them, the following are particularly noteworthy:

- Ma'ashray ki Islah (The Reform of Society),
- Ahl-i Siyasat ke Tor Tariqe (Methods and Conduct of Political Actors),
- Inqilabi Tariqa-e-Kar (The Revolutionary Method),
- Tahrik aur Propaganda (Movement and Propaganda),
- Din ke Karm ke Liye Iltizam-e-Jamaat (Organizational Commitment for Religious Work),
- Dini Talim o Tarbiyat ke Idaron ka Qiyam (The Establishment of Institutions for Religious Education and Training),
- Tahaffuz-e-Din ka Ek Mansuba (A Plan for the Protection of Religion).

The essence of Maulana Islahi's position in these writings may be summarized in the following points:

It is imperative, given the concrete and prevailing circumstances of Pakistan, that political stability be established in the country. No existing political party possesses the capacity to form a government that can genuinely secure such stability. For religious parties and the various groups and personalities engaged in religious work, electoral politics is a futile and ultimately harmful pursuit. Their primary task, in his view, should be to work positively for the dissemination of religious consciousness among the people. For this purpose, they ought to establish institutions in which Islam can be taught free from factional and partisan biases. Such groups can never hope to acquire the kind of political clout that would carry them to the corridors of power. If they plunge into fruitless electoral contests, they will inevitably be driven into all manner of dubious compromises, unethical tactics, and shameful accommodations. In doing so, they will ruin their hereafter and, at the same time, lose dignity and credibility in society.

Not only in different cities of Pakistan but also among Muslim communities abroad, modern-educated young people should be given such an understanding of Islam as is genuinely serviceable for them, so that, in their respective professions and fields, they may be able to provide exemplary guidance and work for constructive change in every stratum of society.

In this connection, we reproduce below an excerpt from his article *Tahaffuz-e-Din ka Ek Mansuba*:

We appeal to every Muslim in this country who is concerned about the future of Islam to reflect on this issue above and beyond all group and party prejudices, and to withhold nothing—by way of effort or sacrifice—that he can contribute to this cause... At this juncture, it is also necessary that an educational and training council be established which, for the time being, should devote itself to the following tasks:

1. *The establishment of a college or training institute which integrates both Arabic and English, whose faculty comprises scholars of both the traditional and modern sciences who are at the same time conscious of the religious significance of their disciplines.*

2. *The establishment of a Dar al-Tasnif (center for authorship and research) which would prepare high-quality works on all those questions that arise today from the encounter and conflict between modern thought and philosophy and Islam, and which would further undertake their publication and dissemination.*
3. *The establishment of a center for the reform of society which would adopt all appropriate measures currently possible to arrest the moral decline of society and to work for its rectification.*

For these tasks, cooperation is required from three categories of people. First and foremost, from those who fully appreciate the importance of this objective and are prepared to devote their full effort and energy to realizing it. Second, from such men of learning as possess the intellectual capacity for any one of the activities mentioned above and are ready to dedicate their abilities to it, irrespective of whether their background is in traditional or modern education. Third, from those who are in a position to provide capital and resources for these objectives and are willing to expend their wealth and deploy their means lillah wa fi sabilillah for them.

Although, outwardly, these appear to be three distinct kinds of work and require three different categories of personnel, the spirit animating all these endeavors and the ultimate objective of all these individuals will be one and the same: that we should renew our covenant of servitude to God ourselves and invite His servants to renew theirs. Whether it is education and training, or writing and authorship, or preaching and da'wah, or the struggle for social reform, in every activity the same spirit ought to permeate.” (Maqalat-e-Islahi 1/313)

Maulana Islahi's proposals were taken very seriously by like-minded scholars and his perceptive friends. They invited him to found a nationwide organization on these very foundations. In the light of his bitter earlier experience with Jamaat-i Islami, however, he excused himself and stated that he did not consider it appropriate for himself to assume responsibility for such an enterprise. Under the title *Ek Nayi Dini Tanzim ki Zarurat* (The Need for a New Religious Organization), he wrote in one of his articles:

*In any case, we regard the need for such an organization as a natural demand of the times. If some of God's servants take steps in this direction, we shall gladly welcome them. We will cooperate with them, and we shall join forces with them by contributing whatever capacities and abilities we possess. At the same time, we wish, without any reserve, to state that the religious tasks which we currently have in view do not permit us to go beyond participation and cooperation to the point of directly assuming responsibility for such an organization. The work that we have already taken upon ourselves is quite sufficient to exhaust our energies. In our own estimation, these are not tasks that can be set aside or treated as secondary. At present we regard the completion of the exegesis *Tadabbur-e-Quran* and the endeavor to equip intellectually capable, modern-educated young people with religious knowledge as absolutely indispensable undertakings. Our impression is that God Almighty has granted us a modest measure of aptitude for these tasks.*

When a person works in accordance with his God-given abilities and is sincere, God bestows blessing upon that work. In our judgment, it is not possible for ordinary people to rise, in the manner of prophets, bearing the whole of religion upon their shoulders; to speak frankly, we consider such an ambition to be a kind of delusion. For people like us, it is quite enough if we can render some small service to the religion and the community in proportion to our abilities. If, through this, we are able with our own hands to fix even a single dislodged brick in the foundation of the ummah, that may perhaps suffice for our salvation. You may call this narrowness of ambition or the bitterness of experience, but rather than losing everything in the pursuit of 'having it all,' safety seems to lie in this: that, out of the innumerable avenues of service to the Muslim

community, we take up only that work for which we feel some capacity within ourselves. (Maqalat-e-Islahi 1/96-97)

At this point we cannot refrain from adding that, if only Maulana Islahi had thought in precisely these terms at the time when he left Madrasat al-Islah to accept Maulana Sayyid Abu al-Ala Maududi's invitation to Pathankot. By all means, he might have joined the Jamaat, but it would have been better had he cooperated in the very manner that he later chose in 1962. At the same time, it is a harsh reality that the atmosphere of the madrasa had ceased to be congenial for him, and that Maulana Maududi's insistence had become so intense that, albeit with some reluctance, he agreed to leave Madrasat al-Islah.

By that time, that is, by 1961, Maulana Islahi had already begun teaching according to his own carefully designed plan and curriculum to Khalid Masud and his associates. In this regard he wrote a full article in *Mithaq* under the title *Halqa-e Tadabbur-e-Quran*. An excerpt from this piece is presented below:

The 'Circle for the Contemplative Study of the Quran' is the realization of a long-standing dream of ours. For many years we have held the view that, if there is any viable strategy left to protect religion in our country from the new dangers that threaten it, it is that we should produce such scholars who possess insight into both religion and the world, and who, armed with modern intellectual tools, are able to serve the cause of religion on every front. The older generation of scholars in our community who, in terms of their learning and erudition, were truly reliable are departing from this world one by one. Those few who remain are now in the position of the fading light of dawn. The traditional institutions from which such scholars once emerged have, it is true, always been in a pitiable state, but now their helplessness and marginalization have reached such a point that their existence and non-existence are almost equivalent.

The entire attention of our community has shifted to modern education and, through it, to government employment. These religious seminaries have been reduced to refuges for orphans and the destitute who have nowhere else to go. The administrators of these institutions are, for the most part, so rigid that they are not readily prepared to accept any change or reform. Even if some of them do become willing, their resources are so meagre that they are unable to implement even the most modest reform program in practical terms...

Because of my other preoccupations, I avoided for a long time taking direct responsibility for this kind of work. Yet the sheer gravity of this need finally compelled me to devote some time to it. Accordingly, I formed a circle consisting of those appreciators of religious knowledge who constantly used to visit me. Without any invitation on my part, a substantial number of students joined this circle, most of whom are highly educated. Not more than six months have elapsed since the establishment of this circle, and I myself do not devote more than two hours a day to it, and yet the results I see before me lead me to conclude that, if these students are able to remain associated with me for three years, then, within the limited time I give them, I shall at least be able to bring them to a level where they can directly benefit from those sources and grapple with those problems in reflection, research and critical inquiry from which I myself benefit.

During this period I have taught them Arabic in a simple manner and, alongside it, a number of suras of the Quran and selected ahadith from Sahih Muslim. In the Quranic lessons, I have dealt with all the discussions that are indispensable at the introductory stage: lexical analysis, grammar, language, style, coherence (nazm), interpretation of verses, and derivation of legal rulings. The more subtle discussions concerning proofs and wisdom I have not yet raised; life permitting, I intend to include them to an appropriate extent in the second and third years so that they may also become acquainted with the Quran's philosophy, its theology, and its wisdom.

In the hadith lessons I chose Sahib Muslim because, for the understanding of its contents, its arrangement is exceptionally wise. In these lessons I have discussed all the topics necessary for students of hadith. I have also, as needed, introduced them to the terminology and principles of the discipline. In matters of creed and law, I have familiarized them with the perspectives and arguments of the jurists and the theologians. The doubts and objections that are levelled nowadays against hadith have been kept especially in view during the lessons, and I have tried to dispel them. Since the minds of these students are free and independent, they present their doubts and questions with complete openness, and I actively encourage this freedom.

By God's grace, in this period every kind of question has been raised, yet on no issue have they remained unconvinced. To assess the results of my efforts, I have myself, from time to time, put questions to them, and, by way of expressing gratitude for God's favor, I state that their answers have proven far more promising than I had expected. I have taught advanced students of Arabic and the religious sciences Quran, literature, and the philosophy of history for something like fourteen years, yet I was never as satisfied with the outcomes as I am with the results of this modest endeavor. (Maqalat-e-Islahi 1/317-318)

[To be continued]



FLORA AND FAUNA

Dr. Khursheed Rizvi

Some researchers are of the view that in earlier historical periods Arabia did not suffer from a scarcity of water and vegetation; rather, after the post-glacial times, moisture gradually evaporated from the land and arid deserts expanded. Other scholars have rejected this thesis. In their opinion, there has been no significant climatic transformation in the Peninsula as such; what has occurred is an expansion of desert areas due to administrative neglect and failure of environmental management. The arguments advanced by both groups are substantial and merit careful consideration. However, the botanical and zoological investigation carried out by the German orientalist Bernard Moritz in 1923 has lent support to the former view. According to his findings, the flora and fauna of Arabia have suffered a clear, progressive decline over successive periods, the principal causes being the increase in aridity and the encroachment of the desert upon arable lands. A modern, scientific study of Arabian plant and animal life is still far from complete. Classical Arabic literature preserves a very long list of plants and animals, the detailed examination of which would require a separate monographic study. Many of these plants and animals are associated with particular literary traditions and symbolic connotations; some brief, cursory indications of these will appear on the following pages.

Many species of Arabian flora and fauna have now disappeared. Among animals, for instance, the ostrich (na‘am: ostrich) is widely mentioned in early literature and is treated as an emblem of swift movement. Until 1930 it still existed in considerable numbers, but thereafter large-scale hunting for its feathers led to intensive slaughter, so that by around 1944 the species had effectively become extinct in Arabia.

The Arabian oryx (بقر الوحش، مها: oryx), which constitutes a fixed motif in the nasib or amatory prelude of pre-Islamic odes—its herds evoked as wandering through the deserted encampments of the beloved—disappeared from the northern desert, that is, the Nafud, as a result of hunting. In some parts of the Empty Quarter (*al-Rub‘ al-Khali*), however, remnants of the population survived. In 1961, under the auspices of an international fund for the protection of wildlife, some breeding pairs were transported from the last thirty or so Arabian oryx to the Phoenix Zoo in Arizona, where their numbers increased and efforts began to reintroduce them elsewhere in the world. Campaigns for their conservation and propagation were also launched in Arab countries. Thus, in 1979, by order of Sultan Qaboos, the “Arabian Oryx Project” (*mashru‘ al-maha al-‘arabiyyah*) was established in Oman, which works not only for the oryx but for several other endangered species—for example, the Arabian leopard. Similarly, in 1986 the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD – *al-hay‘ah al-wataniyyah li-himayat al-hayah al-fatriyyah*) was created in Saudi Arabia, and it has been systematically implementing its programs ever since.

Various species of gazelle (ظبي، رэм و غيره) that once roamed in vast herds have declined rapidly since the advent of the rifle. The lion (أساد: شير) has now disappeared altogether. Leopards and panthers (نمر: panther, فهد: leopard) survive to some extent, and wildcats are still found in mountainous regions. The ibex (أيل: ibex), the striped hyena (نعل: hyena), the wolf (ذئب), the fox (ثعلب), the monkey (قرد), and the jackal (ابن آوى) still exist.

The polecat or skunk (ظربان: polecat / skunk), the hyrax (وبرا: cony or hyrax), the hedgehog (خارموش، قنفذ)

hedgehog), the hare (ارنب: hare / rabbit), the spiny-tailed lizard (ضب: *dhabb*), and among wild rodents *yarbu'* (بربوع: *jerboa*) and *jurad* (جراد) likewise continue to be found.

Among birds one encounters eagles, falcons, crows, sparrows, owls, vultures, larks (قبره: lark), doves, pigeons, partridges, quails, bulbuls, sand-grouse (قطعة: sand-grouse), and the hoopoe (بُبُول), which is frequently mentioned in early Arabic literature. Many migratory species also pass regularly through these regions. Among insects and related creatures, various species of snakes, scorpions, centipedes, spiders, ants, bees, and locusts are particularly important. Locusts constitute a favoured food among desert dwellers.

Domesticated animals include the camel, horse, sheep and goats, mules, donkeys, cats, dogs (especially the swift hunting dog *al-saluqi*), and cattle, whose size is reduced under Arabian climatic conditions.

Of all these animals, the camel has enjoyed a central and defining importance in Arabian society over millennia—a position only displaced by contemporary mechanical means of transport. Even today, however, travel in the deep desert is virtually impossible without camels. Yet, because of the transformation of Bedouin economy, sheep and goats have now become more profitable than camels, so that their numbers are increasing while camel herds are gradually diminishing. Otherwise, not only in antiquity but until very recent times it was virtually impossible to form an adequate idea of the role of the camel in Bedouin life. Bedouins rode them, loaded their tents on them, drank their milk, ate their meat, and fashioned tents and clothing from their hides and wool, putting them to countless uses. Their dung served as fuel. Clothing and other necessities were purchased by selling camels, and for a long period camels themselves functioned as a kind of circulating currency in day-to-day transactions. In times of extreme thirst and water shortage, the Bedouin would slaughter a camel and obtain a reserve of water from its stomach. For all these reasons the camel has been called “the Bedouin’s alter ego”. In a similar vein, Sprenger described the Bedouin as “the parasite of the camel”. It is therefore not surprising that Arabic possesses hundreds of terms for the camel and that the great masterpieces of early poetry are replete with its descriptions. Different breeds of camel exist, and the most highly prized are those that can go longest without water and maintain good speed over long daily distances. A camel of good breed can in summer cover an average of twenty-five miles a day for three or four days without drinking. In spring, when pasturage is available, it can sometimes go for a full month without water, and when water is at last found it can drink up to thirty gallons at once and store it for future use. It is because of such extraordinary qualities and such hardiness that the camel has earned the title “ship of the land” (*safinat al-barr*) or “the ship of the desert” (*safinat al-sahra*).

After the camel, the horse has been the most important animal. It is ubiquitous in Arabic literature. The Arabian horse, though now renowned throughout the world, is not originally native to Arabia; rather, it was brought there from elsewhere in remote antiquity. However, once in Arabia its bloodline remained largely free from admixture, so its breed retained great purity. Because the horse feels thirst quickly and requires good quality fodder, horse-keeping was always an expensive pursuit among the Arabs. Bedouins would often quench their own thirst with camel’s milk and save scarce water for the horse, and at times even give priority to the horse’s thirst over that of their own children. The chief reason for accepting such hardship in raising horses was their military value. In intertribal warfare, whether for attack or defense, the horse was more effective than the camel. Its second importance was commercial: Arabian horses were exported to India, Egypt, and Western lands. Since these two functions have now disappeared, the Arabian horse itself is gradually dying out. On the one hand, modern weaponry has erased its significance in warfare; on the other, demand abroad has steadily declined. In addition, the discovery of petroleum has transformed the Arab economy from the ground up; consequently, horse-breeding among desert dwellers has almost vanished, surviving only as a personal aristocratic hobby among royal families and wealthy elites—and now, with the abundance of motor cars, it is highly probable that even this residual role is breathing its last.

When one thinks of the plant life of Arabia, the image that generally comes to mind is that of the date palm. In reality, given its all-embracing utility, the date palm stands on one side and the rest of the Arabian flora on the other. Against the backdrop of burning sands, the oases it creates appear as genuine earthly paradises. For settled populations, the date palm has held the same status that the camel has enjoyed among Bedouins. Dates are a richly nutritious, ready-to-eat food which, together with milk, formed part of the staple daily diet of the Arabs for centuries. Once dried, they can be preserved for long periods. Date wine (*nabidh*) is prepared from dates. The pits, when crushed, are fed to camels. The trunks are used in building houses; although the wood is not of the highest quality, it can nevertheless serve for modest furniture. The bark and fronds, besides providing fuel, have been used for roofing, for weaving baskets and mats, and for countless other purposes. Because the date palm thrives in intense heat and can grow even with brackish or poor water, it is, like the camel in the desert environment, a low-cost yet highly valuable divine gift. In the orchards of the settled population, rows of date palms have the same economic importance as camel herds do for the Bedouins. As a result, the Arabic language contains a proliferation of synonyms for the date similar to that for the camel. Different stages in the development of the date have different names: the unripe date is *lawni* (لون), the half-ripe *busr* (بُسْر), the fully ripe fresh date *rutab* (رُطَاب), and the dried fruit *tamr* (تمْر). There are innumerable varieties of date; in Madinah alone, some one hundred and forty types have been counted. Dates are still regarded, along with Zamzam water, as the quintessential gift from the Haram. The special importance of the date is beyond dispute, yet Arabian plant life is by no means confined to it.

Among trees, two varieties of tamarisk known as *ghada* and *athl* (غضّاء، أثْل: tamarisk) are prominent. The *athl* is planted in rows around settlements and fields to form windbreak hedges that check sandstorms. The wood of *ghada* is very hard, and its charcoal burns for a long time and is slow to go out; hence the expression *jamr al-ghada* (the embers of *ghada*), which occurs frequently in Arabic literature. The *talh* tree, that is, acacia or babul (بِبُول / كِبِير), is also widespread and yields gum. The carob (*kharub* or *kharnub*: carob) is likewise significant. In addition, the *sidr* (سدر: lote or berry tree) is common, as is *juniper* ('ارَار: juniper), already mentioned earlier. In Zafar and some other regions, coconut palms grow either in place of, or alongside, date palms. In some places, the *mukl* or *dum* tree (مُقْل، دُوم: gingerbread tree) has taken the place of the date. It is closely related to the date palm but has, instead of a single trunk, a multi-branched stem. Beyond these there are hundreds of arboreal and herbaceous plants mentioned in early Arabic sources. In recent decades, the neem tree has taken firm root in Arabia and is known by the same name. In the plain of *Arafat*, rows of neem have been planted for the convenience and shade of pilgrims.

The land of Arabia is not devoid of flowers and fruits. Among flowers are roses, jasmine, *naz-bu*, mint (نعناع: mint), wild desert thyme (صعتر / زعتر: thyme), *khuzama* (خزامي: lavender), and several other aromatic blossoms. The chamomile (uqhuwan: گل بابونه, chamomile) is often invoked in similes, for example to evoke glistening white teeth. Fruits include grapes, figs, almonds, oranges, lemons, apricots, peaches, pomegranates, apples, watermelons, melons, plums, jujubes, *unnab*, tamarind, quinces, and, here and there, mangoes and bananas as well. Clearly, these plants were introduced from outside, many of them probably brought from northern regions by the ancient Nabataeans and Jewish communities and then cultivated locally. Fruit trees are generally planted in the inter-rows of date palm orchards, using the ground space between the palm lines. Among vegetables, the principal items are radish, gourd, cucumber, onion, and leek (گندنا، گراث: leek). Wheat, barley, maize, millet, tobacco, rice, and, on a modest scale, cotton are cultivated in certain areas. *Berseem* (Egyptian clover) is widely planted as fodder.

Among desert plants, *senna* (*sana*), aloe (گیوکار: aloe), and *samh*—whose seeds are used to prepare porridge—are noteworthy, as is the truffle (*kam'ah*, حِمَاء: “snake mushroom” / truffle), which forms part of the Bedouin diet and

has numerous local names. The arak tree (اراک: *peelu*) is also important: its twigs serve as *miswak* (tooth-sticks) and provide excellent fodder for camels. Likewise, the cactus (نگ پھنی، صنیر یا صبار: *cactus*) is a good camel fodder, despite its bitterness and thorns. It is precisely such hardiness in both plant and animal that makes the camel the characteristic creature of the desert. A similar cactus-like plant, *thohar* (Euphorbia of cactiform type), is also found in the desert.

Near Hadramawt, in the region of Mahrah, frankincense has continued to be produced from ancient times down to the present. Alongside frankincense, myrrh (murr: *myrrh*) and balsam or balm (balsam) are also of note. Among plants that yield dyes are wars (ورس), henna (حناء), and indigo (بنیل). In addition to all of these, coffee (*qabwah*) merits special mention. It figures prominently among the exports of Yemen. There is no reference to it in early historical and literary sources. The probable hypothesis is that the coffee plant was brought from Abyssinia to southern Arabia in the fourteenth century CE. The first explicit textual references appear in writings of the sixteenth century. In any case, in the contemporary social life of Arabia—both among Bedouins and settled populations—coffee has pride of place among the customary refreshments. No gathering for eating or drinking is considered complete without it, and among desert dwellers verses are recited in praise of coffee in much the same way as pre-Islamic poets composed odes in praise of wine. With this in view, Philip K. Hitti aptly referred to coffee as “the wine of Islam”.

For details, see:

- (1) Enc. Brit., 2:175–76, Arabia; Fauna, Flora.
- (2) Enc. Isl., 1:540–42, Djazirat al-‘Arab, Flora & Fauna.
- (3) Hitti, 18–22.
- (4) Geo. Fact., 55–88, 103–106.

[To be continued...]



NEWSLETTER - AL-MAWRID US

ISTIFSAR — WITH DR. AMMAR KHAN NASIR

A new question-and-answer series titled “*Istifsar — With Dr. Ammar Khan Nasir*” has been launched under the banner of the Ghamidi Center. In this program, Dr. Ammar Khan Nasir, a scholar at the Ghamidi Center, responds to academic and intellectual queries. Some of the key questions posed in the November 2025 sessions include: “Under what circumstances may one leave a particular sect for another?” “Is it permissible to use the term *kafir* for non-Muslims?” “Has conclusive communication of the truth (*itmam-e-hujjah*) already occurred for non-Muslims?” and “Is the establishment of an Islamic state a religious necessity?” Recordings of these sessions are available on the Ghamidi Center’s YouTube channel.

ASK GHAMIDI

This is an online Q&A session designed to allow participants to obtain direct answers from Javed Ahmed Ghamidi regarding questions related to religious and ethical matters that arise in their minds. Each month, a large audience engages in this session. Prominent questions asked in November 2025 include: “Who inherits if a person leaves behind neither children nor siblings?” “What is the true nature of an oath?” “What is the expiation for failing to fulfil a vow?” and “Do the sins of followers fall upon their leaders?” Recordings of these sessions are available on the Ghamidi Center’s YouTube channel.

IS RELIGION EASY OR DIFFICULT?

In November 2025, Muhammad Hassan Ilyas was invited to the popular YouTube program “Lunch with Lillas”, where he delivered an extensive discussion on the theme “Is Religion Easy or Difficult?” He elucidated several aspects of religion in a contemporary context and provided well-reasoned answers to the host Ms. Mah Noor’s questions. Some of the significant queries addressed in the discussion include: “Are men and women equal in Islam?” “Is covering the face obligatory in Islam?” and “Is ablution valid over nail polish?” The recording of this program is available on the Ghamidi Center’s YouTube channel.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAM SHAH WALIULLAH’S WORK

This article by Syed Manzoor ul-Hassan is based on Javed Ahmed Ghamidi’s lectures. The author highlights the scholarly stature of Shah Waliullah and the foundational significance of his intellectual method. It is explained that religion is generally understood through two major approaches: the Salafi method—rooted in the outward compliance with divine commands—and the method of jurisprudence and reflection, which views religion as a coherent system of thought. Imam Shah Waliullah’s remarkable contribution lies in his deep appreciation of the Salafi tradition while standing within the reflective juristic tradition, harmonizing both approaches with profound wisdom. His work resolved many internal tensions within religious thought and presented a unified and balanced intellectual framework. Consequently, scholars across both intellectual traditions regard him as an authoritative figure. This essay appeared in last month’s issue of Ishraq America.

WEEKLY LESSONS IN QURAN AND HADITH

During the November 2025 sessions of the Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's ongoing live lessons in Quran and Hadith, organized by the Ghamidi Center, he taught verses 59–70 of Surah al-Hajj. In the Hadith lessons, he discussed traditions concerning the dreams of the Prophet (PBUH). Key topics addressed include: "Angels conversing with the Prophet in a dream," "The angel showing Ayshah (RA) to the Prophet (PBUH) in a dream," "The Prophet seeing himself in battle attire," and "The migration toward the city of dates." Recordings of these lessons are available on the Ghamidi Center's YouTube channel.

AFKAR-E-GHAMIDI

Afkar-e-Ghamidi is a weekly program on the Ghamidi Center's YouTube channel in which Syed Manzoor ul-Hassan, editor of Ishraq America, explains and elucidates the ideas of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi. The program discusses various themes in an accessible manner. The episodes broadcast in November 2025 were titled: "The True Responsibility of Scholars," "The Reality of Seal upon the Hearts," and "Is a Fatwa a Verdict or an Opinion?" These episodes are available on the YouTube channel.

THE CORRECT CONCEPT OF AL-KHARAJ BIL-ZAMAN

In this article, Muhammad Hassan Ilyas critically examines the conventional juristic interpretation of al-kharaj bil-Zaman and clarifies its original meaning. The article explains that the report intends only to convey that entitlement to profit belongs to the one who assumes responsibility and liability for a given thing. Later jurists, however, reduced it to a principle pertaining merely to financial loss. The author argues that this reading is linguistically, contextually, and contractually untenable, since each transaction establishes its own form of responsibility, and profit arises from the interplay of those distinct responsibilities. This article appeared in the November 2025 issue of Ishraq America.

"TAFHEM AL-ATHAR" SERIES

Under the Ghamidi Center's supervision, the program "Tafhim al-Athar" presents explanatory discussions on the reports and practices of the Companions and Successors, along with Q&A sessions based on selected narrations. The program is hosted by Dr. Syed Muti ur-Rahman, while Dr. Ammar Khan Nasir participates as a guest scholar. Topics discussed in November 2025 include: "The Companions' reluctance toward writing Hadith," "Causes of the appearance of false claimants to prophethood," "Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq's letter to the apostates," "The Companions' diligence in documenting Hadith," and "Compilation of Hadith and the role of the Umayyad rulers." These sessions are available on the Ghamidi Center's YouTube channel.

ENGLISH SUMMARY OF 'ITMAM-E-HUJJAH'

In his 23-Objections video series, Mr. Shehzad Saleem is providing English summaries of all topics discussed thus far. In November 2025, he delivered the summary of the topic "Itmam-e-Hujjah." Recordings are accessible on the Ghamidi Center's YouTube channel.

MAULANA ISLAHI'S DEPARTURE FROM JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI AND HIS NEW SCHOLARLY ENGAGEMENTS

Last month's episode of Hayat-e-Amin sheds light on Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi's departure from Jamaat-e-Islami and his subsequent intellectual endeavors. Citing his letter to Maulana Maududi, the article outlines the context of his resignation resulting from ideological and administrative differences. It then discusses his new scholarly pursuits, his training of young students, and the launch of the monthly journal Misaq. It also summarizes his academic critique of Jamaat-e-Islami's policy during the 1965 presidential elections, which reflects his intellectual independence and principled stance.

FAITH AND BELIEFS

As part of the Meezan Lecture Series, Dr. Shehzad Saleem continues teaching Dr. Ghamidi's book Meezan in English so that English-speaking audiences may also benefit. In November 2025, he recorded two lectures on the theme "Faith and Beliefs." These are available on the Ghamidi Center's YouTube channel.

THE GHAMIDI CENTER'S ONLINE SPIRITUAL KHANQAH

In the sessions of the ongoing online spiritual retreat (khanqah) organized by the Ghamidi Center, key topics discussed last month included: "The role of prayer in life," "Giving charity after one is afflicted by the evil eye," "The evolution of faith," "Inclination from faith toward superstition," and "The seven dimensions of human potential." Recordings are available on the Center's YouTube channel.

ISLAM STUDY CIRCLE

Every month, Dr. Shehzad Saleem conducts a session under the title Islam Study Circle. He discusses various religious, ethical, and social themes in the light of the Quran and Hadith. The session comprises three parts: explanation of a selected Quranic theme; discussion on selected Prophetic traditions; and analysis of a passage from the Bible. The session concludes with answers to participants' questions. Topics discussed last month included: "A servant of God," "Some precious qualities," "The burden of obedience to God," and "A bad habit I wish to discard." The session is conducted in English, and recordings are available on the institution's YouTube channel.

ILM O HIKMAT: GHAMIDI KAY SAATH

In the weekly programs of Ilm o Hikmat: Ghamidi Kay Saath broadcast on Dunya News in November 2025, some of the key questions addressed include: "How can the causes of error in understanding the truth be mitigated?" "Is the issue of raising the hands in prayer a matter of truth and falsehood?" "How can intellectual and practical harmony be established between consultative governance and Western democracy?" and "What is the evidence that political order must arise through consultation?" The recordings are available on the institution's YouTube channel.

DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM'S ONLINE PRIVATE CONSULTATION SESSIONS

Dr. Shehzad Saleem conducts monthly online private consultation sessions in which participants seek guidance concerning personal and family matters. More than forty such sessions were held last month, during which participants sought advice regarding parental challenges and adolescent issues.

ISSUANCE OF FATWAS BASED ON RELIGIOUS OPINIONS

People frequently approach the Ghamidi Center of Islamic Learning, Al-Mawrid USA, regarding legal applications of the Shariah. They often require applied opinions concerning marriage and divorce, inheritance, and various social and economic matters. Several such fatwas were issued last month. These were prepared by Muhammad Hassan Ilyas in light of the thought of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi.

TEACHING OF AL-BAYAN IN ENGLISH

Continuing his English-language instruction of Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's Quranic exegesis Al-Bayan, Dr. Shehzad Saleem delivered lessons on verses 153–165 of Surah al-Anam (6) in November 2025. The purpose of this initiative is to make the understanding of Al-Bayan accessible to English-speaking scholars and students. Recordings of these sessions are available on the Ghamidi Center's YouTube channel.

ASK DR. SHEHZAD SALEEM

Every month, Dr. Shehzad Saleem conducts a live Q&A session in which he responds to questions on various religious, ethical, and social themes. Participants may pose their questions in either Urdu or English. Recordings of these sessions are available on the Ghamidi Center's YouTube channel.

