

COMMENTARY ON THE
**FORTY
HADITH**
OF AL-NAWAWI

Volume
1

شرح الأربعين النووية

Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo

*Introduction by
Dr. Jaafar Sheik Idris*



Commentary
on the *Forty Hadith of*
al-Nawawi

Volume 1

By
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Introduction by Dr. Jaafar Sheikh Idris

All praises are due to Allah. I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah. I also bear witness that Mu-hammad is His servant and messenger. To proceed:

This is a great commentary on a great book. Br. Jamaal Zarabozo is to be congratulated for producing such a learned work. He is also to be thanked for giving the English speaking students of Islam the chance to taste the flavor of in-depth knowledge of hadith, a flavor that has been up to now the prerogative of speakers of Islamic languages, especially Arabic. He is also to be commended for choosing al-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith* because they are known to be among the most important sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In-depth knowledge of them is thus sure to give the reader, even if he or she is a novice, a comprehensive view of the most fundamental Islamic beliefs and principles. No wonder that this book has been for hundreds of years among the most popular of Islamic books in the Muslim world. It is to be found today in its original Arabic or in many other languages in the private libraries of almost all practicing Muslims. It is also studied as a textbook by almost all young students of Islam in the Muslim world. There are many commentaries on this book from which Br. Zarabozo has definitely benefited; but his is not a mere translation or summary of those commentaries—it is an original commentary the English speaking reader will find more useful and interesting than mere translations of those traditional commentaries.

The advantage of this book comes out clearly in the original method the author followed in his study of these prophetic sayings. He starts by giving

his reader the Arabic text of the hadith, followed by a new translation, which is without a doubt a great improvement on existing translations. He then gives a list, in Arabic, of all the important words and phrases of the hadith under discussion and explains them very briefly in English. He then gives a brief but very scholarly discussion of the status of the hadith. In this scholarly discussion, the author bears in mind that not every one of the readers is familiar with the sciences of hadith and, therefore, he explains all the different technical terms and ideas which he uses. But the discussion is, at the same time, conducted at a level which makes it interesting and useful even for specialists of this science.

After giving the reader some brief and general comments on the hadith and after giving him a biographical sketch of the Companion who reported the hadith, the author delves into the main business of studying the hadith in great detail and depth. Every phrase of the hadith is studied linguistically, logically, jurisprudentially, legally, and so on. The author uses his vast knowledge of the sources to put before the reader almost all that scholars old and new had to say on matters related to the hadith and almost all the lessons that they had deduced from it. But he does not only quote and translate; he also adds, discusses and evaluates. He gives you all the important interpretations of different parts of the hadith text and the arguments of the scholars who suggested them. This gives the reader the chance to penetrate the minds of those great scholars and to familiarize himself with their reasoning and argumentation. Having acquired this vital training in studying hadith, the reader might find himself, thanks to the author, in disagreement with him over some of his preferences on, in time, a scholarly basis.

Many readers will, I am sure, be surprised to discover, after reading a commentary on one of the hadith, how meager their knowledge of the hadith was before they read the commentary and how wrong they were in assuming that their meager knowledge was all that was to be gotten from the hadith.

Due to the comprehensiveness of the author's commentary, the reader will not be studying explanations of the hadith in a narrow sense; the reader will, in fact, be introduced to many branches of the Islamic sciences: the different sciences of hadith, the science of textual interpretation, the science of jurisprudence, law, and even Arabic language. It is sometimes better to study these sciences in contexts like these than to study them in isolation in textbooks. Such contextual study makes it easier for the learner to remember the rules, to apply them and also to recall them whenever he reads the texts in whose context he studied them.

The author (and for that matter, the publisher, Al-Basheer Company for Publications and Translations) has promised to continue henceforth to provide English speaking students of Islam with such in-depth studies. We are certainly eagerly awaiting to enjoy more of his works. May Allah increase him in

Introduction by Shaikh Jafar Idris

knowledge and sincerity and help him to continue to serve the cause of truth in this scholarly manner.

Dr. Jaafar Sheikh Idris
American Open University
Falls Church, VA
November 15, 1997

Commentary on the 40 Hadith of al-Nawawi

Author's Introduction

All praises are due to Allah. We praise Him, seek His Help, and ask for His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil in our souls and from our sinful deeds. Whoever Allah guides, no one can mislead. Whoever Allah leads astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah. I also bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. O believers, have *taqwa* [fear] of Allah according to His right and die not save as Muslims. O mankind, have *taqwa* of your Lord, the One who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and from them spread many men and women. And fear Allah from whom you demand your mutual rights and [do not cut] familial ties. Surely, Allah is ever an All-Watcher over you. O believers, have *taqwa* of Allah and always speak the truth. He will direct you to do righteous deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has indeed achieved a great achievement. To proceed:

The Quran and the sunnah are the sources of guidance for every Muslim. The sunnah consists of the Prophet Muhammad's own statements, own deeds and others' acts that he approved of tacitly. Perhaps, the most important of those three aspects are his statements. These statements are captured in the authentic hadith literature. Therefore, the authentic hadith, along with the Quran, constitute the basic source of guidance for every Muslim until the Day of Judgment.

It is, therefore, very important that the hadith literature be made available in English. In this way, those Muslims who do not have access to Arabic may guide their lives by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). However, translation of hadith texts in itself may not be sufficient. This is true for many reasons. First, one is translating, obviously, from a foreign language with different linguistic rules. Also, one is translating the words of someone who lived in a different culture and time from the English speakers of today. Hence, in order to do justice while translating, one sentence may actually need to be translated into an entire paragraph for it to be understood properly. Second, the Prophet's speech was something special.

With just a few words, he could convey many truths. His words have deep meanings to them that the layman may be unable or unqualified to derive. Therefore, he must turn to what the scholars have stated in explaining such important words of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In this work, the author has turned to those scholars to understand these words properly. Third, many of the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) can only be correctly understood when studied in the light of verses of the Quran and other hadith. Throughout the ages, Muslim scholars have written commentaries on hadith that have highlighted other relevant texts in order for the reader to get a complete picture of what the Prophet (peace be upon him) said.

In Arabic, as well as some other languages, such as Urdu, numerous commentaries on hadith are available. These commentaries fill an important gap and take the reader from a basic understanding of the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to a deep and comprehensive understanding. Until now, most of the English literature related to hadith has been restricted to translation. There are some exceptions. Siddiqi and Hasan, for example, have tried to add some commentary to their respective translations of *Sahih Muslim* and *Sunan Abu Dawud*. Unfortunately, such brief commentaries, although beneficial and important, cannot quench the thirst of those who want to completely understand the words of their Prophet (peace be upon him). Hence, more is definitely needed.

In fact, it is high time that the literature in English move from basic, introductory works to more in-depth works. This is especially true with respect to Quranic commentaries, hadith commentaries and fiqh literature. There are now, by the grace of Allah, numerous Muslim communities in the West. Some of these communities do not have any individuals who are proficient in Arabic. They do their best to follow the Quran and sunnah but what they are given, in the form of English literature, from the guidance of the Quran and sunnah simply is not sufficient. It does not meet their communal and individual needs. One reason for this is that many people think that such in-depth work is not needed in English, so they do not write or publish such works. However, such works are definitely needed and, Allah willing, such works will start to be published on a regular basis to meet the needs of the growing community of Muslims who are not familiar with the Arabic language.

The work that the reader is now holding in his hands is an initial attempt to present a detailed commentary of some of the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Al-Nawawi has done an excellent job of collecting together a small number of vital hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). These hadith are considered some of the most comprehensive and important hadith for the individual Muslim. Allah willing, if a Muslim truly understands these hadith and implements them in his life, his path to Paradise will be made easy. That is why they need to be understood in detail, in the light of the explanations by scholars throughout history. The goal of this work, therefore, is

Author's Introduction

to present in English a detailed explanation, based upon well-known commentaries, of these very important hadith.

The method that will be followed is the following: First, the text of the hadith with an English translation shall be presented. Then a selected vocabulary of the Arabic text will be given, in the hopes that this may aid those who are trying to learn and understand Arabic. The sources for the hadith and the "grade" of the hadith will then be given. After that will follow a brief discussion of the life of the Companion who narrated the hadith. Then each portion of the hadith will be discussed in some detail, with an emphasis on points that help one understand and apply the hadith properly in his or her life. After that will come some related points that can be derived from the hadith. Finally, there will be a short summary of the main points of the hadith.

For further benefit, an introductory chapter on Imam al-Nawawi's life as well as a commentary on Imam al-Nawawi's own introduction have been included.

A note must also be added here concerning the transliteration. It has been this author's lengthy experience that even the most precise transliteration is not truly helpful if the reader is not familiar with the Arabic sounds. Even for those who are familiar with Arabic sounds, transliterations can sometimes be more confusing than helpful. Therefore, the purpose of the transliteration in this work is to help the novice who is unfamiliar with Arabic sounds to pronounce the words in a fashion approximating their actual pronunciations. In general, the *hamza* and *ain* have been ignored, unless absolutely necessary to differentiate between the same or similar vowel sounds. The long vowel sounds have been presented as "aa", "oo" or "ee". However, if a word with a particular spelling has virtually become part of the Muslim-English vocabulary and it is pronounced properly, no change has been made to it in the spelling, in order to avoid any confusion. Therefore in the texts, for example, the following changes were not made: Allah to Allaah, Islam to Islaam, hadith to *hadeeth*, *sahih* to *saheeh*, al-Bukhari to al-Bukhaari, Malik to Maalik and so on.

This loose method of transliteration will not be a shortcoming for those familiar with the Arabic letters and sounds. This is because the actual Arabic has been presented for virtually ever transliterated word and the majority of the referred to personalities referred. The Arabic is presented immediately after the word is mentioned in the text, in the selected vocabulary section, in the glossary, in the biographical data section or in the bibliography. In the bibliography, one will find the Arabic spelling for every Arabic author and book used.

The reader must also be introduced to one convention that has been adopted by this author. The word hadith has been used in both a singular and plural usage, like the words deer, sheep and elk in English. This was done because the Arabic plural (*ahaadeeth*) would be strange for many English

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

readers. The common usage of hadiths is also difficult to pronounce or handle. Therefore, the word was left as hadith throughout the text.

May Allah accept this deed and make it beneficial for all of its readers.

Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo

Nov. 1, 1998

Boulder, CO

Imam al-Nawawi's Life

The Life of al-Nawawi

Before commenting on the *Forty Hadith* of al-Nawawi, it would be proper to introduce Imam al-Nawawi to the reader. It is important for Muslims to take the time to learn about the lives of the pious predecessors. The great scholars and pious individuals of the past can be great examples for the living. Their behavior and actions can have a great effect upon the hearts. Their examples demonstrate that in every age, there were pious Muslims who followed the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his noble Companions, without compromise and without giving into the desires of this world. They demonstrate to the Muslims of today that the guidance of the Quran and hadith was sufficient for them to lead their lives in manners pleasing to Allah, although they did not sit with and learn directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him) or even his close Companions.

Today, Muslims face many of the same problems, temptations and difficulties that these pious predecessors faced. The pious predecessors read and intensely studied the Quran and hadith to attain guidance for their lives. They applied the Quran and sunnah in their lives under various circumstances. What they derived from the Divine Guidance should be considered a light for all of those who come after them who face circumstances similar to theirs.

There are many aspects of al-Nawawi's life, in particular, that may set an example for those living today. In his introduction to his Master's Thesis on al-Nawawi, Ahmad al-Haddaad echoed these views when he stated,

The third reason [for writing about al-Nawawi] was to bring to the forefront the life of this extraordinary man who lived in a later time. It is hoped that this biography will bring to us and the coming generation great benefits with respect to seriousness and striving for knowledge, with respect to asceticism and fearing Allah, and with respect to bravery in publicly speaking the truth. The lives of the pious have the greatest effect on those who hear about them. Allah has certainly spoken the truth when He said, "And all that We relate to you (O Muhammad) of the news of the messengers

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[is] in order that We may thereby make your heart strong and firm” (*Hood* 120).¹

The goal here is to be brief. Therefore, only some aspects of his life will be highlighted.²

Background to al-Nawawi’s Life: Islam in the Seventh Century of the Hijrah

The Seventh Century of Islam was a very turbulent time, especially for the area of Sham (“Greater Syria”). It was during this Century that the Mongols invaded from the East and the Crusaders controlled part of the Muslim lands from the West. In the year 656 AH, the Mongols invaded and conquered Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasids. In 658, however, under the reign of al-Mudhafar Qutuz ibn Abdullah and military leadership of al-Dhaahir Baibars, the Muslims handed the Mongols a stunning defeat at Ain Jaloot. Also, in 679, when the Mongols again tried to conquer Aleppo, they were defeated. From that time onwards, Muslim forces continued to battle and make headway against the Mongols. Similarly, the Crusaders were defeated and removed from Sham in the year 691.

By the grace and mercy of Allah, these turbulent times did not mean the end of Islamic studies for the inhabitants of that area. In fact, when Noor al-Deen Zanki (d. 569) entered Sham he found that the light of learning had been extinguished. Therefore, he made a concerted effort to encourage the people of that area to renew their studies of Islam. In the process, he opened many schools for the study of Islam. In fact, he opened the first Dar al-Hadith in Damascus, Aleppo and elsewhere. This same spirit of spreading knowledge and establishing educational institutions was carried on by those who ruled after Noor al-Deen Zanki, especially Saif al-Deen Qalaawoon (d. 689). Therefore, one does not find a shortage of scholars and learning even during that turbulent century of Islamic history.

Al-Nawawi’s Birth and Upbringing

Muhi al-Deen¹ Abu Zakariya² Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Hizaami al-Nawawi was born in 631 A.H. (1233 C.E.) in the village of Nawa, south of Damascus,

¹ Ahmad al-Haddaad, *al-Imaam al-Nawawi wa Athaaruhu fi al-Hadeeth wa Uloomih* (Beirut: Daar al-Bashaair al-Islaamiyah, 1992), p. 7.

² Those readers interested in more details about the life of Imam al-Nawawi may consult Alaa al-Deen ibn al-Attaar, *Tuhfat al-Taalibeen fi Tarjumah al-Imaam Muhiy al-Deen* (Riyadh: Daar al-Sami’ee, 1414 A.H.), *passim*; Jalaal al-Deen al-Suyooti, *al-Minhaaj al-Sawi fi Tarjumah al-Imaam al-Nawawi* (Beirut: Daar ibn Hazm, 1994), *passim*; Abdul Ghani al-Diqr, *Al-Imaam al-Nawawi: Shaikh al-Islaam wa al-Muslimeen wa Umdat al-Fuqahaa wa al-Muhaditheen* (Damascus: Daar al-Qalam, 1980), *passim*. Al-Suyooti relied greatly on al-Attaar, quoting lengthy passages from his work.

Syria. Coming from Nawa, he is given the descriptive name al-Nawawi, which is also sometimes written al-Nawaawi.

Al-Nawawi did not come from a well-known family. There is very little mention, if any, of his grandfather, father and other relatives. This implies that they were a modest family. They also were not known for producing great scholars. However, his father did have a reputation for being very pious and God-fearing. His father had a garden in which he would grow food for his family. He would avoid, and taught his family to avoid, eating anything which may be forbidden in any way whatsoever. This was a true application of the following hadith from *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ طَيِّبٌ لَا يَقْبَلُ إِلَّا طَيِّبًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِمَا أَمَرَ بِهِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
فَقَالَ (يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ) وَقَالَ (
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ) قَالَ وَذَكَرَ الرَّجُلُ يُطِيلُ السَّفَرَ
أَشْعَثَ أَغْبَرَ يَمُدُّ يَدَهُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ يَا رَبِّ يَا رَبِّ وَمَطْعَمُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَشْرَبُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَلْبَسُهُ
حَرَامٌ وَغُذِيَ بِالْحَرَامِ فَأَنَّى يُسْتَجَابُ لِذَلِكَ

“O People! Verily Allah is good and He does not accept but what is good. Allah has ordered the believers with the same command that He ordered the messengers. He said, ‘O Messengers, eat of the good and pure things and work righteous deeds. Verily, I am knowledgeable of what you do.’ And He said, ‘O believers! Eat of the good and wholesome things that We have provided for you.’ And he mentioned a man who was on a long journey, with disheveled hair and dust-ridden, stretching out his hands to the sky, saying, ‘O Lord, O Lord,’ while his food is of the forbidden, his drink is of the forbidden, his

¹ All of the biographical works give him the nickname “Muhiy al-deen” although he himself did not like to be called by it. He said that he did not forgive the person who gave him that nickname. He may have disliked that nickname because it means, “The One who Gives Life to the Religion,” while, in fact, the religion of Islam is not in need of anyone to give it life. Al-Haddaad argues that the name does become him but that out of modesty, he did not like to be called by it. (See al-Haddaad, p. 19.) According to al-Madaabaghi, if a name or title of praise is disliked by someone, out of modesty, although the title fits him, then it is allowed to call that person by that name. This is not considered a type of backbiting or insult. See Hasan al-Madaabaghi’s comments on the margin of Ahmad ibn Hajr al-Haitami, *Fath al-Mubeen li-Sharh al-Arbaeen* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1978), p. 4.

² He was given the name Abu Zakaria (“The Father of Zakaria”) although he never had a child by that name. It is not uncommon for men to be given agnomens while they are still under age and that agnomen remains with them throughout their lives. In *al-Majmoo*, al-Nawawi argues that it is recommended for people to have agnomens, even if they do not have children. See Yahya al-Nawawi, *al-Majmoo Sharh al-Muhadhab* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, n.d.) vol. 8, p. 438.

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clothing is of the forbidden and his provisions are of the forbidden. How is he going to be responded to [by Allah]?”

From his youth, Yahya al-Nawawi was not attracted to sports or playing. Indeed, the other children chided him for this. From an early age, he turned his attention to his studies. He hated any activity that would take him away from memorizing the Quran. On one occasion, the children forced him to play with them and he cried because of the time that he was wasting.¹ It is not surprising then that he memorized the Quran at an early age.

At the age of eighteen, his father took him to Damascus to continue his studies. He excelled in the Shafi'ee school of fiqh, memorizing some of its most important texts. He performed the pilgrimage to Makkah, visited Madinah and other locations but then returned to Damascus to continue his studies. He remained in Damascus until just prior to his death, when he returned to his hometown of Nawa.

Al-Nawawi's Personal Life

His Pursuit of Knowledge

Al-Nawawi first studied at the Saaramiya school in Damascus. This is where his father left him. He had no housing there whatsoever. After some time, he approached the Shaikh of the school to ask if he had any housing, as many of the schools did house their students. They had no housing so the Shaikh suggested that he go to the Rawaahiyah School. There he was given a very small room in which he lived for a number of years. In fact, he remained in that small room until he was named the head of the Ashrafiyah school, a number of years later.² It was stated that, when one visited him, the room was so small and the books were so many, that the only way one could sit down was to remove the books and pile them on top of each other to make some room to sit.

After Saaramiyah, he continued his studies at the Rawaahiya school in Damascus. At one point in time, he was attending twelve lectures a day on assorted topics, including Arabic language, hadith, fiqh and Islamic legal theory. Some of his well-known teachers³ included Ishaq ibn Ahmad al-Maghrabi al-Maqdisi (d. 650 A.H.), Abdul Rahman al-Anbari (d. 661 A.H.) and Abdul Azeez al-Ansaari (d. 662 A.H.). He studied *Sahih Muslim* from Abu Ishaq Ibraaheem al-Waasiti. In 655 A.H., at the age of 24, he began teaching at the Ashrafiyah school. His reputation and excellence as a scholar began to be recognized by the scholars and inhabitants of Damascus.

¹ Al-Haddaad, p. 26.

² Al-Haddaad, p. 32.

³ The most detailed discussion of the different teachers of Imam al-Nawawi may be found in al-Haddaad, pp. 41-70.

His pursuit of knowledge dominated his entire life. He would put all of his time into studying, learning and teaching. It is even stated that he would not sleep except when sleep would overtake him. He would rest on his book and sleep for a little, then he would act startled upon awakening and continue studying. He once said about himself, "I spent two years without lying on the ground [to sleep] on my side." That is, he would always study and write until slept overtook while in a sitting position. Al-Qutb al-Yauneeni said about him, "He would not waste any moment of the day or night but he would spend it busy with attaining knowledge. Even when he is walking in the streets he will be busy going over what he had remembered and reviewing his notes. He continued gaining knowledge in that way for a period of six years."¹

It seems—and only Allah knows the reality—that Allah truly blessed his time. Perhaps this was due to a sincere intention to please Allah. As mentioned above, he would attend up to twelve classes a day. Commenting on that fact, al-Diqr wrote,

He used to have twelve study sessions a day with his teachers. These included explanations, verifications, commentaries, explaining the difficult aspects and expressions as well as exacting the correct wordings. This would take, as a least approximation, twelve hours a day. Then he would need to review what he had learned and memorize what needed to be memorized. The very least approximation is that this would also take twelve hours a day. This is twenty-four hours in a day! When would he sleep? When would he eat? When would he perform the acts of worship? When would he perform the voluntary late-night prayers? It is well-known that he performed those types of acts of obedience and worship. When would all of that take place? He was in need of studying and reviewing for all the twenty-four hours in a day and night. This shows how Allah blessed and graced this man. Allah blessed him in his time. He gave him the ability to complete in one day what it takes everyone else two days to do, and in one year what takes others two years to accomplish. This is the only way we can explain this tremendous undertaking that made him one of the greatest scholars of his time in about ten years. In fact, it made him the leader (Imam) of his time. This is also the only way we can explain all of his wonderful, detailed and radiant writings in a span of time that lasted no more than fifteen years. He spent all of his lifetime and living hours in learning, teaching and writing.²

¹ Quoted in al-Diqr, p. 28.

² al-Diqr, p. 34.

His Austerity

He led a very austere and simple life. Some narrations state that all the clothing he possessed was a turban and a long gown. He did not desire any of the pleasures of this world. At one point in time, he would not eat anything except some cake and olives that his father would send him from time to time from Nawa. One of the reasons for this was that he was certain that such food came from permissible sources.

He would refuse even permissible things out of fear that they may lead him to doubtful matters. Indeed, he refused to eat any of the fruit of Damascus because he knew that the orchards, many of which were endowments and for orphans and others, were not handled properly and he feared that the food he would be eating was not from a permissible source. Another reason he gave for not eating that fruit was that much of it was handled through sharecropping and there was a difference of opinion among the scholars concerning the validity of sharecropping. In a footnote, al-Haddaad points out that, in reality, all of those matters boiled down to one thing: al-Nawawi was afraid to involve himself in any matter concerning which there was even the slightest doubt.¹

Al-Nawawi desired to live a simple and pure life, although it would have been possible for him to live otherwise, given his teaching position and influence. Chief Justice Sulaimaan al-Zara'i narrated that he visited al-Nawawi on the day of Eid. Al-Nawawi was eating some kind of broth with no meat. He asked Sulaimaan to eat with him and he said that it was not appealing to him. Sulaimaan's brother went and brought some roasted meat and sweets. Sulaimaan told al-Nawawi to eat from it but he refused. Sulaimaan said to him, "O my brother, is this forbidden?" He said, "No, but it is the food of the tyrants [and extravagant]." In this matter, he was following the example of the Prophet (peace be upon him) who could have enjoyed many of the bounties of this world, but, instead, his household would go days without cooking any meat or having their full of bread for two days straight.² It seems that al-Nawawi did not consider such food as impermissible, in general, as obviously the Prophet (peace be upon him) ate such foods. However, it seems that he was never sure that their source was permissible, so he refused to eat such foods.³

He was also well-known for his modesty. Part of his modesty included never being served by any of his students. At the same time, he continued to serve his students even into his old age.

Al-Nawawi would fast perpetually (every day except the days of *Eid*).⁴ In general, he would only eat once a day, after the last obligatory prayer of the

¹ al-Haddaad, p. 87.

² Al-Haddaad, p. 90.

³ Al-Diqr, p. 129.

⁴ There is a difference of opinion concerning perpetual fasting. Al-Nawawi seemed to be of the view that it is permissible as long as one has the ability to do it and as long as one does not fast

day; and he would only drink once a day, before dawn. When he drank, he would not drink cold water out of fear that it may make him drowsy. Al-Haddaad argues that this was done by al-Nawawi so that he would dedicate all of his time to work and worship instead of the pleasures of this life. Al-Haddaad writes that it is said that knowledge is not attained by rest. In fact, he states, a person will not receive even part of knowledge unless he dedicates all of himself to it. If a person dedicates all of himself to knowledge, then he may achieve a portion of it. Al-Haddaad states that perhaps this was al-Nawawi's perception of knowledge. He left his heart completely free and open to receive the blessed knowledge of the religion of Islam.¹

He did not accept a stipend for his teaching. It seems that he may have accepted money for the first year or two. That money that he did receive, he would spend on books that were left as endowments after him. However, after that time, he refused to accept any money whatsoever for his services.²

One material possession of this world that al-Nawawi did have was books. In general, a student is greatly in need of books. He is perhaps as much in need of books than he is of food and water, as al-Haddaad pointed out. As alluded to earlier, al-Nawawi's small room was like a warehouse of books. One of the testimonies as to how many books al-Nawawi had may be found in his introduction to *al-Tahqeeq* wherein he said, "I have with me, of the books of Shafi'ee fiqh, and all praises are due to Allah, about one hundred books, including well-known books, rare books and others."³ Al-Haddaad comments, "If that was the case with the number of books of fiqh, which were not as plentiful as they were in later eras, then what about the number of books of hadith he must have had, as there were many more books of hadith available at his time."⁴ Taaj al-Deen al-Subki (683-756), who was a Chief Justice (*Qaadi al-Qudha*), was asked to complete one of al-Nawawi's works, *al-Majmoo*. He tried to excuse himself by saying that he did not have the number of references available to him that al-Nawawi had.

It seems clear, though, that al-Nawawi's goal was not simply to possess a large library. His books were not for decoration or display. Instead, he benefited greatly from those works and, from his lectures and writings, numerous people have benefited from them since then.

Al-Nawawi Never Married

Al-Nawawi is one of the famous scholars throughout history who never married. Other scholars who never married include ibn Taimiya and Sayyid

on those days in which it is prohibited to fast. See al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh Muslim*, vol. 8, p. 40.

¹ Al-Haddaad, p. 35.

² See al-Diqr, p. 127.

³ Quoted in al-Haddaad, p. 71.

⁴ Al-Haddaad, p. 72.

Qutb. Different explanations are offered as to why al-Nawawi remained single. The most obvious reason is his austerity and lack of desire for the pleasures of this world. His life was filled with the desire to learn, teach and engage in acts of worship. The temptations of this life seemed to have never stirred his heart.

Some may point to the fact that he did not have the means to wed. It does seem obvious that he never had the means to marry. However, this might have been due to his personal choice. It seems just as obvious that if he wanted to, he could have obtained such means by, for example, receiving a salary for his teaching. Hence, his lack of desire for the things of this world must be considered a stronger explanation for his lack of marrying.

Al-Diqr, however, offers another possible explanation. Al-Diqr writes that it could have been the result of his piety and fear of Allah. It is possible that he did not marry because he feared that he would not be able to fulfill the rights of his wife and, therefore, he would be displeasing Allah. Allah states that women have rights similar to those against them. The household is like a small society with the husband being the head of that society. Hence, he is in a very serious position with a great deal of responsibility on his shoulders. In his commentary to the hadith of Asmaa, in which she states that she served her husband in many different ways, al-Nawawi wrote,

That is all part of the goodness and kindness that people follow. This is where the woman serves her husband in those things that she mentioned, such as preparing food, cooking, washing clothing and so forth. This is all voluntary work on the part of a woman towards her husband and her good dealings with him. These are all good acts on her part. None of that is obligatory upon her. If she refused to do any or all of that, she would not be sinful. In fact, he must do those jobs for her and it is not permissible for him to force her to do any of them. This is what the woman does on a voluntary basis only. It is a beautiful custom that women have been following since the first generations until now. Only two things are obligatory upon the woman: keeping herself ready and prepared [sexually] for her husband and staying in his house.¹

If that was the reason that al-Nawawi did not get married, it may have been extreme on his part. However, it is a lesson that all husbands should take note of: marriage is not a laughing matter but it is a very serious relationship that Allah will hold one responsible for on the Day of Judgment.

¹ Yahya al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh Muslim* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 14, pp. 164-165. On that question, al-Nawawi is following one of the opinions held by the scholars. Some scholars do consider such acts on the part of the wife to be obligatory.

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In fact, al-Nawawi was once told that marriage is a great sunnah and it is perhaps the only sunnah that he had not fulfilled. His reply was, "I fear that I may follow one sunnah and thereby get involved in many forbidden acts."¹

Al-Nawawi's Beliefs and Creed (*Aqeedah*)

Introduction

There is no question that the correct and only true form of Islam is that of the Prophet (peace be upon him), his Companions and those who follow their path. This can be proven from many verses of the Quran and hadith.² This path is also known as the way of the *salaf* or pious forefathers of Islam. This methodology has always been present but it has received more attention in recent years. More and more Muslims are recognizing the strengths of its premises and the weaknesses of the other schools, such as the Ashari school, for example.³

With this re-emergence of the Salafi school, some people are confused concerning how to deal with and view many of the earlier scholars that held errant views on some matters related to faith and belief. In the writings of great scholars of Islam, such as ibn Hajr and al-Nawawi, there are numerous passages that go against the beliefs of the Salaf.⁴ The following questions arise:

¹ Al-Haddaad, p. 92. There is a lesson in this for many of the young Muslim men of today, especially those living in non-Muslim societies. They find themselves looking at women, which is forbidden, and therefore they think that the only solution is to get married. However, they are neither financially, emotionally or mentally ready for marriage— they are only physically ready to get married. They then get married but since they were not ready for marriage, they end up wronging their wives. Many times they beat their wives. Other times they force their wives to work and support the family when that is the responsibility of the husband. Such marriages often end up in divorce— many times after children have arrived. Hence, instead of correcting themselves by fasting and other means, they get married. They end up hurting their wives, their communities who are usually called in to solve the problems and the children who grow up in broken homes or in a confused state. All of this is because they do not realize that they may be avoiding one sin by marriage, but they end up committing many others, as al-Nawawi astutely realized about himself.

² This is not the proper place to go into details concerning this matter. The interested reader may consult Abdul Qadir al-Arna'oot, *A Glimpse at the Way of the Companions* (Birmingham, UK: al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, 1994), *passim*.

³ The Asharis claim to be the followers of Abu al-Hasan al-Ashari (260/874-324/936). Unfortunately, the term "Ashari" can cover a broad spectrum of beliefs. One of the novel ideas that the Asharis introduced was to give figurative interpretations for many of the attributes of Allah. This approach differed from the approach that was handed down from the time of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

⁴ Some modern-day Asharis criticize scholars such as Abdulazeez ibn Baaz and numerous others for "correcting" the views of the great scholars such as al-Nawawi and ibn Hajr. However, the standard by which to judge is not Abdulazeez ibn Baaz, nor al-Nawawi, nor ibn Hajr. It is the Quran, sunnah and the understanding that the Prophet (peace be upon him) conveyed to his Companions. If something is correct according to that standard, it is to be accepted regardless of who says it. If something is incorrect according to that standard, it is to be rejected regardless of

How is it that these great scholars held such views? What should be one's attitude towards these scholars? It is due to the appearance of questions like these that al-Nawawi's creed or beliefs will be discussed in some detail here.

Before discussing al-Nawawi's views, it is proper to mention the correct approach to the attributes of Allah. The correct approach coming from the Salaf is that whatever Allah has stated about Himself or whatever the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated about Him is accepted as true and stated clearly, without any need for reinterpretation. (This reinterpretation is known as *taweel*.) For example, if Allah states that He has a hand, then it is believed that He has a hand. It is not to be understood that "hand" here stands for power, mercy or any other kind of interpretation. At the same time, though, it is understood that, as Allah has made clear in the Quran, there is none like unto Allah. Therefore, if Allah has a hand, it is not like a human hand. Instead, it is a hand that is becoming of His Majesty and Godliness.¹

Al-Nawawi's *Taweel*

It must be first pointed out that al-Nawawi never wrote any book on *aqeedah* (creed and faith). There is a book entitled *al-Maqaasid fi Bayaan Ma Yajib Marafatuhu min al-Deen min al-Aqeedah wa al-Ibaadah wa Usool al-Tasawwuf* that is ascribed to him.² According to Salmaan³, Al-Zirikili and al-Diqr do not mention this book among al-Nawawi's writings. However, this is not correct. Al-Zirikili mentions it and states that it is a writing on *tauheed*.⁴ Al-Diqr, not in the section on al-Nawawi's writings but elsewhere, makes one mention of it but he simply states that al-Zirikili mentions it as one of al-Nawawi's works.⁵ Actually, al-Nawawi's close student ibn al-Attaar did not mention this as one of al-Nawawi's books in his abbreviated discussion of al-Nawawi's writings.⁶ Also, neither al-Dhahabi nor ibn Katheer mention this

who says it. Furthermore, when convenient, these modern-day Asharis also disagree with great scholars, such as ibn Hajr and al-Nawawi on points related to *aqidah*, fiqh and other matters. Hence, if they are free to disagree with them, then obviously people like Abdulazeez ibn Baaz may disagree with them, especially when he has the backing of the Quran, sunnah and way of the *Salaf*.

¹ This methodology, as well as the evidence for it, is given in the commentary to Hadith #2, under the section, "Belief in Allah."

² Unfortunately, this book has been translated and published in English with al-Nawawi's name on it. This has led many people to believe that it contains the teachings of the well-respected Imam al-Nawawi. Furthermore, the *Maqaasid* is an extremely small work. The English translations is filled with comments that have nothing to do with the original *Maqaasid*. Hence, in all honesty, the English work should be entitled a commentary on *al-Maqaasid* and not simply a translation of *Maqaasid*.

³ Mashhoor Hasan Salmaan, *Al-Rudood wa al-Taaqqubaat ala ma waqa li-l-Imaam al-Nawawi fi Sharh Saheeh Muslim min al-Taweel fi al-Sifaat wa Ghairaha min al-Masaail al-Muhimaat* (al-Thuqba, Saudi Arabia: Dar al-Hijrah, 1993), p. 20.

⁴ Khair al-Deen al-Zirikili, *al-Alaam* (Beirut: Dar al-Ilm al-Malayeen), vol. 8, p. 149.

⁵ See al-Diqr, p. 63. Also see Al-Zirikili, vol. 9, p. 85; al-Diqr, pp. 72-104.

⁶ See ibn al-Attaar, pp. 75-100.

particular work of al-Nawawi, although they were very close to his time and, one could assume, they would have considered any work on *aqeedah* and the basics of Islam to be important.¹ Al-Suyooti, who considers himself an Ashari, also did not mention that work when he discussed al-Nawawi's writings.² Similarly, Ahmad al-Haddaad, who listed many works of al-Nawawi including those that are still in manuscript form which al-Haddaad could not see, nowhere mentions this as one of al-Nawawi's works. Similarly, Hitu, a specialist in Shafi'ee fiqh, mentions thirty-eight of al-Nawawi's works and does not mention *al-Maqaasid*.³

More important, however, is Salmaan's argument that the *al-Maqaasid* contains many aspects that demonstrate that it is not one of al-Nawawi's works. Its style of writing is different from that of al-Nawawi. Furthermore, it contains many passages that contradict what al-Nawawi has written in the books that are definitively known to be from him. Indeed, there is no question that *al-Maqaasid* has been written by a pure Ashari and al-Nawawi's name has been put on the work just to give it some credence.⁴

One may, however, derive al-Nawawi's understanding of *aqeedah* from his commentary on *Sahih Muslim*. It is here where al-Nawawi's *taweel* and divergence from the way of the Salafi school has appeared. One can conclude from that commentary that al-Nawawi was definitely not a pure Ashari. He would sometimes resort to *taweel*, sometimes he would leave the meaning of an attribute to Allah (*tafweedh*⁵) and other times he would remain silent.

In any case, no one can deny that al-Nawawi made *taweel* for a number of the attributes of Allah. For example, on one occasion, he explains the hand of Allah as meaning His power.⁶ On another occasion, he explains it as meaning Allah's mercy.⁷ However, one will note that al-Nawawi was not very consistent in his *taweel*. In one of his discussions of Allah's Hand, he seemingly rejected the *taweel* of Qaadhi Iyaadh and argued for leaving the wording of the Hand of Allah alone without giving it any reinterpretation.⁸

This "inconsistency" on the part of al-Nawawi has led people to form different conclusions about al-Nawawi. Some people call him Salafi, others

¹ For al-Dhahabi, see the excerpt from *Tadhkirat al-Huffaadh* in the introduction to al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh Muslim*, vol. 1, pp. ٥٠-٥١. For ibn Katheer, see Imaad al-Deen ibn Katheer, *al-Bidaayah wa al-Nihaaya* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1985), vol. 13, p. 294. Both of them mention a number of al-Nawawi's works, including those he did not finish, and neither of them make any allusion whatsoever to *al-Maqaasid*.

² Al-Suyooti, *al-Minhaaj*, pp. 53-65.

³ See Muhammad Hasan Heetoo, "Introduction," to Yahya al-Nawawi, *al-Usool wa al-Dhawaabit* (Beirut: Daar al-Bashaair al-Islamiyyah, 1988), pp. 14-16.

⁴ See Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, p. 20 and p. 25.

⁵ *Tafweedh* implies recording the wording as it is and then stating that the meaning of the word is known only to Allah and has no understandable meaning to humans.

⁶ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih*, vol. 17, p. 132.

⁷ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih*, vol. 6, pp. 38-39.

⁸ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih*, vol. 17, p. 132.

call him Ashari and yet others call him *Tafweedhi*.¹ Al-Dhahabi, a Salafi, once wrote about him, “His attitude toward the *sami’iyah* attributes² was one of being silent. He would report them as they have come [without trying to re-explain them]. Perhaps, he would rarely make *taweel* in his commentary to *Sahih Muslim*.” Commenting on that statement, al-Sakhaawi wrote, “This is what [al-Dhahabi] said. But one can find *taweel* often in al-Nawawi’s words.”³ The concepts of much and little are relative, but it seems that al-Sakhaawi’s view is closer to the correct stance. Al-Yafi’ee and al-Taaj al-Subki, leading Ashari scholars, have both declared al-Nawawi an Ashari.⁴

Many of the modern-day scholars seemed inclined to consider him more Salafi than Ashari. For example, the author of the dissertation *al-Imam al-Nawawi wa Juhoodahu fi al-Tafseer* wrote, “He was a Salafi in his beliefs but he occasionally made *taweel* if necessity required that.”⁵ In his book on the Ashari school, Safar al-Hawaali wrote, “It is not correct to consider him Ashari. It should be said, ‘He agrees with the Asharis on some points.’”⁶ Naasir al-Aql wrote, speaking of al-Nawawi and others similar to him, “With respect to their general beliefs, they are from *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*. As for calling them Asharis, this in need of some verification and confirmation... They are closer to being from the people of hadith than they are to being from the scholastic theologians.”⁷

Salmaan has offered the strongest argument as to why there is so much confusion concerning al-Nawawi and his beliefs. Salmaan wrote,

He agrees with the Asharis when he quotes from their works and is silent about what they have said. In some cases, he explicitly states that he accepts what they state. He is also in agreement with the Salaf in much of their beliefs. This is because he was influenced by and preoccupied by the transmitted reports [from the Prophet (peace be upon him), his Companions and so forth]. This was also because he stayed away from scholastic theology (*ilm al-kalaam*) and did not delve into its particular issues. So the researcher who notes the places where he was influenced by the Asharis will consider him an Ashari. The one who notes those places where he was in agreement with the beliefs of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-*

¹ Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, p. 18.

² There are some attributes of Allah that can be “proven” logically and rationally. These would include the fact that Allah is living, knowing and so forth. There are other attributes that can only be known through revelation and what has been passed on from the Prophet (peace be upon him). This would include, for example, the fact that Allah has a hand. These are the “attributes known through transmitted reports” or the *sami’iyah* attributes.

³ Both of these statements were quoted in Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, p. 18.

⁴ Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, p. 18.

⁵ Quoted in Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, p. 19.

⁶ Safar al-Hawaali, *Minhaj al-Ashaa’irah fi al-Aqeedah* (Kuwait: Daar al-Salafiyah, 1986), p. 29.

⁷ Naasir al-Aql, *Mabaahith fi Aqeedah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah wa Muwaqif al-Harakaat al-Islamiyyah al-Muasirah Minha* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, n.d.), p. 63.

Jamaah, where he also defends those beliefs and refutes the heretics and misguided people, will consider him a Salafi. This is the main reason why people get confused and perplexed as to where to place him.

May Allah have mercy on ibn Taimiya who once said, “Almost everyone of the later scholars had some mistakes in his writings due to the misconceptions and confusions spread by the heretics. That is why one will find in many of the writings on legal theory, creed, fiqh, asceticism, Quranic commentary, and hadith, that a person will quote on a very important issue a number of opinions and will quote a number of different views and people but the view with which Allah sent His Messenger will not be mentioned. This is not because they do not like what the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught but simply because they had no knowledge of it.”¹ Ibn Taimiya’s above statement applies one hundred percent to Abu Zakaria al-Nawawi.²

Indeed, Salmaan studied the sources of al-Nawawi’s views. He discovered that, for the most part, his mistakes appeared most prominently when he was quoting from the earlier scholars who had commented upon *Sahih Muslim*. These earlier scholars included al-Maazari and Qaadhi Iyaadh. These two respected scholars were very clear and outspoken in their use of *taweel*.³ Al-Nawawi was also not a detailed researcher in the area of creed and faith. He was content with taking what the earlier writers had stated, in particular Qaadhi Iyaadh, and he left the matter at that. Furthermore, he lived at a time when the Ashari school had become the dominant school. Those people who contributed the most to the Ashari school and really laid down its scholastic foundations include al-Raazi (d. 606), al-Aamidi (d. 631) and al-Armawi (d. 682). Al-Nawawi lived from 631 to 676. Hence, he lived in the heyday of the spreading and solidifying of the Ashari school. This was especially the case in the regions of Sham (Greater Syria) and Egypt. Perhaps—and only Allah has such knowledge—had al-Nawawi had a better exposure to the views of the Salafi school, he would have been a “complete” Salafi with respect to matters of faith. Salmaan contrasts al-Nawawi with one of al-Nawawi’s most important and devoted student, ibn al-Attar.⁴ Ibn al-Attar lived beyond the time of al-Nawawi and was able to witness the influence of some of the more remarkable

¹ In other words, they are so confused or overloaded with these differing views that have been presented as the correct view that they cannot see, through all those clouds, the actual view that was taught by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions.

² Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 28-29.

³ Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, p. 11.

⁴ Ibn al-Attar studied with al-Nawawi for a period of six years. He was known as the “abridger” of al-Nawawi. Al-Nawawi had a great deal of respect for ibn al-Attar, as can be seen in the incident quoted by Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, p. 13.

Salafi scholars, including ibn Taimiya (661-728) and al-Dhahabi (673-748) (ibn al-Attar's foster brother). Ibn al-Attar wrote a book entitled *Al-Itiqad al-Khaalis min al-Shakk wa al-Intiqaad* or "The Belief that is Free of any Form of Doubt or Criticism." In that work, he completely refuted the concept of *taweel* that his teacher al-Nawawi had fallen into on occasion.

Conclusions About al-Nawawi's *Aqeedah*

There is no question that al-Nawawi was influenced by the Ashari school. This was particularly true when he quoted from others, such as Qaadhi Iyaadh and al-Maazari. He also did his best to deny any kind of anthropomorphism with respect to Allah. Unfortunately, he felt that the way to do that was to make *taweel* for hadith that describe Allah in ways that could be misunderstood. In fact, in the introduction to his *Majmoo'*, he stated clearly that one is only to resort to *taweel* if it is needed in order to refute the heretical groups.¹ Hence, he did not believe in *taweel* as the correct or original method of *aqeedah*. However, due to developments and people following different extremes with respect to Allah's attributes, he stated that one could be forced to make *taweel* in specific cases. He also was not a specialist in the field of *aqeedah* and simply relied upon what some scholars had stated before him.

Therefore, al-Nawawi sometimes made *taweel*; sometimes he rejected *taweel*; sometimes he made *tafweedh*. On most other matters related to *aqeedah*, however, he followed the ways and beliefs of the Salaf.² He definitely was not a pure or staunch Ashari, although he was influenced by them. Indeed, he refuted the Asharis on a number of points, most notably the question of what is the first obligation upon the responsible person. He clearly stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) never ordered, nor is it to be ordered, that one has to know the proofs and the methodology of the scholastic theologians for the existence of Allah. This is definitely not, he shows, the first obligation upon humans as the Asharis claim.³

What then should be one's stance towards al-Nawawi, after all, such *taweel* are definitely heresies and go against the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him)? In this author's view, the answer to this question should be very clear and easy to understand for everyone. Unfortunately, it seems not to be. People have gone to extremes. Some people flee from him and all of his writings because he made *taweel* on some occasions. Indeed, recently, people have publicly burnt al-Nawawi's work as well as *Fath al-Bari* by ibn Hajr. Others take and follow what he said even if it goes against the way of the

¹ Al-Nawawi, *al-Majmoo'*, vol. 1, p. 25.

² For other areas in which al-Nawawi had some mistaken views related to *aqeedah*, see Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 219-276.

³ See Al-Nawawi, *al-Majmoo'*, vol. 1, pp. 24-25.

Quran, sunnah and the Companions. Both of these approaches are incorrect and very dangerous.

Perhaps ibn Taimiya best described how one should deal with those great scholars of Islam who had some deviant views or were influenced by one of the many heretical schools in the history of Islam. Ibn Taimiya wrote,

No one is permitted to follow the slips of the scholars. Similarly, no one is allowed to say anything about the people of knowledge and faith except for what is becoming of them. Verily, Allah has overlooked the mistakes of the believers. Allah says [in the Quran as a supplication], “Our Lord, do not hold us responsible if we forget or err” [*al-Baqara* 286]. And Allah said, “I have done so.” [That is, “I have not held them responsible.”] We have been ordered to follow what has been revealed for us from our Lord and we do not accept or follow anyone else as our patron besides Him. We have also been ordered not to obey any created being in an act which is disobedience to the Creator. Furthermore, we seek forgiveness for our brothers who preceded us in faith. We say [as Allah has taught us in the Quran], “Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who have preceded us in faith.”

This is an obligation upon all Muslims in every perplexing matter of this nature. We extol Allah’s command by obedience to Allah and His Messenger. We also attend to the rights of the Muslims, especially the scholars among them, as Allah and His Messenger have ordered. Whoever deviates from this path has deviated from the path of evidence and truth to the path of following desires in blind obedience to others. One then also harms the believing men and women by something that they did not earn. Such a person is an oppressor and a wrongdoer. Whoever magnifies [in his heart] and honors the bounds set by Allah and does well to the servants of Allah, this person will be from the devoted servants of Allah and the God-Fearing. Allah, the Exalted, knows best.¹

Not every mistake in the realm of *aqeedah* means that the person must be condemned or implies that he is a heretic. Indeed, there is a difference between a heresy (*bidah*) and a heretic (*mubtadi*) in the same way that there is a difference between a blasphemous act (*kufir*) and an unbelieving apostate (*kaafir*). Perhaps a person may be forgiven by Allah for a mistake he made in matters of *aqeedah*. Related to this point, ibn Taimiya wrote,

It is not necessarily the case that everyone who makes a mistake in matters of *aqeedah* is destined to be from the

¹ Ahmad ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo Fataawa Shaikh al-Islam ibn Taimiya* (Riyadh: Daar al-Ifta, n.d.), vol. 32, p. 329. Also quoted in Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 32-33.

destroyed and losers. Perhaps, the disputant was a mistaken *mujtahid* [exercising his mental capabilities and striving to find the truth] for whom Allah will forgive his mistake. It is also possible that he did not receive enough information about that topic to conclude that the proof has been established against him.¹

A person may be known for his calling to the sunnah and the way of the Prophet and his Companions. He may also be clear that one must always obey the Quran and sunnah and there is no room for compromise or following others when they differ from the Quran and sunnah. This may be something that echoes throughout his writings and speeches. Even if someone sincerely wishes to stick to that path, it is possible for him to make mistakes. It is hoped that Allah will forgive him for his mistakes while, at the same time, it is recognized that it is not acceptable to follow or accept those mistakes he made. Once again ibn Taimiya wrote,

If a person states that a specific act is recommended and takes one closer to Allah or, by his speech or action, obligates a particular act and he does that without that act being sanctioned by Allah, then he has legislated something in the religion for which Allah has not given permission. Whoever follows that person in that deed has taken him as a partner with Allah... Yes, it could be the case that the person was making *taweel* in what he postulated² and he may be forgiven because of his *taweel*. This is if he was a *mujtahid* and performed the *ijtihaad* that is pardoned when one is mistaken. In fact, he will be rewarded for his *ijtihaad*. However, it is not permissible for anyone to follow him in that [wrong opinion]. In the same way, it is not permissible to follow anyone's statement or action when one is aware that such is not the correct view. [It is not allowed to follow such a person] even if that person might be rewarded or excused [for his mistake].³

In fact, with respect to the Asharis as a whole, Salmaan has an excellent discussion of how they should be viewed and treated. Quoting from a book entitled *al-Aqeedah al-Salafiyah fi Kalaam Rabb al-Bariyah*,⁴ Salmaan wrote,

¹ Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 3, p. 179. The phrase, "proof established against him" is a common phrase in Islamic literature. It implies that a person has been clearly shown, by proofs from the Quran and sunnah, the error of his ways.

² That is, the person was not intentionally violating the laws of Allah but his understanding was that the plain, lexical meaning of the Quran and sunnah was not actually what Allah or the Prophet (peace be upon him) had meant by those words.

³ Ahmad Ibn Taimiya, *Iqtidhaa Siraat al-Mustaqeem* (Published by Dr. Naasir al-Aql, 1404 A.H.), vol. 2, p. 580.

⁴ For whatever reason, Salmaan does not mention the name of the author of this work, as he failed to do so on many other occasions, and he did not include a bibliography to his work.

The Life of Imam al-Nawawi

Among the Asharis there are scholars who served Islam and the Shareeah, including Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi, al-Qaasim ibn Asaakir, Imam al-Izz ibn Abdul Salaam and other virtuous Asharis. We mention the good that they have done although we point out what heresies they fell into. Certainly, there is no partiality when it comes to the truth. However, we do not allow their innovations to prevent us from benefiting from their knowledge of the sunnah, fiqh, Quranic commentary, history and so forth— although we stay cautious.

We have an example in the Pious Forefathers and the leaders of Islam. They narrated from many of the innovators due to their knowledge that those people were honest.

We avoid calling specific Muslims unbelievers, deviants or evildoers when it comes to those types of scholars. Such name-calling or labeling is not the way of the Pious Forefathers. It is sufficient for us to make clear their innovation and refute it when it presents itself to us.

This is the way in which one should deal with a scholar who is not overcome by innovations and desires, and for whom we know that he is very eager to follow in the footsteps of the Messenger (peace be upon him). [This is also the case when we] see him seeking to discover the truth from the Quran and sunnah but he does not reach that truth due to some misconception or other aspect.¹

Finally, ibn Uthaimen was asked specifically about al-Nawawi and ibn Hajr and those people who were calling these two excellent scholars heretics. Ibn Uthaimen gave a lengthy reply during which he stated,

The two *shaikhs* and preservers of the religion have their place of prominence, honesty and great benefit for the Muslim nation. Even if they made some mistake in reinterpreting some of the texts mentioning the attributes [of Allah], such mistakes are covered and immersed by what they had of virtue and great benefit. We suspect that what they stated was only the result of their own personal *ijtihaad* and a permissible form of interpretation— at least in their view. I hope from Allah that such are from the forgiven mistakes; and I hope that the good and benefit that came from them will be efforts that are rewarded and appreciated by Allah; and I hope that Allah's words will apply to them, "Verily, the good deeds remove the evil deeds" (*Hood* 114). We are of the opinion that they are both from the *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah* and this is

¹ Quoted in Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, p. 31.

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evidenced by their service to the sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), their eagerness to purify it from the wrong that had been attributed to it and their implementation of its rulings. They differed from the leaders of the *ahl al-Sunnah* with respect to some verses and hadith concerning attributes [of Allah] based on a mistaken *ijtihaad* and we hope that Allah will deal with them with forgiveness and pardon.¹

His School of *Fiqh*

In the realm of *fiqh*, al-Nawawi was a follower of the Shafi'ee school and, in fact, one of the greatest Shafi'ee scholars to have ever lived. Of the later Shafi'ee scholars, al-Nawawi and, before him, al-Rafi'ee have had the greatest influence. Their influence and following was so great that it led Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Abdul Wahhaab, of the Eighth Century, to say, "Today, the people are Rafi'eeyah and not Shafi'eeya, as well as Nawawiya and not *Nabawiyya* (following the Prophet),"² implying that people were following al-Rafi'ee instead of al-Shafi'ee, and following al-Nawawi instead of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Al-Nawawi was a great *faqeeh* or jurist. However, he was not *muta'asib* (a blind and patriotic follower of a specific school of *fiqh*). In other words, he did not have such an allegiance to his school of *fiqh* that he would continue to follow that school even if its views contradicted the Quran and sunnah. In fact, that is not the meaning of being a *faqeeh* or jurist whatsoever. Instead, it means to understand and derive the laws of the *shareeah* directly from the Quran and sunnah.

Al-Nawawi's classic work on *fiqh*, *al-Majmoo'*, has an introduction about the importance of attaining knowledge and *fiqh*. In that work, he quoted ibn al-Salaah, a previous Shafi'ee *faqeeh* and *muhaddith*, who said,

If a follower of the Shafi'ee school finds a hadith that contradicts his *madhhab*, then if he possesses the qualifications of an absolute *mujtahid*, or a *mujtahid* on that particular subject or issue, then he should research the matter and he has the right to independently follow that hadith. If he does not have those qualifications and it is hard upon him to go against what is stated in the hadith, after he researched the matter and did not find a satisfying response to [why his *madhhab* did not follow that] hadith, then he may act in accord with that hadith if an Imam other than al-Shafi'ee has acted on the basis of that hadith. In that case, he will be excused for not following the Imam of his *madhhab*.

¹ Muhammad ibn Uthaimin, *Kitaab al-Ilm* (Riyadh: Daar al-Tharayaa, 1996), pp. 212-213.

² Quoted in al-Diqr, p. 50.

Al-Nawawi stated that this was an excellent observation on the part of ibn al-Salaah.¹

In al-Nawawi's commentary to *Sahih Muslim* and in his *Majmoo'* one can spot many examples of Imam al-Nawawi following what the hadith states instead of following the Shafi'ee school's opinion. Indeed, his knowledge of *fiqh* went well beyond knowing the Shafi'ee *madhhab*. His student, ibn al-Attaar once said, "He was a preserver of and one who memorized the Shafi'ee *madhhab*, its principles, foundations and secondary issues. He was also knowledgeable of the opinions of the Companions and the Followers. He knew wherein the scholars agreed and wherein they differed. And, in all of that, he followed the path of the early scholars."²

Furthermore, he had a great love for the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was much better grounded in the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) than many of the other jurists. This, in the long run, made him a superior jurist also.

Among the Shafi'ees, al-Nawawi and al-Rafi'ee became known as "the two Shaikhs" (*al-shaikhain*). There developed the question as to who should be followed when al-Nawawi and al-Rafi'ee had a difference of opinion. Some stated that al-Rafi'ee's opinion should be preferred because he was closer in his views to the basic foundations of the Shafi'ee *madhhab*. However, many of the Shafi'ee jurists favored al-Nawawi's opinions because he was more in line with the authentic sunnah and more knowledgeable of hadith. The Shafi'ee jurist and historian al-Yafi'ee wrote,

In my opinion, whenever he [al-Nawawi] supports his view with authentic hadith, then his view takes precedence. This is certainly to be the case because Imam al-Shafi'ee himself once said, "If the hadith is authentic, then it is my *madhhab*." Similar is the case if he does not support himself with a hadith and the forms of evidence they use are comparable to each other, [al-Nawawi's view is still accepted due to his advanced knowledge of the sunnah] he was guided, supported, blessed and correct. However, if one of their opinions is more supported by the evidence, then the one who has the stronger evidence is to be followed.³

However, there may be one difference between al-Rafi'ee and al-Nawawi. It seems, Allah knows best, that al-Rafi'ee was more exacting and put more thought into his writings than al-Nawawi. Al-Nawawi's goal was to reproduce

¹ Al-Nawawi, *al-Majmoo'*, vol. 1, p. 115.

² Quoted in al-Diqr, pp. 49-50.

³ Quoted in al-Diqr, pp. 51-52. Imaam al-Ramaly also made a similar conclusion. See al-Haddaad, p. 21.

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the knowledge that he had received and pass it on. Therefore, Al-Nawawi's writings were numerous and not as exacting as those of al-Rafi'ee.¹

His Writings

There are three aspects that definitely stand out concerning al-Nawawi's writings. The first aspect is how accepted and appreciated his writings are. The second aspect is how much al-Nawawi was able to write in a fairly short period of time. The third aspect deals with al-Nawawi's clarity of expression, conciseness and comprehensiveness.

Concerning the first aspect, Salmaan stated,

Allah has made his writings appreciated and accepted among the people. Hundreds, in fact thousands, of scholars have compiled collections of forty hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) but none of them have had the acceptance and approval like that of *The Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi*. Twenty, in fact, hundreds, of scholars have written commentaries on *Sahih Muslim* but never have had the fame of *Sharh al-Imaam al-Nawawi*, known as *al-Minhaaj fi Sharh Saheeh Muslim ibn al-Hajaa*j. The same is true for the remainder of his writings. Upon al-Nawawi be the mercy and pleasure of Allah.²

Concerning the second aspect, al-Nawawi died at the relatively young age of 44. He started writing in the year 663 or 664.³ Hence, in a span of twelve or thirteen years, he compiled some of the most important works in the history of Islam. One of these works, the commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, is in eighteen volumes. Another work, *al-Raudha*, is twelve volumes. His classic work, *al-Majmoo*, which he did not complete, is published in nine large sized volumes.⁴ These are just some of his works that he completed in that short time. It was said that he wrote a notebook full every day of his writing career. This is proof, once again, that his time was truly blessed and he spent all of his waking moments— and almost all of his moments— writing, researching and spreading his knowledge. In fact, it is said about him that he would continue writing until his hand would hurt him so much that he could not write any more.⁵

Concerning his style of writing, Saleem al-Hilaali has stated,

Al-Nawawi wrote about various topics. His writings were distinguished by their clarity, easy expressions and pleasurable

¹ See al-Asnawi's comments about the two of them as quoted in Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, p. 12.

² Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 7-8.

³ Al-Diqr, p. 73.

⁴ The published work is actually twenty volumes. However, al-Nawawi only finished the first nine. Al-Subki attempted to complete his work but finished only three more volumes. The last eight volumes are from a later scholar.

⁵ Al-Diqr, p. 73.

wordings. When he gave a topic a thorough treatment, he would not leave detail, narration or important point out. If he dealt with something in an abridged matter, he would bring out what was interesting and wonderful.¹

With respect to his writings on *fiqh*, al-Nawawi introduced a very important innovation that set his work apart from the earlier works on *fiqh*. According to Zain al-Iraaqi, before al-Nawawi, the jurists would mention hadith in their books while rarely discussing whether the hadith was authentic or not. This was true, he says, even if the author was a scholar of hadith. They would be silent about the hadith in imitation of those who preceded them. However, al-Nawawi took a different approach. In his works on *fiqh*, he discussed the hadith, mentioned who recorded it and declared whether it was authentic or not.² Al-Iraaqi ends his statement by saying, “This was something important and beneficial. May Allah reward him with a good reward.”³

It is said that al-Nawawi wrote at least fifty books.⁴ The following is a partial list of the works of al-Nawawi (besides those discussed in detail below): *al-Usool wa al-Dhawaabit* (a small book on some principles of *fiqh*); *al-Idhaah fi al-Manaasik* (a book on the rites of Hajj); *al-Tahqeeq* (a work on *fiqh*); *al-Adhkaar* (a book on words of *dhikr* and the remembrance of Allah); *al-Tibyaan fi Adaab Hamlat al-Quran* (a book on the etiquette of reading the Quran); *Bustaan al-Arifeen* (an inspirational work); *Tahdheeb al-Asma wa al-Laughtaat* (a very important biographical and lexical reference work); *Irshad Tullaab al-Haqa`iq* (a work on the sciences of hadith, which was an abridgement and more of ibn al-Salaah’s classic introduction to the sciences of hadith); and *al-Taqreeb wa al-Taiseer* (this is al-Nawawi’s abridgment of his own *Irshaad*).

Below is a discussion of some of his more important works.

Al-Majmoo’ Sharh al-Muhadhdhab

Al-Nawawi’s *al-Majmoo* is an outstanding work of *fiqh* and one of the most comprehensive of all such works. Along with the Hanbali ibn Qudaama’s *al-Mughni*, *al-Majmoo* could be considered one of the best *fiqh* works ever compiled. Both of these works are actually commentaries on standard works of their respective schools of *fiqh*. However, both of the commentators did not

¹ Saleem al-Hilaali, *Bahjat al-Naadhireen Sharh Riyaaadh al-Saaliheen* (al-Damam, Saudi Arabia: Daar ibn al-Jauzi, 1994), vol. 1, p. 11.

² Al-Nawawi’s comments on hadith in his voluminous *Majmoo* have recently been collected and published in a separate volume: Muhammad al-Ramli, *Al-Lulu al-Masnoo fi al-Ahadeeth wa al-Athaar alati hakama alaiha al-Imaam al-Nawawi fi al-Majmoo* (al-Damaam, Saudi Arabia: Ramaadi li-l-Nashr, 1996).

³ For the quote from al-Iraaqi, see al-Haddaad, pp. 20-21.

⁴ Al-Haddaad listed 39 of al-Nawawi’s books that are still in manuscript form today and which he did not have the opportunity to view. See al-Haddaad, pp. 232-236.

restrict themselves to their particular school of fiqh. Indeed, their goal was to present what was correct according to the Quran and sunnah. In doing so, while discussing any particular issue, they would present the views of different scholars and schools and then weigh them to see which are the strongest. Hence, they give a complete picture of the opinions and evidence for almost each fiqh issue conceivable at their times. When ibn Qudaama and al-Nawawi make their conclusions in their respective works, their conclusions are usually quite convincing.

Al-Diqr describes this book as the greatest work of the Shafi'ee school of fiqh. In fact, al-Diqr says, had al-Nawawi been able to complete the work in the pattern that he had begun it, it would be the greatest fiqh work of all, save for what the founders of the schools themselves wrote.¹ After offering a description of the book, ibn Katheer concluded, "In general, it is a book the likes of which I have never seen from what has been passed on from the earlier scholars and none of the later scholars have come up with anything comparable to it."²

His Commentary to *Sahih Muslim*

In the same way that al-Nawawi has one of the classic works on *fiqh*, he also has one of the two most respected and popular commentaries on a collection of hadith. It could be argued, again, that there are two works of hadith commentaries that stand out among the rest. These are ibn Hajr's *Fath al-Baari*, which is a commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari*, and al-Nawawi's commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, sometimes entitled *al-Minhaaj fi Sharh Saheeh Muslim ibn al-Hajaaj*.

Once again, it is both al-Nawawi's detail, when needed, and excellent pithy expressions that give this commentary a distinctive flavor. Al-Diqr states that there is no question that will come to the mind of the reader of *Sahih Muslim* except that he will find the answer to it in al-Nawawi's commentary.³ Al-Nawawi was an expert in hadith, Arabic language and fiqh. He combined all of these together in this work. This led to a commentary that remains today as the main reference on *Sahih Muslim*.

Al-Nawawi wrote his commentary on *Sahih Muslim* towards the end of his life. It was one of the last works that he wrote. He completed the entire work in two years. Most likely, he completed it at the same time he was working on other books.⁴

¹ Al-Diqr, p. 97. In fact, some later scholars have tried to complete it on the pattern of al-Nawawi but, unfortunately, there is a noticeable difference between the completions and the work by al-Nawawi.

² Quoted in al-Diqr, p. 98.

³ Al-Diqr, p. 75.

⁴ al-Diqr, p. 77.

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Al-Nawawi also worked on a commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Unfortunately, he did not complete much of it. It has been recently published and is now available to the public, by the grace and blessings of Allah.

Riyaadh al-Saaliheen (“Gardens of the Righteous”)

One of the works that al-Nawawi is most famous for is a collection of Quranic verses and hadith arranged according to topic, entitled *Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*.¹ Others have compiled similar works but none have been so popular and widely accepted as al-Nawawi's. One of the aspects that sets this work apart from many other similar works is the rarity of weak hadith it contains. Of the over 1900 hadith it contains, approximately only forty hadith are weak. Those weak hadith are not greatly weak and they concern matters for which there is other support, such as Quranic verses or authentic hadith. This overall characteristic of the work is not surprising given al-Nawawi's strong standing as a scholar of hadith.

As is clear from his introduction, his purpose in compiling this work was to encourage others to do good, as Muslims are supposed to work with one another in piety and righteousness.

Although the work was very popular, it was not until Muhammad ibn 'Allan al-Sidiqi (d. 1057 AH) that someone wrote a commentary on the work. After him, very few if anyone wrote another commentary on it until modern times. Recently, two quality commentaries on the work have been published. One is Saleem al-Hilaali's *Bahjat al-Naadhireen Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen* and the other is Muhammad ibn Uthaimen's *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*.²

Raudhat al-Taalibeen wa Umdat al-Mufteen

One of the most important works in the Shafi'ee school of fiqh is al-Nawawi's *Raudhat al-Taalibeen*. This work is basically an abridgment of al-Rafi'ee's *Fath al-Azeez fi Sharh al-Wajeez*. However, al-Nawawi did more than simply abridge that work. On occasion he would differ with the conclusions of al-Rafi'ee and he also discussed some issues which al-Rafi'ee

¹ There are at least four translations of this work currently available in English. These are Muhammad Amin bin Razduq, *Riyad-us-Saliheen* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1998); Abdur Rahman Shad, trans., *Riyad as-Salihin* (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1985); S. M. Madni Abbas, trans., *Riyadh-us-Saliheen* (Karachi: International Islamic Publishers, Ltd., 1983); and Zafrulla Khan (the Qadiani), trans., *Gardens of the Righteous: Riyadh as-Salihin* (London: Curzon Press, 1975).

² Ibn Uthaimen's commentary on *Riyaadh al-Saaliheen* is currently being translated into English: Muhammad ibn Salih al-Uthaymeen, *An Explanation of Riyaaadh al-Saliheen from the words of the Master of the Messengers* (Sajad ibn Abdul Rahman, trans., The Quran and Sunnah Society, 1998).

did not.¹ Interesting aspects of this work include al-Nawawi distinguishing al-Shafi'ee's old views in Iraq from his new views in Egypt, his pointing out the cases concerning which there is a strong difference of opinion and his pointing out of the cases where the difference of opinion is very weak.

Its importance in the Shafi'ee school can be seen by the fact that this book has been abridged, commented upon and expanded by a number of scholars since the time of al-Nawawi. Many later scholars praised it and talked about how essential it is for any follower of the Shafi'ee school.²

Unfortunately, in his abridgment, al-Nawawi left out the evidence for the different positions he states. Hence, the work may be of great use to strict followers of the Shafi'ee school but is not very beneficial for the one who is seeking to go beyond the school itself to understand the evidence and the proofs for the strongest position on a particular question.

It seems that al-Nawawi noticed that there were some shortcomings in this work. He had the intention to review it and edit it. Unfortunately, he passed away before he was able to accomplish that task.³

Minhaaj al-Taalibeen

Another one of the most important fiqh works among the Shafi'ees also came from the pen of Imam al-Nawawi. This work is *Minhaaj al-Taalibeen*. In this work, al-Nawawi abridged al-Rafi'ee's *al-Muharrar*. Since the time of al-Nawawi, it has become standard practice for the Shafi'ees to memorize this work.

This work has been commented upon by a number of scholars. One of the most important of these commentaries is *Mughni al-Muhtaaj ila Marifat Maani Alfaadh al-Minhaaj* by Shams al-Deen Muhammad al-Sharbeeni (d. 977 AH). An English translation, based on the French translation, by the Orientalist E. C. Howard is also available.

His Students

Besides his writings, of course, al-Nawawi cast his influence over numerous students. He taught for many years and many people benefited from him. Some of his better known students include ibn al-Attar, the great scholar of hadith Jamaal al-Deen al-Mizzi, Abu al-Abbaas ibn Faraah, al-Badr Muhammad ibn Jamaah and Abu al-Rabi al-Haashimi.⁴

¹ Zuhair al-Shaweesh, introduction to Yahya al-Nawawi, *Raudhat al-Taalibeen wa Umdat al-Mufteen* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1991), vol. 1, p. ج. See also al-Nawawi's own introduction to that work, p. 5.

² See al-Diqr, pp. 78-80. Al-Diqr also discusses the criticisms of the work on pp. 81-83.

³ Al-Diqr, p. 82.

⁴ For a more extensive discussion of al-Nawawi's students, see al-Haddaad, pp. 129-139.

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His Bravery and Sacrifice for the Sake of Allah

Al-Nawawi understood very well the evil of disobeying Allah. He would not accept or remain silent in the presence of any evil, no matter who or what the source. He stood up for the sake of Allah and he feared the punishment of no one but Allah. He once stated that he considered dying for the sake of Allah an act of worship. Hence, he would stand up to the king, the other scholars, the powers that be and anyone else for the sake of Allah.

At the same time, he understood very well the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him), "The religion is sincere advice." He took it upon himself to advise those who were doing wrong. He tried his best to guide them to what is best and proper. He would use soft speech and convincing arguments from the Quran and sunnah whenever appropriate. If this had no affect, then he would take a harsher approach to try to correct the wrong that appeared around him.

Al-Nawawi, the Ruler and the Masses

The leader of the Muslims during much of al-Nawawi's lifetime was al-Sultan al-Dhaahir. He was a war hero. He was the one who fought the Mongols and handed them a great defeat. However, his status and popularity did not prevent al-Nawawi from standing up to him when he was wrong. He would approach him personally in the Hall of Justice (*Daar al-Adl*) or write to him if necessary.

On one occasion, al-Nawawi sent the Sultan a letter on behalf of the Muslim masses. It was also signed by a number of other scholars. These scholars, as mentioned by al-Nawawi's student ibn al-Attar, who delivered the letter, were from all of the different schools of fiqh represented in Damascus. It is interesting to note that they had al-Nawawi write the letter and send it as a letter from himself with the others signing it. This may be a sign that they accepted al-Nawawi as their leader in this kind of matter, that is, when it came to social reform and standing up to the ruler.

Basically, this letter was a request from Imam al-Nawawi for the ruler to lessen the taxes that were placed on the inhabitants of Sham. Portions of that letter read as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. From the servant of Allah, Yahya al-Nawawi. The peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon the righteous ruler, the king of the governors, may Allah make his good deeds long lasting and make him rule with goodness... and bless him in all of his affairs. Amen.

It is to be brought to your attention that during this year the people of Sham are in very difficult circumstances and are very

weak, due to the lack of rain, high prices, lack of crops, death of grazing animals and other reasons. And you [rulers] know that one must have sympathy for the ruler and the ruled. And one must advise them for his welfare and their welfare. Verily, the religion is sincere advice. Those serving the *shareeah* have written as a matter of advice to the sultan, in love for him. This is a letter reminding him to take care of the affairs of his citizens and to be gentle towards them. There is no harm meant by this letter. Instead, it is a sincere advice and complete act of sympathy. It is a reminder to those of understanding... And it is spoken by pointing out the importance of being gentle with the ruled as then Allah will put in store for you a great reward:

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ
تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ

بِالْعِبَادِ

“On the Day when every person will be confronted with all the good he has done, and all the evil he has done, he will wish that there were a great distance between himself and his evil. And Allah warns you against Himself [His punishment]” [*ali-Imraan* 30]. This letter that the scholars have sent to the ruler is a trust and an advice to the Sultan, may Allah strengthen him. You are responsible and will be questioned about this trust. You have no excuse if you delay concerning it. There will be no proof for you in the sight of Allah if you fail in any way concerning it. You will be asked about it,

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ

“The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail” [*al-Shuaraa* 88].

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ﴿١٦﴾ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ ﴿١٧﴾ وَصَحِيَّتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ ﴿١٨﴾ لِكُلِّ

أَمْرٍ مِّنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُعْنِيهِ

“That Day shall a man flee from his brother, and even from his mother and his father, and even from his wife and his children. Every man, that Day, will have enough to make him not care for others” [*Abasa* 34-37]. You, and praise is due to Allah, love goodness and are anxious to perform good. You, in fact,

rush to it. And this is one of the best of good deeds and one of the most virtuous acts of obedience. You are qualified for it and Allah has delivered it to you. This is a bounty from Allah. We are afraid that the matters might get even worse if you do not look into dealing softer with the people. Allah has said,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَئِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ

“Verily, those who are pious, when an evil thought comes to them from Satan, they remember (Allah), and (indeed) they then see (aright)” [*al-Araaf* 201]. Allah also says,

وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

“Whatever you do of good deeds, truly Allah knows them well” [*al-Baqara* 215]. The group that wrote this letter are expecting its fruits. Whatever you do you will find it with Allah.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

“Surely Allah is with those who fear Him and the doers of good” [*al-Nahl* 128]. Peace, blessings and mercy of Allah be upon you.¹

One can see from this letter that al-Nawawi had no intention to try to show up the ruler. He was not trying to demonstrate that he has more influence or power than the ruler. He was not insulting to the ruler nor did he use any bad language directed to the ruler, as many people do today. He was not trying to show how brave he was in standing in front of the ruler. Instead, his interest was the interests of the people. He spoke to the ruler in such a way that he believed he would get his message across and the people would be helped.

Al-Nawawi would change his approach if kindness and politeness would not achieve his goal. If that did not work, he would put the fear of Allah into the ruler, while, at the same time, making it clear that he feared no one but Allah. After the above letter was sent to the ruler, the response was not positive. Indeed, the response was more of a threat than anything else. Apparently, in that response, the ruler claimed that he needed to collect those taxes for the sake of jihad. Here are portions of the letter that al-Nawawi sent to the ruler after receiving the ruler’s response to the first letter:

¹ For the text of this letter, see ibn al-Attaar, pp. 101-104; al-Suyooti, *al-Minhaaj*, p. 66-68; al-Haddaad, p. 106; Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 304-306; al-Diqr, pp. 160-162.

... The response that has come is one of rejection, rebuke and threat. We understood from it that the jihad you mentioned in your response is not in accord with the *shareeah*. Allah has made it obligatory to explain a ruling when need calls for it. Allah has said,

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ

“And remember when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the scripture to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to conceal it” [*ali-Imraan* 187]. Therefore, it is obligatory upon us to make it clear and it is forbidden for us to be silent. Allah has said,

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ مَا يَنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“There is no blame on those who are weak or ill or who find no resources to spend, if they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger. No grounds [of complaint] can there be against the doers of good. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” [*al-Taubah* 91]. You mentioned in your response that jihad is not simply upon the soldiers. This is something that we do not disdain. But jihad is a communal obligation. If the sultan has a special army that receives its wages from the Public Treasury, and that is the case that is happening today, then the rest of the citizens are to be left alone to their own interests and the interest of the sultan and his soldiers by farming, construction and so forth. All of the people are in need of that. The jihad of the soldiers corresponds to the wages that have been set for them. It is not allowed for them to take anything from the citizenry, as long as there is some money, property, land or possessions in the public treasury. The Muslim scholars in the land of the Sultan are all agreed on this point. Praise be to Allah, the public treasury is filled with money and may Allah increase it and bless it during the life of the sultan and support him in his struggle against the enemies of Islam.

وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ

“There is no victory except from Allah” [*ali-Imraan* 126]. His help is sought in jihad and other aspects by completely recognizing one’s reliance upon Allah, following the footsteps of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and implementing the laws of the Shariah. All that we wrote, first and last, was an advice that we believed in. We worship Allah accordingly. We ask Allah to keep us on that path until we meet Him. The Sultan knows that it was an advice for him and for his citizens. There is no room for any blame in it. We did not write it to the Sultan except because we know that he loves the *shareeah* and following the behavior of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) in treating his citizens with kindness and sympathy. And we know the Sultan’s tendency to follow the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him)....

As for threatening the citizens because of our advice and threatening a group [of scholars], this is not what is expected from the justice and calmness of the ruler.... As for myself, threats do not harm me or mean anything to me. They will not keep me from advising the Sultan. Certainly, I believe that this is obligatory upon me and upon others. The result of anything obligatory will be goodness and an increase of good in the sight of Allah.

إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَعٌ وَإِنَّ الْأَخْرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ

“Truly, this life of the world is nothing but a (quick passing) enjoyment, and verily, the Hereafter that is the Home that will remain forever” [*Ghaafir* 39].

وَأَفْوِضُ أَمْرِي إِلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

“I leave my affair to Allah. Verily, Allah is the All-Seer of (His) slaves” [*Ghaafir* 44]. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) ordered us to speak the truth wherever we are and not to fear, for the sake of Allah, the punishment of anyone. [Then al-Nawawi praises the ruler and admits that the ruler had done a great deal of good in jihad and other realms.].... There will be no argument for us if we abandon the act of advising that is obligatory upon us. Peace, the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you.¹

In this letter, one can see that al-Nawawi’s complete concern was Allah and the Hereafter. He did not care about the threats he received. He only cared

¹ For the complete text of this letter, see ibn al-Attaar, pp. 104-108; al-Suyooti, *al-Minhaaj*, pp. 68-71; al-Haddaad, p. 109; Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 306-309; al-Diqr, p. 162-165.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

about correcting the wrong that was being done. He did not bow down to the ruler just because he was the ruler and just because he had done some excellent deeds in the past. However, he realized that he must advise the ruler. He clearly stated that the results of acting upon what is obligatory can only be good and praiseworthy in the end.

Al-Nawawi, the Ruler and the Masses Again

On more than one occasion, al-Nawawi approached the ruler in the Hall of Justice concerning a particular matter that was of common interest to the people of Damascus. It had to do with the gardens that they had owned and kept. They had been taken over by the Mongols. After the Mongols were thrown out of Damascus, the ruler appointed a Hanafi jurist who stated that as long as the people do not bring proof that those lands belonged to them in prior years, some sort of document, for example, then it would belong to the ruler and the government. This was a great hardship on the people as many of those lands were in the possession of their families for years and they had no proof for such. Al-Nawawi became harsh with the ruler after he would not respond to his pleas and the request of the other scholars and return the gardens to their rightful owners. Finally, the ruler became upset and told his workers to cut off al-Nawawi's salary. He was told that he does not receive any salary or wages. He asked, "How does he eat?" They said, "From what his father sends him from time to time." The ruler said, "By Allah, I thought about seizing him and having him killed but then it was if I saw a lion with his mouth open between him and me. Had I approached him, he would have attacked me."¹ Indeed, it was narrated by many that the ruler, the military hero of the wars against the Mongols, greatly feared al-Nawawi.

After the face to face meetings with the ruler were of no avail, al-Nawawi sent a letter to the ruler advising him to change his ways and to treat the citizenry in the proper manner. Here are some excerpts from that letter—note how forcefully he tries to move the ruler by quotes from the Quran and hadith,

In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. All praises are due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. Allah says,

وَذَكِّرْ فَإِنَّ الذِّكْرَ تَنْفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"And remind, for verily reminding profits the believers" [*al-Dhaariyaat* 55]. Allah says,

¹ Quoted in al-Suyooti, *al-Minhaaj*, p. 29; al-Haddaad, p. 107;

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ

“[And remember] when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it” [*ali-Imraan* 187]. And Allah says,

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ

“Help you one another in righteousness and piety; but do not help one another in sin and transgression” [*al-Maaidah* 2]. Allah has obliged the responsible people to advise the Sultan and to advise the Muslim masses. In an authentic hadith, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

الدِّينُ النَّصِيحَةُ لِلَّهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِأَيِّمَّةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَعَامَّتِهِمْ

“Religion is sincere advice to Allah, His Book, the leaders of the Muslims and the masses.”¹ From the matters of giving advice to the Sultan, may Allah strengthen him and guide him to the obedience of Allah, is to inform the Sultan whenever anything is done in contradiction to the principles of Islam. Allah has made obligatory kind treatment of the citizenry and looking after the affairs of the weak, as well as removing any harm from them. Allah says,

وَأَخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“And lower your wing [i.e., be kind and courteous] to the believers” [*al-Hijr* 88]. In an authentic hadith, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

هَلْ تُنصَرُونَ وَتُرزَقُونَ إِلَّا بِضِعْفَائِكُمْ

“Are you not but supported and provided for only due to your poor?” The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

¹ Here al-Nawawi was paraphrasing a hadith found in al-Bukhari and Muslim.

من كشف عن مسلم كربة من كرب الدنيا كشف الله عنه كربة من كرب يوم القيامة
والله في عون العبد ما كان العبد في عون أخيه

“Whoever removes a difficulty from a Muslim in this world, Allah will remove for him a difficulty of the difficulties of the Day of Judgment. Allah is assisting the servant as long as he is assisting his brother.”¹ The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ وَلِيَ مِنْ أَمْرِ أُمَّتِي شَيْئًا فَشَقَّ عَلَيْهِمْ فَاشْتُقْ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ وَلِيَ مِنْ أَمْرِ أُمَّتِي شَيْئًا
فَرَفَقَ بِهِمْ فَارْفُقْ بِهِ

“O Allah, if anyone is in charge of anything for my *Ummah* and he is harsh upon them, then be harsh upon him. And if anyone is in charge of anything for my *Ummah* and he is gentle upon them, then be gentle with him.”² He also said,

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

“All of you are shepherds [people in places of responsibility] and you will all be asked about your flock.”³ The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

إِنَّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَلَى مَنَابِرَ مِنْ نُورٍ عَنْ يَمِينِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَكِلْتَا يَدَيْهِ يَمِينٌ
الَّذِينَ يَعْدِلُونَ فِي حُكْمِهِمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ وَمَا وَلُوا

“The just will be with Allah upon *minbars* of light to the right of the Merciful, and both of His hands are right hands. They are the ones who are just with respect to rulings, people and what they are in charge of.”⁴ [Then al-Nawawi praises the ruler for all the good that he had done. He asks Allah to continue his rule and to bless him....] Allah has made it obligatory to give

¹ Here again, al-Nawawi is paraphrasing a hadith found in al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² This text was recorded by Muslim. Actually, in al-Nawawi’s letter he reversed the two sentences.

³ Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

⁴ This was recorded by Muslim. Again, al-Nawawi somewhat paraphrased the text.

thanks for His blessings and He has promised to give more to those who are thankful. Allah has said,

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

“If you give thanks, I will give you more” [*Ibraaheem* 7]. The Muslims have faced, due to this taking over of their property, such different forms of harm that no one could possibly put into words. You have sought from them proof that should not be required of them. None of the scholars of the Muslims have ever declared that land legal [for the rulers to take]. In fact, if someone possesses something, it is considered his property. It is not allowed to deny him or to require him to prove his ownership. The life of the Sultan is known to be of one who loves acting according to the Shariah. You advise your deputies to do such. So it is much more befitting that you also do so. You are responsible for freeing the people from this problem and solving all of their problems concerning it. If you free them, Allah will free you from every disliked deed, for these people are the weak, some of them are orphans, poor, weak and righteous people. It is through these people that you are aided, rescued and provided for. They are the inhabitants of the blessed land of Sham and the neighbors of the Prophets (peace be upon them). They are to be treated with due respect and should not be harmed for any reason. If the Sultan would see what hardship they are facing and their great grieving, he would release them immediately and would not delay. However, the matter is not being presented to him correctly. By Allah, rescue the Muslims and Allah will rescue you. Be kind with them and Allah will be kind with you. Bring them a solution soon before the rains come and they lose all their crops. Most of them inherited their lands from the previous generations and it is not possible for them to provide a script showing that they bought the land. If the Sultan is kind to them, then he has for him the supplication of the Prophet (peace be upon him) for those who are kind to his *Ummah* and he will also be helped against his enemies. Allah has said,

إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ

“If you help (in the cause of) Allah, He will help you” [*Muhammad* 7]. The citizenry will also pray for you. Your dominion will be filled with blessings. It will be blessed in all of the good deeds you intend. There is a hadith from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that states,

مَنْ سَنَّ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ سُنَّةً حَسَنَةً فَعَمِلَ بِهَا بَعْدَهُ كُتِبَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أُجْرٍ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا وَلَا يَنْقُصُ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْءٌ وَمَنْ سَنَّ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ سُنَّةً سَيِّئَةً فَعَمِلَ بِهَا بَعْدَهُ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ مِثْلُ وِزْرِ مَنْ عَمِلَ بِهَا وَلَا يَنْقُصُ مِنْ أُوزَارِهِمْ شَيْءٌ

“Whoever establishes a good practice in Islam that is acted upon after him shall have recorded for him the reward of everyone who acted upon it without the reward of any of them being lessened. Whoever establishes an evil practice in Islam that is acted upon after him shall have recorded for him the burden of everyone who acted upon it without the burden of any of them being lessened.”¹ We ask Allah, the Noble, to guide the Sultan to a good deed by which he will be remembered until the Day of Judgment and to protect him from an evil practice. This is the advice to the Sultan that is obligatory upon us. We hope from Allah that Allah will inspire him to accept it. Peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of Allah. All praises are due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. And the peace of blessings be upon our leader Muhammad, his family and his companions.²

Another narration states that the ruler was able to get a number of jurists, some out of fear and some for worldly benefit, to sign a *fatwa* allowing the ruler to do what he had decided upon. Some of the scholars refused to sign the decree. However, it is stated that the ruler had some of the scholars who did not sign the *fatwa* killed.³ This seems a bit strange as it is somewhat out of line with what is known about al-Dhaahir Baibars, his relationship with the Muslim scholars and even with how al-Nawawi deals with him in his letters.

Perhaps the stronger narration is the narration that states that the ruler became very upset with al-Nawawi after these encounters. Hence, he decided to have him removed from Damascus. Al-Nawawi said that he would listen and obey— perhaps realizing that such would cause less harm and civil strife than remaining in Damascus and opposing the ruler. Hence, he left Damascus and went to his hometown of Nawa.⁴

¹ Recorded by Muslim.

² The complete wording of the letter may be found in ibn al-Attaar, pp. 108-114; al-Suyooti, *al-Minhaaj*, pp. 71-74; al-Haddaad, pp. 111-113; Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 310-313; al-Diqr, pp. 146-149.

³ See al-Diqr, p. 144.

⁴ Al-Diqr, p. 145.

Al-Nawawi, the Ruler and the Masses Once Again

Sultan al-Dhaahir Baibars understood the dangers of the Mongols close by. Hence, he decided to do what he could to defeat them and drive them further out of the lands of the Muslims. He asked for a *fatwa* from the scholars that would allow him to take money from the citizenry in order to use it in his battles against the Mongols. The scholars of al-Shaam wrote such a *fatwa* for him. He asked if any scholar refused to write such a letter and he was told that only al-Nawawi refused. Al-Dhaahir Baibars had al-Nawawi brought to him and he asked him personally to sign with the other scholars. However, al-Nawawi refused. The Sultan asked him why. He answered,

I know that you used to be a slave of the Ameer Banduqaar and you did not have any wealth. Then Allah bestowed His bounty upon you and you became the ruler. I have heard that you have one thousand male slaves and each one of them as a girth [by which the horse's saddle is tied] of gold. And you have two hundred slave girls and each of them has a portion of gold jewelry. If you spend all of that and you leave your slaves with straps and dyes instead of the gold girths, and you leave the slave girls with their clothing and no jewelry, then I will give you a *fatwa* that you can take wealth from the citizenry.¹

Here, once again, it is narrated that the Sultan got upset with him and had him banished from Damascus. He then left to Nawa. Perhaps, there was more than one event that led to the Sultan's actual decision to ban al-Nawawi from Damascus, Allah knows best.

After he left to Nawa, the scholars said that he was one of their leading scholars and workers. He is someone whose example is to be followed. Hence, they went to try to bring him back to Damascus. However, he refused. He said that he would not enter Damascus if al-Dhaahir was still there. After a few months, Sultan al-Dhaahir Baibars died.²

Al-Jaami' commented on this incident by stating that one should note how the Sultan was not willing to take any action until he received the *fatwa* of the scholars on that matter. Even though the Sultan wanted that wealth for a noble purpose, al-Nawawi refused as he saw it as taking wealth through improper means.³ Pious intentions do not make illegal means permissible.

Finally, al-Jaami stated that one should note how the rest of the scholars reacted. They did not remain silent at what had happened to their fellow scholar and leader. Instead, they got together and tried to bring al-

¹ See Abdul Rahman al-Jaami, *Ulama`una wa Duatuna: Mawaaqif Batoola wa Shujaah* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1411 A.H.), p. 37.

² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Nawawi back to Damascus, showing him that they would support him upon his return. This is the behavior that scholars should exhibit towards one another.¹

As shall be seen in the next example, al-Nawawi had already set the example for them. He is the one who came to their defense when the ruler tried to wrong them.

Al-Nawawi, the Ruler and the Scholars

On one occasion, the ruler decreed that a jurist could only teach at one school at a time. This caused great hardship upon the scholars as many of the schools did not offer sufficient salaries for them to live. Hence, they had to teach in different schools to make ends meet. Al-Nawawi knew the importance of the scholars and knew the importance of standing up on their behalf. Hence, he did not remain silent on this issue but he once again wrote the ruler to correct him on this policy that he had enacted.

This shows that al-Nawawi involved himself in social issues that were not directly related to texts of the Quran and sunnah. No one can claim that this decree was not a right of the ruler if he felt that there was some benefit or need for it. However, al-Nawawi realized that such a ruling was not in the best interests of the people or, in particular, of the scholars who are so important to society. Hence, he stepped in and did his best to change the way of the ruler.

This letter was once again filled with exhortations from the Quran and hadith. He stressed the importance of the scholars and how they are the heirs of the Prophets. He stated that many of them have families and cannot live off of just one salary. In any case, they are involved in spreading knowledge and they deserve to be supported.²

Note that al-Nawawi, who was one of the scholars and one of the teachers, had no personal interest in this matter. He was teaching at only one school and he was not accepting his salary for teaching at that school. Hence, he was coming to the defense of his brethren scholars while not seeking any personal benefit.

Al-Nawawi and Other Scholars

Imam al-Nawawi had the greatest amount of respect for all of the other scholars throughout the history of Islam. This was very clearly shown in his writings of a biographical nature. He used to praise them for their services to Islam. At the same time, however, given the love he had for the scholars, the truth was definitely more beloved to him. He would not hesitate to point out a mistake or to disagree with a scholar if that scholar's views were not based on

¹ Ibid., p. 39.

² For the complete text of the letter, see ibn al-Attaar, pp. 115-116; Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 315-317; al-Diqr, pp. 166-168.

sound evidence. This obviously did not mean that he did not have the greatest amount of love and respect for that scholar. Instead, he knew that it was his responsibility towards Allah to expose truth and oppose falsehood no matter what or who the source of that falsehood be.

One of al-Nawawi's beloved *shaikhs* was al-Taaj al-Fazari. He gave a *fatwa* for the ruler al-Dhaahir that it was not necessary to give one-fifth of the booty for the sake of Allah, His Messenger, the poor and so forth. He tried to prove that from evidence from the Quran and sunnah. The ruler and the army were very happy with this ruling because they continued to receive large amounts of booty through their fighting. However, al-Nawawi noted the falsehood in his argument and, therefore, he could not remain silent. Al-Nawawi stated that the *shaikh* had gone against the consensus of the Muslim scholars. The two debated this issue and there were harsh words between them. Al-Fazari was a better debater but al-Nawawi knew the *madhhab* better than him, memorizing numerous texts, and he was able to confound him. He refuted him in detail and with stern words, this although he was a man who was beloved to him. But, again, Allah was more beloved to al-Nawawi.¹

If al-Nawawi concluded that a person who was thought to be a scholar seemed to have a bad intention in some act he was doing, al-Nawawi would advise that person in stern words. There was a *shaikh* in Damascus known as ibn al-Najjaar. He tried to implement some things that went against the Quran and sunnah. He gave a *fatwa* (religious ruling) stating that the ruler could take the gardens from the citizens. Al-Nawawi wrote him a letter advising him to change his ways and stated that none of the earlier scholars had ever given such a *fatwa*. His response was to write a threatening and insulting letter back to al-Nawawi. Al-Nawawi was forced to respond. He wrote him an extremely long letter. He kept referring to ibn al-Najjaar as "the one who wronged his own soul." He exhorted him with Quranic verses and hadith.

The opening part of the letter, however, shows that al-Nawawi was not out to oppose ibn al-Najjaar until ibn al-Najjaar's own state was made very clear by his public actions. Here is the opening of that lengthy letter,

All praises are due to Allah. From Yahya al-Nawawi. O you who are lacking in your preparation for returning to Him by leaving what is best for your own self... I was not aware of your dislike for supporting the religion and advising the Sultan and Muslims. [I was not aware of that] because all believers should be treated with good thoughts. Every once in a while I would hear about how you were deceiving the Muslims. However, I rejected those reports with both my tongue and my heart, because such was backbiting and I did not know if those reports were true. And I continued to be in that state until these

¹ For the details of that story, see al-Diqr, pp. 116-121.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

days. [He then goes on to explain how he had lied and tried to deceive the ruler.]¹

Al-Nawawi and the Masses

In sum, one can see that al-Nawawi was a defender of the masses, a defender of the scholars and a defender of the truth. He would oppose anyone who went against the Quran and sunnah. He would not just oppose the little people and leave the powers that be alone. Similarly, his life was not simply about standing up to the ruler and forgetting about the wrong that others did. Indeed, one must include among his acts of establishing good and eradicating evil the many writings that he has against different innovations that were practiced by the masses of his time.

He objected to the innovation of bowing down to one's Sufi *shaikh*, the innovations that occurred at the grave of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the innovation of building mosques upon graves and many other issues. In his defense of the *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*, he wrote against the Qadarriyah, Mutazilah, Khawaarij and Shia.² All of this was part and parcel of his standing for the truth, establishing good and eradicating evil.³

His Death

Shortly before al-Nawawi's death, he returned to his hometown of Nawa. There are two different stories given as to why he returned. Perhaps they are not contradictory. Basically, the ruler al-Dhaahir Bairbars became so enraged with al-Nawawi's refusal to accept any kind of wrong that he ordered al-Nawawi to be expelled from Damascus. The ruler's expelling of al-Nawawi could have been due to al-Nawawi's objections to more than one act that the ruler was doing. Al-Nawawi then went to visit his teachers and colleagues in Damascus, both alive and dead, at their cemeteries, to bid them farewell. Then he went to Jerusalem, and then back home to Nawa.⁴ Allah knows best.

After a short period of time in Nawa, he fell ill and passed away. He died on the 24th of Rajab, 676 A.H. (1277 CE). He died at the age of forty-four. However, by the grace and mercy of Allah, his accomplishments during his short life span were equal to or greater than many who lived even twice as long

¹ For the complete text of the letter, see Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 318-327; al-Diqr, pp. 149-158.

² His discussions on these points may be found, for example, throughout his commentary on *Sahih Muslim*. However, Salmaan has combined a number of them together and eloquently presented them as a coherent whole. See Salmaan, *al-Rudood*, pp. 277-300.

³ Although many people today seem to neglect the fact that it is just as important to eradicate the wrong of the masses as is eradicating the wrong of the rulers. The ruler is not the only one that needs to be advised and corrected. Sincere advice is also to be given to the Muslim masses. This can only be done if one corrects and guides them with respect to the many innovations and incorrect beliefs they hold.

⁴ See al-Diqr, p. 194.

as he did. May Allah reward him greatly for all of his efforts and striving for the sake of Allah.

When the news of his death reached Damascus, the people were very saddened. Tears flowed from their eyes. One of the greatest scholars and greatest leaders of the people had passed away. Indeed, one who was greatly beloved by almost everyone he touched in his life had died.

As his student ibn al-Attar mentioned and as is clear from his commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, he wished that his grave would be according to the sunnah. That is, it was to be leveled and not prominent. However, the people— perhaps one could say the ignorant people— refused that. They wanted to make his grave site prominent and a place for visitation. They decided to build a dome over his grave. However, Allah willed that al-Nawawi's wish be fulfilled. Every time they tried to build something over his grave, it was destroyed. His grave, after many attempts, was finally left flat, slightly marked and according to the sunnah.¹ His grave is still well-known and recognized today.

Conclusion

This author does not claim that this short biography of Imam al-Nawawi does justice to him. His student ibn al-Attar once stated that he saw many amazing things from al-Nawawi that if he were to write about all of them, it would fill volumes.² All of the biographers who wrote about al-Nawawi praised him greatly. They all accepted his status as a scholar, leader and ascetic. Perhaps one can sum up what the different scholars said about him by one statement from the scholar of hadith Abu al-Abbaas ibn Faraah. He stated, "The *shaikh* had reached the top in three areas. Every one of these areas is such that a person should be willing to mount his camel and travel in order to seek it. One is the level he attained when it comes to knowledge. The second is the level he attained when it comes to asceticism. And the third is the level he attained in ordering good and eradicating evil."³

¹ Al-Diqr, pp. 195-196.

² Quoted in al-Diqr, p. 182.

³ Quoted in al-Suyooti, *al-Minhaaj*, p. 49; al-Haddaad, p. 117. For quotations from numerous biographical dictionaries concerning al-Nawawi, see al-Haddaad, pp. 117-123; al-Diqr, pp. 173-182.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

Commentary on Al-Nawawi's Introduction

Imam al-Nawawi's Introduction to His *Forty Hadith*¹

الحمد لله رب العالمين، قيوم السماوات والأرضين، مدبر
الخلايق أجمعين، باعث الرسل صلوات الله وسلامه عليهم
أجمعين إلى المكلفين، هدايتهم وبيان شرائع الدين، بالدلائل
القطعية وواضحات البراهين، أحمدته على جميع نعمه وأسأله
المزيد من فضله وكرمه، وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا
شريك له الواحد القهار، الكريم الغفار، وأشهد أن سيدنا
محمداً عبده ورسوله، وحببه وخليله، وأفضل المخلوقين،
المكرم بالقرآن العزيز المعجزة المستمرة على تعاقب
السنين، وبالسنن المستمرة للمتشرحين، سيدنا محمد
المخصوص بجوامع الكلم وسماحة الدين، صلوات الله
وسلامه عليه وعلى سائر النبيين والمرسلين وآل كلّ وسائر
الصالحين، أما بعد:

فقد روينا عن علي بن أبي طالب وعبد الله بن مسعود
ومعاذ بن جبل وأبي الدرداء وابن عمر وابن عباس وأنس
بن مالك وأبي هريرة وأبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنهم

¹ First, the text of al-Nawawi's Introduction shall be presented. This will be followed by a commentary on that introduction. The translated text of al-Nawawi's work will be indented to distinguish it from the commentary.

من طرق كثيرات بروايات متنوعة أن رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) قال "من حفظ على أمي أربعين حديثاً من أمر دينها بعثه الله يوم القيامة في زمرة الفقهاء والعلماء." وفي رواية أبي الدرداء "وكنت له يوم القيامة شافعاً وشهيداً." وفي رواية ابن مسعود "قيل له: ادخل من أيّ أبواب الجنة شئت." وفي رواية ابن عمر "كُتِبَ في زمرة العلماء وحُشِر في زمرة الشهداء." واتفق الحفاظ على أنه حديث ضعيف وإن كثرت طرقه.

وقد صنف العلماء رضي الله عنهم في هذا الباب ما لا يحصى من المصنفات. فأول من علمته صنف فيه عبد الله بن المبارك، ثم ابن أسلم الطوسي العالم الربّاني، ثم الحسن بن سفيان النسائي، وأبو بكر الآجري وأبو بكر محمد بن إبراهيم الأصفهاني، والدارقطني والحاكم وأبو نعيم وأبو عبد الرحمن السلمي وأبو سعيد الماليني وأبو عثمان الصابوني وعبد الله بن محمد الأنصاري وأبو بكر البيهقي وخلائق لا يحصون من المتقدمين والمتأخرين.

وقد استخرت الله تعالى في جمع أربعين حديثاً اقتداءً بهؤلاء الأئمة الأعلام وحفاظ الإسلام، وقد اتفق العلماء على جواز العمل بالحديث الضعيف في فضائل الأعمال، ومع هذا فليس اعتماداً على هذا الحديث، بل على قوله

(صلى الله عليه وسلم) في الأحاديث الصحيحة: "ليبلغ الشاهد منكم الغائب." وقوله (صلى الله عليه وسلم) "نضر الله امرءاً سمع مقالتي فوعاها فأداها كما سمعها." ثم من العلماء من جمع الأربعين في أصول الدين، وبعضهم في الفروع، وبعضهم في الجهاد، وبعضهم في الزهد، بعضهم في الآداب، وبعضهم في الخطب، وكلها مقاصد صالحة رضي الله عن قاصديها، وقد رأيت جمع أربعين أهم من هذا كله. وهي أربعون حديثاً مشتملة ذلك، وكل حديث منها قاعدة عظيمة من قواعد الدين، قد وصف العلماء بأن مدار الإسلام عليه، أو هو نصف الإسلام أو ثلثه أو نحو ذلك، ثم ألتزم في هذه الأربعين أن تكون صحيحة، معظمها في صحيح البخاري ومسلم، وأذكرها محذوفة الأسانيد ليسهل حفظها ويعم الانتفاع بها إن شاء الله تعالى، ثم أتبعها بباب في ضبط خفي ألفاظها. وينبغي لكل راغب في الآخرة أن يعرف هذه الأحاديث لما اشتملت عليه من المهمات واحتوت عليه من التنبيه على جميع الطاعات، وذلك ظاهر لمن تدبره، وعلى الله اعتمادي، وإليه تفويضي واستنادي، وله الحمد والنعمة، وبه التوفيق والعصمة.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, the [One who] Sustains the Heavens and the Earths, Director of all that is created, who sent the messengers

(peace and the blessings of Allah be upon all of them) to rational beings, to guide them and explain the religious laws to them with clear proofs and undeniable arguments. I praise Him for all of His bounties. I ask Him to increase His grace and generosity. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, alone, who has no partner, the One Alone, the [One who] Subdues, the Generous, the Forgiving. I bear witness that our leader Muhammad is His servant and messenger, His beloved and dear one, the best of all creation. He was honored with the Glorious Quran that is the enduring miracle throughout all the years. He was also sent with his guiding sunnah that shows the way for those who seek guidance. Our leader Muhammad has been particularized with the characteristic of eloquent and pithy speech, and simplicity and ease in the religion. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, the other prophets and messengers, all of their families and the rest of the righteous.

To proceed:

We have narrated, through many chains and various narrations, from Ali ibn Abu Taalib, Abdullah ibn Masood, Muaadh ibn Jabal, Abu al-Darda, ibn Umar, ibn Abbaas, Anas ibn Maalik, Abu Huraira and Abu Saeed al-Khudri— may Allah be pleased with all of them— that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, “Whoever preserves for my Nation forty hadith related to its religion, Allah will then resurrect him in the company of the savants and scholars.” Another narration states, “Allah will raise him as an erudite and learned scholar.” In the narration from Abu al-Darda, it is stated, “On the Day of Resurrection, I will be an intercessor and witness for him.” In the narration from ibn Masood, it is stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “It will be said to him, ‘Enter Paradise through any door you wish.’” In the narration of ibn Umar, one finds the words, “He will be recorded among the company of the scholars and will be resurrected in the company of the martyrs.” The scholars of hadith agree that, although this hadith has numerous chains, it is weak.

The scholars (may Allah be pleased with them) have compiled innumerable works of this nature. The first one that I know of who compiled such a work was Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak. After him came ibn Aslam al-

Toosi, a pious scholar. Then came al-Hasan ibn Sufyaan al-Nasaai, Abu Bakr al-Aajuri, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem al-Asfahaani, al-Daaraqutni, al-Haakim, Abu Nuaim, Abu Abd al-Rahmaan al-Sulami, Abu Saïd al-Maleeni, Abu Uthmaan al-Saabooni, Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Ansaari, Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi and countless others both from earlier and later times.

I have turned to Allah for guidance and prayed to Him while compiling these forty hadith, following the example of those Imams and guardians of Islam. The scholars have agreed that it is permissible to act in accord with weak hadith that state the virtuousness of deeds. Nonetheless, given that fact, I have not relied upon that hadith only in compiling this work. Instead, I am following the statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) found in an authentic hadith, "Let him who was present among you inform those who are absent." The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said, "May Allah make radiant the man who has heard what I said, preserved it in his memory and conveyed it in the way that he heard it."

Scholars have compiled forty hadith on faith and belief (*usool*), on practical matters (*furoo*), on jihad, on austerity, on etiquette, and even on sermons. All of these [collections] were concerning righteous aims. May Allah be pleased with those who sought them. However, I have found it best to collect together forty hadith which are more important than all of those. These forty hadith incorporate all of those separate topics. In fact, each hadith is by itself a great general precept from the foundations of the religion. Some scholars state that all of Islam revolves around these hadith. Some have said, about particular hadith, that they are one-half of Islam, one-third of Islam and so forth.

I have committed myself to including only authentic hadith in these forty hadith. The majority of them are from *Sahih al-Bukhari* or *Sahih Muslim*. I have mentioned them without their chain of authorities in order for it to be easier to memorize them and thus more will be able to benefit from them, Allah willing. After the hadith, I included a section on the meanings of the obscure expressions found in the hadith.¹

¹ This is not included in the translation but may be referred to in the commentary.

Everyone who desires and looks forward to the Hereafter must be familiar with these hadith because they cover the most important aspects of the religion and offer direction to all forms of obedience to Allah. This is clear to anyone who ponders these hadith. I rely only upon Allah and I entrust my affair only to Him. To Him is all the Praise and grace, from Him is guidance and protection from error.

Commentary on Al-Nawawi's Introduction

Al-Nawawi stated, "All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds..."

It is noteworthy, that in none of al-Nawawi's major works did he begin with what is known as *khutbah al-haajah*.¹ These are the words with which the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to begin many of his speeches. In his commentary to *Sahih Muslim*, al-Nawawi makes mention of *khutbah al-haajah* by saying, "It is confirmed in *Sunan Abu Dawood* with a *sahih* chain from ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him) who said, 'The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) taught us *khutbah al-haajah*: All praise is due to Allah, we praise Him, seek His aid and...'"² In that hadith, it is clear that the Prophet (peace be upon him) intentionally taught his followers that beginning. For this reason, many of the learned begin their lectures, Friday speeches and books similarly. However, no one claims that it is obligatory. If someone begins his speech in that matter, he has done well and what is best. If he does not, no harm has been done.

Al-Nawawi always began his works with praises of Allah. As is clear from his commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, he followed this practice due to the following hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him), as reported by Abu Huraira:

كُلُّ أَمْرٍ ذِي بَالٍ لَا يُبْدَأُ فِيهِ بِالْحَمْدِ أَقْطَعُ

"Every matter of importance that does not begin with praise [of Allah] is lacking in blessing." This hadith is recorded with different wordings by Abu Dawood and ibn Maajah. (The above is ibn Maajah's text.) Al-Nawawi records a number of its different wordings and concludes that the narration from Abu Huraira is *hasan*.³ However, this seems to be one of those cases where al-

¹ For the complete text of *khutbah al-haajah*, see the beginning of the introduction of this work. For more details, see the author's *The Friday Prayer: Part 1- The Fiqh* (Aurora, CO: Islamic Assembly of North America, 1994), pp. 95-97.

² Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih*, vol. 6, p. 160.

³ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih*, vol. 1, p. 43.

Nawawi was not very strict in his grading of a hadith. Other scholars, such as Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani and Shuaib al-Arnaoot, who discussed this hadith in more detail than al-Nawawi, have concluded that the hadith is weak, in agreement with al-Daraqutni before them.¹

The hadith with the wording, “praises of Allah,” although being weak, is close to being *hasan*. However, the hadith that states, “Every important matter that does not begin with, ‘In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful,’ is defective,” is a very weak hadith, as is clear from a study of its different chains.² Unfortunately, in his discussion of this hadith in *Sharh Sahih Muslim*, al-Nawawi did not point out the great weakness in this narration. Another weak hadith similar to the above is, “Every important matter that does not begin with praise of Allah and blessing upon me is devoid of any blessing.”³

In any case, it is clear that the Prophet (peace be upon him) began his *khutbah al-haajah* with the praise of Allah. Similarly, other hadith also mention the Prophet (peace be upon him) praising Allah and testifying to His Oneness before speaking on a matter. Hence, although the above hadith is considered weak, it is still a *sunnah* to begin one's speech with the praises of Allah.

One should also mention the testimony of faith in the opening of one's speech. Al-Nawawi does this later in this introduction. This is based on what is recorded from Abu Huraira that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

كُلُّ خُطْبَةٍ لَيْسَ فِيهَا تَشْهَدٌ فَهِيَ كَالْيَدِ الْجَذْمَاءِ

“Every speech that does not include the testimony of faith is like a hand that has been cut off [that is, without any benefit].” This hadith was recorded by Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi and ibn Hibbaan. It is *hasan* or *sahih*.⁴ The testimony of faith, of course, forms part of the *khutbah al-haajah* that the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught his Companions.

Al-Nawawi stated, “They were sent to guide [those rational beings].” In this passage, guidance is in reference “to showing the straight

¹ See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Irwa al-Ghaleel fi Takhreej Ahadith Manaar al-Sabeel* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 29-32; Shuaib al-Arnaoot's footnotes to al-Ameer al-Faarisi, *al-Ihsaan fi Taqreeb Saheeh ibn Hibbaan* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 173-175.

² See al-Albaani, *Irwa*, vol. 1, pp. 29-32.

³ See al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 27.

⁴ Al-Albaani, Abdul Qaadir al-Arnaoot and Shuaib al-Arnaoot agree that it is either *hasan* or *sahih*. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth al-Saheeha* (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1979), vol. 1, hadith #169; Abdul Qaadir al-Arnaoot's footnotes to al-Mubaarak ibn al-Atheer, *Jaami al-Usool fi al-Ahadeeth al-Rasool* (Maktaba al-Hilwaani, 1971), vol. 5, 683; Shuaib al-Arnaoot's footnotes to al-Faarisi, *al-Ihsaan*, vol. 7, p. 36.

path”. The prophets and messengers showed mankind the straight path and it is up to the individual to choose to follow that path or not. However, guidance, that is the guidance or faith that is actually put into the hearts, cannot come from the prophets, for it is a bounty that comes from Allah only.

Hence, there are two distinct types of guidance. One is guidance in the sense of showing another person what is the correct path to follow while the other is guidance in the sense of giving a person faith and belief in his heart. This is why some find the following two verses of the Quran contradictory but they are not contradictory at all: The first is referring to the guidance which means placing faith and belief in the heart. The second refers to “guidance” in the sense of simply showing people what is right and wrong. The first verse is,

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ

بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

“Verily, you (O Muhammad) guide not whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He knows best those who are the guided” (*al-Qasas* 56). The second verse is,

وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

“And verily, you (O Muhammad) are indeed guiding (mankind) to the Straight Path” (*al-Shoora* 52).

Al-Nawawi stated, “I praise Him for all of His bounties. I ask Him to increase His grace and generosity.” This is a general characteristic that one finds in the beginning of almost all of al-Nawawi’s works. Al-Nawawi lived a very austere life. However, he fully recognized that the bounties of Allah consists of faith, knowledge and contentment. For these bounties, he regularly thanked Allah.

Al-Nawawi stated, “I bear witness that our leader Muhammad is His servant and messenger, His beloved and dear one.” In this passage, al-Nawawi is specifically pointing out four important qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He was the servant of Allah. This is the most honored position that anyone could ever attain. Indeed, in the Quran, when Allah truly acclaims the position of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Allah refers to him as His servant. For example, at the beginning of *surah al-Israa*, Allah states,

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى
 الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنَ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ
 السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

“Exalted above any imperfection be He who took His servant for a journey by night from the *Masjid al-Haram* [in Makkah] to the Farthest Mosque [in Jerusalem], the neighborhood whereof we have blessed, in order that We might show him of Our signs. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer” (*al-Israa* 1). This is how Allah refers to the Prophet (peace be upon him) during one of the greatest events of the Prophet’s life.

Al-Nawawi then points out that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a messenger from Allah. He was chosen by Allah to communicate Allah’s final message to mankind. He is the example for all of mankind to follow. However, he stands out among the messengers as being the final messenger sent for all of mankind until the Day of Judgment.

When one wants to describe the Prophet (peace be upon him), it is these two terms that one should use, the servant and messenger of Allah. This is giving the Prophet (peace be upon him) his proper respect and honoring without going beyond the proper limits— as many people do today, in particular some Sufis.¹ Al-Bukhari recorded that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

لَا تُظَرُونِي كَمَا أَطَرَتِ النَّصَارَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدُهُ فَقُولُوا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ

“Do not extol me like the Christians have [wrongfully] extolled the son of Mary. Verily, I am but His [Allah’s] servant. Therefore, say, ‘The servant of Allah and His Messenger.’”

Then Al-Nawawi describes the Prophet (peace be upon him) with two very special characteristics. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is both the *habeeb* (“the loved one”) and the *khaleel* (“most dear friend”) of Allah. There is a difference of opinion concerning which one of these two characteristics is the most praiseworthy position. Understanding the differences between the two concepts leads to the resolution of this dispute. Ibn Abu al-Izz in his famous commentary to the Creed of al-Tahaawi has discussed the concepts of *khullah*² and *muhabbah*,

¹ Some Sufis go so far as to deny the Prophet’s human status whatsoever. Some even claim that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was all light and, therefore, he cast no shadow at all. Hence, the title of a biography of the Prophet (peace be upon him), *Muhammad: The Shadowless Prophet*.

² *Khullah*, meaning “close friendship”, comes from the same root as *khaleel*, meaning “close, dear friend”.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "If I were to take anyone from among the people of the earth for a *khaleel*, I would have taken Abu Bakr as a *khaleel*. But your companion (that is, the Prophet himself) is the *khaleel* of Allah."¹ Another version states, "I have no relationship to any *khaleel* [of this world]. If I were to take a *khaleel* from the inhabitants of the earth, I would have taken Abu Bakr as a *khaleel*." In yet another version, the words are, "Allah has taken me as a *khaleel* as He had taken Abraham as a *khaleel*."² The Prophet (peace be upon him) made it clear that it was not proper for him to have a *khaleel* from the humans. But if that were possible, the person most deserving to be his *khaleel* would have been Abu Bakr. At the same time, though, on different occasions, he stated that he loved certain people. For example, he said to Muadh, "By Allah, I love you."³ He made a similar statement to the Ansar of Madinah. Zaid ibn Harithah and his son Usamah were known to be beloved to the Prophet (peace be upon him). There are other examples of this nature. 'Amr ibn al-As once asked the Prophet, "What person is most beloved to you?" He answered, "Aishah." He said, "From among the men?" He answered, "Her father."⁴

It is clear from these hadith that *khullah* is a special kind of love. Its object is loved due to its own intrinsic value and not for any other external reason. Obviously, that which is loved for some external reason falls short of that which is loved solely for itself. Since *khullah* is the most perfect love and permeates the whole being of the lover, it cannot have more than one object. That is why when Allah took Abraham as a *khaleel*, and the latter prayed for a son, and Allah gave him Ishmael, and Ishmael began to attract the love of Abraham, Allah disliked that someone else should take the place He had solely in his heart. He therefore tested Abraham. He asked him to sacrifice his son so that his *khullah* would be established over his love for his son. Abraham submitted to Allah and was ready to carry out His command. When he intended to slaughter his son, his *khullah* for Allah was proven, and its supremacy over the love for his son was established. At that moment, Allah repealed His command, and Abraham offered a great animal for sacrifice as a ransom for the son. What Allah had required from Abraham was absolute submission to His

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² Recorded by Muslim.

³ Recorded by Abu Dawood, Ahmad, al-Nasa'i, ibn Hibbaan, and al-Haakim. According to Shuaib al-Arnaout, its chain is *sahih*. See al-Arnaout's footnotes to Ali ibn Abu al-Izz, *Sharh al-Aqeedah al-Tahawiya* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1988), vol. 2, p. 397.

⁴ Recorded by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

command. When this was proved, killing the son ceased to be something good, consequently that command was withdrawn. Since then, animal sacrifice was instituted for his followers till the end of the world.¹

Some people think that the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) was the only *khaleel* of Allah. That is not true. This characteristic is also true for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Again, ibn Abu al-Izz wrote,

It is confirmed that the Prophet (peace be on him) enjoyed the highest degree of Allah's love, which is *khullah* (closeness). He said, "Allah took me as His most intimate friend (*khaleel*) as He had earlier taken Abraham as His most intimate friend."² On another occasion he said, "If I were to take an inhabitant of the Earth as my most intimate friend, I would choose Abu Bakr. But Allah, the Most Gracious, has taken your companion [that is, the Prophet] as His most intimate friend."³ Both of these hadith are in the *Sahih* [of Imam Muslim]. They clearly refute those who say that *khullah* (intimacy) was only for Abraham while *mahabbah* (love) was for Muhammad. Therefore, they say, Abraham is the *khaleel* Allah ("the intimate of Allah") while Muhammad is Allah's *habib* ("beloved"). In the *Sahih*, there are also the words, "Let it be known that I [the Prophet] have no *khaleel* among humans."⁴

As for love, it has been confirmed for many others besides the Prophet (peace be on him). For example, Allah says, "Allah loves those who do good" (*ali-Imran* 134), "Verily, Allah loves the pious" (*ali-Imran* 76) and "Verily, Allah loves those who keep themselves pure and clean" (*al-Baqara* 222).

It is clear, therefore, that those who say that intimacy (*khullah*) was reserved for Abraham and that Muhammad was only given love (*mahabbah*) are wrong. The truth is that *khullah* was reserved for both of them while love was granted to many others. Al-Tirmidhi recorded on the authority of ibn 'Abbas a hadith which states, "Abraham is the *khaleel* of Allah. As for me, I am the *habeeb* of Allah. And this is not boasting."⁵ But this hadith is not authentic.¹

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, pp. 368-369. The translation used here is: Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sharh al-Aqeedah al-Tahawiyah* (Fairfax, VA: Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America, forthcoming). For the sake of the page numbering, the published version from Muassasat al-Risaalah will be the work referred to.

²Part of a hadith in Muslim.

³Recorded by Muslim.

⁴Recorded by Muslim.

⁵Part of a long hadith recorded by al-Tirmidhi and al-Dzarimi. However, two of its transmitters, Zzamah ibn Salih and Salamah ibn Wahram, are rated weak (*dhaeef*) transmitters. Al-Tirmidhi

Al-Nawawi stated, “Our leader Muhammad has been particularized with the characteristic of eloquent and pithy speech.” This is another one of the characteristics that distinguishes the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from the other prophets. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

فُضِّلْتُ عَلَى الْأَنْبِيَاءِ بِسِتِّ أُعْطِيتُ حَوَامِعَ الْكَلِمِ وَتُصِرْتُ بِالرُّعْبِ وَأُحِلَّتْ لِي الْغَنَائِمُ
وَجُعِلَتْ لِي الْأَرْضُ طَهْرًا وَمَسْجِدًا وَأُرْسِلْتُ إِلَى الْخَلْقِ كَافَّةً وَخَتِمَ بِي النَّبِيُّونَ

“I have been given superiority over the other prophets in six respects: I have been given words which are concise but comprehensive in meaning; I have been helped by extreme fright [in the hearts of the enemies]; spoils have been made lawful to me; the earth has been made clean for me and a place of worship; I have been sent to all of mankind; and the line of prophets is closed with me.”²

One of the explanations for the statement, “words which are concise but comprehensive in meaning” is that they are in reference to the Quran.³ There is no question that nothing fits that description better than the Quran. However, there is no need or evidence to restrict it to the Quran only. This was certainly a characteristic of the Prophet’s own speech. By just using a few words, he would make statements that were full of meaning and important points. Some scholars, such as ibn al-Suni, al-Qadhaai and ibn al-Salaah, have made collections of the hadith of concise expression that give vast meanings.⁴ Anyone who has had the fortune of reading some of the famous works of commentary on hadith has been able to witness and appreciate the eloquent and comprehensive speech of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

Al-Nawawi stated, “[Our leader Muhammad has also been particularized with] simplicity and ease in the religion.” This is the translation of the Arabic phrase, سَمَاحَةُ الدِّينِ. This expression is taken from a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It is sometimes mistranslated as, “tolerance in religion.”⁵ This wording may imply certain misconceptions, such

has consequently called it *ghareeb*. (In al-Tirmidhi’s terminology, the word *ghareeb* when used by itself usually implies that the hadith is weak.)

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 1, pp. 164-165.

² Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim. The wording here is that of Muslim. See Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, trans., *Sahih Muslim* (Beirut: Dar al-Arabia, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 265-266.

³ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih*, vol. 5, p. 5; Ahmad ibn Hajr, *Fath al-Baari bi-Sharh Saheeh al-Bukhaari* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1993), vol. 6, p. 233.

⁴ See the reference to their works in al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 24.

⁵ Examples include Ezzedin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davis’ translation of al-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith, and Muhammad Muhsin Khan’s translation of *Sahih al-Bukhari*. See Ezzedin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davis, *Al-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith* (Beirut: Dar al-Quran al-Kareem, 1976),

as the religion of Islam is tolerant and accepting of disobedience to Allah or the religion is tolerant of other religions to the point that it accepts their members as brethren in the faith.

Al-Bukhari has the following chapter title in his *Sahih*,

بَابُ الدِّينِ يُسْرٌ وَقَوْلُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَحَبُّ الدِّينِ إِلَى اللَّهِ الْخَنِيفَةُ
السَّمْحَةُ

“Chapter: The religion is easy. And the statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him), ‘The *Haneefiyah* (true monotheism with devotion to Allah alone) and easy way is the most beloved religion to Allah.’¹” In discussing the meaning to this hadith, ibn Hajr stated that *samha* means the simple, easy religion, as opposed to the hardship and difficulties that were placed on the peoples before Islam.²

In a narration by Ahmad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated,

إِنِّي لَمْ أُبْعَثْ بِالْيَهُودِيَّةِ وَلَا بِالنَّصْرَانِيَّةِ وَلَكِنِّي بُعِثْتُ بِالْخَنِيفَةِ السَّمْحَةِ

“I have not been sent with Judaism or Christianity but I have been sent with the true monotheism and easy religion.” The one who is most characterized as being *Haneef* was the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). Hence, this hadith is stating almost exactly the same thing as what Allah said in the Quran,

وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ مِّلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

“He has not laid down upon you in religion any hardship, it is the religion of your father Abraham” (*Hajj* 78). This concept is also to be found in the following verse,

p. 18; Muhammad Muhsin Khan, trans., *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Beirut: Dar al-Arabia, 1985), vol. 1, p. 34.

¹ As can be seen in the text, al-Bukhari recorded this hadith in *mualaq* form (that is, without its complete chain). This is because the hadith does not meet his standards for the *Sahih*. Al-Bukhari did record it in his work *al-Adab al-Mufrad*. Ibn Rajab simply records narrations of this hadith while pointing out that their chains are all weak. The hadith, however, is *hasan* due to its supporting evidence, as is the conclusion of ibn Hajr and al-Albaani. See Abdul Rahman ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Fath al-Baari Sharh Saheeh al-Bukhaari* (Madina: Maktaba al-Ghuraba al-Athariya, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 148-149; ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 130; Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Adab al-Mufrad* (al-Jubail, Saudi Arabia: Daar al-Sideeq, 1994), p. 122.

² Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 130. For the same interpretation, see al-Haitami, *Fath*, pp. 26-27; Muhammad al-Khidr al-Shanqeeti, *Kauthar al-Maani al-Daraari fi Kashf Khabaaya Saheeh al-Bukhaari* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1995), vol. 2, p. 216.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي
التَّورَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ
الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي
كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي
أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“Those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they find written about in their Torah and the Gospel— he commands them what is good and forbids them from evil; he allows that as lawful all that is pure and prohibits them as unlawful all that is evil. He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the fetters that were upon them. So those who believe in him, honor him, help him and follow the light which has been sent down with him, it is they who will be successful” (*al-Araaf* 157).

However, this concept also must be understood properly. It means that the laws of Islam have already taken into consideration the abilities of mankind and have not laid down any hardship upon mankind. Hence, the five daily prayers and all of the other aspects are not “hardship”. Allah has, in the Quran, denied that they can be considered hardship. Hardship is not a goal in Islam. Allah’s religion has also taken into consideration special circumstances that one may face and these fall under the law of necessity. Hence, the entire religion is simple and easy to practice. Allah has not burdened any soul beyond what it can bear. Also, in general, the religion is within the means of the people without any undue hardships.

Al-Nawawi stated, “May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, the other prophets and messengers, all of their families and the rest of righteous.” In this passage, al-Nawawi invokes both blessings and peace upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is what the believers have been ordered to do in the Quran,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

“Allah sends His blessings on the Prophet and also His angels too [ask Allah to bless him]. O believers! Pray for him [ask Allah to bless him] and salute him with a worthy salutation” (*al-Ahzaab* 56). In the introduction to his *Sahih*, Imam Muslim only mentioned seeking blessings upon the Prophet (peace be

upon him). Al-Nawawi pointed out that Imam Muslim was criticized for that. In most cases where Imam Muslim was criticized for something, al-Nawawi would provide an answer to such criticism and show that Imam Muslim was not incorrect in what he did. However, in this particular case, Al-Nawawi himself did not offer any plausible response with which to defend Imam Muslim.¹

In this passage, al-Nawawi also specifically states the messengers after already stating the prophets. However, every messenger is a prophet and, therefore, the messengers have already been mentioned. Imam Muslim also did this in his introduction and was criticized for doing so. This is an example of making specific mention of something after one has already mentioned it by a general reference. There is nothing wrong with this. In fact, it adds emphasis to the one that is specifically mentioned. This style has been followed in the Quran. For example, in the following verse Allah specifically mentions some of the angels after already mentioning the angels as a whole,

مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَلَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ
لِّلْكَافِرِينَ

“Whoever is an enemy to Allah, His angels, His messengers, Gabriel and Michael, then, verily, Allah is an enemy to the disbelievers” (*al-Baqara* 98).

There is a difference of opinion over the meaning of the *salaat* of Allah upon a person. There are two types of *salaat* of Allah. One is general for all the believers, as in the verse,

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ
وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا

“He it is who sends *salaat* on you and His angels do so too, that He may bring you out of darkness into light. And He has ever been most merciful to the believers” (*al-Ahzaab* 43). The second type of *salaat* of Allah is that exclusively upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as mentioned in *surah al-Ahzaab* verse 56, quoted above.

The dispute over the meaning of *salaat* of Allah derives from the fact that *salaat* essentially has two meanings: (1) Supplication and extolling blessings (as in *al-Taubah* 103 and *al-Taubah* 84), and (2) worship. The latter is definitely not its meaning here; furthermore, the supplication of Allah upon His slaves is problematic.

¹ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, vol. 1, pp. 43-44.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

A number of views have been expressed concerning the meaning of the *salaat* of Allah upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the *salaat* of the angels. These include the following:¹

(1) The *salaat* of Allah is His praising the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to those angels in His presence. The *salaat* of the angels is their making *dua* or supplications for the Prophet (peace be upon him). This has been narrated from Abu al-Aaliyah (as recorded by al-Bukhari in *mualaq* form).

(2) The *salaat* of Allah is His forgiveness for the Messenger (peace be upon him) while the *salaat* of the angels is their seeking forgiveness from Allah for the Prophet (peace be upon him). This has been narrated from Saeed ibn Jubair.

(3) The *salaat* of Allah is His mercy upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) while that of the angels is their prayers for mercy for him. This has been narrated from al-Hasan al-Basri and something similar has come from Ataa ibn Abu Ribaah.² Ibn al-Qayyim describes this opinion as “well-known among the later [scholars].”³

(4) The *salaat* of Allah is His honoring and being generous to the Prophet (peace be upon him). This view has been ascribed to Sufyaan al-Thauri.

(5) Their *salaat* upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) is that they bless him. This has been narrated from ibn Abbaas.⁴ Abu Ubaidah is also said to have held this view. This is the view that al-Tabari seems to prefer.⁵

Ibn al-Qayyim has a lengthy discussion on this question and he refutes many of the views stated above.⁶ He says, for example, Allah distinguished between His *salaat* and His mercy in *al-Baqara* 156-157. Hence, they cannot be the same. He also noted that Allah’s *salaat* is special for the messengers and believers while His mercy encompasses all things. He also argues that if mercy and *salaat* were synonymous, it would be acceptable to say, “Allah have mercy on the messenger,” instead of the traditional, “*salaat* of Allah be on the

¹ Cf., Abdul Rahman ibn al-Jauzi, *Zaad al-Maseer fi Ilm al-Tafseer* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1987), vol. 6, p. 205; Ali al-Maawardi, *al-Nukat wa al-Uyoon Tafseer al-Maawardi* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1992), vol. 4, p. 421.

² Al-Dhahaak is also reported to have said, “The *salaat* of Allah is His mercy and the *salaat* of His angels is supplication.” According to Salmaan, though, the chain for that report is very weak. See Mashhoor Hasan Salmaan, footnotes to Muhammad ibn al-Qayyim, *Jalaa al-Afhaam fi Fadhl al-Salaat wa al-Salaam ala Muhammad Khair al-Anaam* (Al-Dammam, Saudi Arabia: Daar ibn al-Jauzi, 1997), p. 257.

³ Muhammad ibn al-Qayyim, *Jalaa al-Afhaam fi Fadhl al-Salaat wa al-Salaam ala Muhammad Khair al-Anaam*, (Al-Dammam, Saudi Arabia: Daar ibn al-Jauzi, 1997), p. 257.

⁴ Al-Bukhari recorded this report from ibn Abbaas in *mualaq* form but in the English translation of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, it was not translated.

⁵ Muhammad ibn Jareer al-Tabari, *Jaami al-Bayaan an Taweel Aayi al-Quraan* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1988), vol. 12, part 22, p. 43.

⁶ See his complete discussion in ibn al-Qayyim, *Jalaa*, pp. 253-276.

messenger.” He argues that people would object to that change in wording because the two are, in fact, not synonymous.

Ibn al-Qayyim concludes that the strongest opinion is the view of Abu al-Aaliyah: The *salaat* of Allah is His praising the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to those angels in His presence. The *salaat* of the angels is their making *dua* or supplications for the Messenger (peace be upon him).¹ Explaining further the *salaat* of Allah, Ibn al-Qayyim states that this implies Allah praising the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), making the Messenger's place and honor apparent and known and extolling the virtues of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Then Ibn al-Qayyim states that there is no contradiction between this view and the view reported from Ibn Abbaas, that Allah and angels bless the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The first view is simply a specific type of blessing and, hence, the two opinions are compatible.

The conclusion is that the *salaat* of Allah for the Prophet (peace be upon him) is a special blessing from Allah. It is the blessing of Allah's praising the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to His angels and of raising his honor, rank and name. When the expression, “blessings of Allah and peace be upon the Prophet (peace be upon him)” is stated in this work, it is this special blessing that is being referred to.²

In the verse quoted above,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

“Allah sends His blessings on the Prophet and also His angels too [ask Allah to bless him]. O believers! Pray for him [ask Allah to bless him] and salute him with a worthy salutation” (*al-Ahzaab* 56), Allah orders the believers to make *salaat* upon the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

¹ This is also the conclusion of Muhammad ibn Uthameen, Saalih al-Fauzaan, Abdul Azeez al-Rasheed and Muhammad Khaleel Harraas. See Muhammad ibn Uthameen, *Sharh al-Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah* (al-Dammam, Saudi Arabia: Daar ibn al-Jauzi, 1415 A.H.), vol. 1, p. 46; Saalih al-Fauzaan, *Al-Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah li-Shaikh al-Islam Ahmad ibn Taimiyah* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Maarif, 1987), p. 9; Muhammad Khaleel Harraas, *Sharh al-Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah* (al-Thuqbah, Saudi Arabia: Daar al-Hijrah, 1995), p. 58; Abdul Azeez al-Rasheed, *al-Tanbehaat al-Sanniyyah ala al-Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah* (Dar al-Rasheed, n.d.), p. 11.

² Recently some speakers have objected to the expression, “Blessings of Allah and...upon the Prophet,” arguing that such is a bad translation since the expression literally— they say— means, “May Allah exalt his mention.” As was shown in the text above, this is one of the interpretations and it is not its literal meaning. Second, this interpretation is a special blessing upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) and there should not be any harm in expressing it in a more general fashion by saying, “blessings of Allah...” Allah knows best.

مَنْ صَلَّى عَلَيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ بِهَا عَشْرًا

“Whoever prays one prayer for me, then, due to it, Allah makes ten *salaat* upon him.” (Recorded by Muslim.) This hadith is an example illustrating the principle that the reward for a deed is similar in nature to the deed itself. When a Muslim makes *salaat* for the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), that Muslim will be rewarded by Allah praising him and increasing his honor and place.¹

A word also needs to be stated about the second component of the expression one says after mentioning the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) name. Besides making *salaat* for the Prophet (peace be upon him), one also asks for *salaam* for him. The word *salaam* is most often translated as, “peace”. Some people have also objected to this translation because in the phrase used, it actually means, “keep him safe from every form of evil or harm.”² When speaking about a nation, “peace,” first and foremost means a nonwarring condition. However, when speaking about an individual this is not what is implied. When speaking about an individual, as in the expression, “peace be upon him,” “peace” implies its other connotations of, “freedom of the mind from annoyance, distraction, anxiety, an obsession, etc.; tranquility; serenity; a state of tranquility or serenity...”³ It is these latter connotations that are meant by the word, “peace,” when used in this expression in this commentary.

Al-Nawawi stated, “To proceed (أما بعد *amma ba’d*):” It was the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to use this expression. It is used to show that one is moving from one idea or purpose to another. Hence, for example, while delivering a *khutbah*, one begins with the praises of Allah and testimony of faith. Then, as one begins the topic of the *khutbah*, the person states, “To proceed,” to demonstrate that he is now beginning a new discussion. According to ibn Hajr, the words “To proceed,” are not essential but one should use something that serves the same purpose.⁴

Al-Nawawi stated, “We have narrated, through many different chains and various narrations, from Ali ibn Abu Taalib, Abdullah ibn Masood, Muaadh ibn Jabal, Abu al-Darda, ibn Umar, ibn Abbaas, Anas ibn Maalik, Abu Huraira and Abu Saeed al-Khudri— may Allah be pleased with all of them— that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, “Whoever preserves for my *Ummah* forty hadith related to its religion, Allah will then resurrect him in the company of the well-

¹ Cf., ibn al-Qayyim, *Jalaa*, p. 265.

² Cf., Harraas, *Sharh al-Aqeedah al-Waasitiyyah*, p. 59.

³ *Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Portland House, 1989), p. 1060.

⁴ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 3, p. 67.

grounded and scholars.” Another narration states, “Allah will raise him as a erudite and learned scholar.” In the narration from Abu al-Darda, it is stated, “On the Day of Resurrection, I will be an intercessor and witness for him.” In the narration from ibn Masood, it is stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “It will be said to him, ‘Enter Paradise through any door you wish.’” In the narration of ibn Umar, one finds the words, “He will be recorded among the company of the scholars and will be resurrected in the company of the martyrs.” The scholars of hadith are agreed that, although this hadith has numerous chains, this is a weak hadith.” Al-Nawawi states that this is a weak hadith. Such has been the conclusion of other scholars also. However, the person whose discussion of this hadith was most detailed was Fauzi ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad in his work *al-Adhwa al-Samaawiyah fi Takhreej Ahadeeth al-Arbaeen al-Nawawiyah*. His discussion goes on for over sixteen pages.¹ His conclusion, after studying a number of chains of this hadith, is that the hadith is fabricated. In order to be brief, only a small portion of one of the chains shall be presented here. Concerning the narration from Abdullah ibn Abbas, ibn Muhammad wrote,

Recorded by Tammaam in *al-Fawaaid*, ibn Adi in *al-Kamaal...* [He then mentions nine sources for the narration.] [They narrate it] from the chain of Ali ibn Hujr who said that Ishaq ibn Najeeh narrated to him on the authority of ibn Juraij on the authority of Ataa ibn Abi Rabaah on the authority of ibn Abbas. I [Fauzi ibn Muhammad] say: This chain is filled with darkness. It has two problems. First, Ishaq ibn Najeeh al-Malatai is called a liar as is stated in *al-Taqreeb* by ibn Hajr. Second, ibn Juraij is Abdul Maalik ibn Abdul Azeez al-Makki and he commits *tadlees*². In this case, he narrated it by saying “on the authority of” without explicitly stating how he received it. Al-Nasaai and Ahmad ibn Hanbal have characterized him as a commiter of *tadlees*. Al-Daaraqutni said, “The worst kind of *tadlees* is the *tadlees* of ibn Juraij as it is an evil *tadlees*. He does not make *tadlees* except when he heard something from rejected narrators.”

[However, it has supporting evidence...] The supporting evidence is extremely weak and one cannot be pleased with it. Khaalid [the supporting narrator] is a liar according to Yahya and Abu Haatim al-Raazi. Ibn Hibbaan said that he narrated fabricated hadith [supposedly] on the authority of trustworthy

¹ Fauzi ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad, *al-Adhwa al-Samaawiyah fi Takhreej al-Ahadeeth al-Arbaeen al-Nawawiyah* (Amman: al-Maktabah al-Islamiyya, 1413 A.H.), pp. 10-26,

² *Tadlees* is where a narrator narrates reports on the authority of his teacher what he had actually not heard directly from his teacher but through a third party. He uses an ambiguous phrase, “on the authority of (an),” that makes it unclear how he received the hadith.

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narrators.... The chain also contains Ahmad ibn Bakr al-Balisi. Ibn Adi said about him that he narrates rejected reports [supposedly] on the authority of trustworthy narrators. Abu Fath al-Azdi said that he used to fabricate hadith...¹

The discussion of the remainder of the different chains is very similar in nature to the above. At the end of his discussion, he quotes a principle from ibn Hajr: If a hadith is considered weak simply due to weakness of the narrators' memories, then it can be raised to *hasan* if it has many chains that support one another. However, if a hadith has numerous chains but they all contain liars, people suspected of lying and completely rejected narrators, then it moves down to the level where it is not allowed to act upon it under any circumstances whatsoever.²

Al-Nawawi's statement that it is weak is an understatement. It seems that it is worse than weak. It is at least very weak and there is good evidence to show that it is a fabrication, given that in almost every chain of the hadith there are either liars, forgers of hadith, unknown narrators or missing links. Allah knows best.

Al-Nawawi stated, "The scholars (may Allah be pleased with them) have compiled innumerable works of this nature. The first one I knew of who compiled such a work was Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak. After him came..." Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak lived from 118 to 181 A.H. It is reported that he studied under Sufyaan al-Thauri, Maalik ibn Anas and Abu Hanifah. He was knowledgeable of hadith and considered a trustworthy narrator. He was also known for his bravery and participation in jihad. He died while participating in jihad.³

It is possible that Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak had his own particular views about acting according to hadith that are unfounded. It seems that he acted based on this hadith concerning the forty hadith while this hadith is clearly not an acceptable hadith and that fact was known to the scholars at Abdullah's time. He is also known to have performed *Salaat al-Tasbeeh*.⁴ Some people point to his example as quasi-evidence that *Salaat al-Tasbeeh* has some foundation to it. However, again, it seems that Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak, may Allah have mercy on him, cannot be considered a kind of

¹ ibn Muhammad, pp. 10-11.

² Quoted in ibn Muhammad, p. 26.

³ For more about Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, see Muhammad Uthmaan Jamaal, *Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak: al-Imaam al-Qudwa* (Damascus: Daar al-Qalam, 1987), *passim*.

⁴ *Salaat al-Tasbeeh* is a special prayer in which certain words of *dhikr* are repeated a number of times in each of the different movements of the prayer. There is a great deal of difference of opinion among the scholars concerning the authenticity of the hadith related to *Salaat al-Tasbeeh*. Some scholars consider the hadith to be authentic, others call it *hasan*, others call it weak while at least one scholar has called it a fabrication.

authority given that it is very possible that he acted on the basis of hadith that are not confirmed. Allah knows best.

Al-Nawawi stated, “The scholars have agreed that it is permissible to act in accord with weak hadith that state the virtuousness of deeds.” This statement needs to be discussed in detail here because it is a concept that has caused a great deal of confusion. At the outset, it should be noted that there does not seem to be any support for al-Nawawi's claim that such is agreed upon by the scholars.

Dealing with Weak (*Dhaeef*) Hadith

Any hadith that does not meet the conditions for a *sahih* or *hasan* hadith will be deemed a rejected hadith. For a hadith to be considered acceptable “on its own merit”, it must meet the following five conditions:

- (1) the chain of narrators must be unbroken (in other words, the hadith may be traced all the way back to its source without the names of any narrators missing from the chain);
- (2) all of the narrators in the chain must be people of integrity and piety;
- (3) three, all of the narrators in the chain must be either greatly or acceptably proficient narrators;
- (4) the narration may not contradict stronger reports or narrations; and,
- (5) there can be no hidden, damaging defect in the chain (for example, if it were discovered that a mistake was committed by one of the narrators).

The above are the conditions for a hadith to be *sahih lidhaatihi* (*sahih* based on its own merits) or *hasan lidhaatihi* (*hasan* based on its own merits). There is another category of *hasan* that is of importance here. A hadith could be weak on its own but if it supported by other evidence, it could be raised to the level of *hasan*. This is known as *hasan lighairihi* (“*hasan* due to other evidence”).

If a hadith falls short of being graded *hasan lidhaatihi* or *hasan lighairihi*, it is a rejected hadith. Rejected hadith are also divided into three categories: weak hadith, very weak hadith and fabricated hadith. The category that is of concern here, that was referred to by al-Nawawi, is weak hadith. The defects of weak hadith are “minor” in comparison to very weak hadith. For example, a weak hadith may contain narrators with poor memories but may not contain narrators who have been accused of lying.

There is a difference of opinion among the scholars concerning the relating of and acting in accordance with weak hadith.¹ Basically, one may say that there are three opinions on acting in accordance with weak hadith:

(1) The first opinion states that weak hadith may be used with virtually no restrictions on their use. This opinion has been attributed to Ahmad and Abu Dawood.

(2) The second opinion states that weak hadith may be acted upon given certain conditions. (The conditions shall be stated below.) This is the view of a large number of scholars.

(3) The third opinion states that weak hadith are never to be acted upon. This view is held by a number of scholars.

The First Opinion: Weak Hadith May Be Used Without Any Restriction

The first opinion, as it is generally stated, is that it is allowed to act according to weak hadith in general with virtually no further conditions restricting their use. In reality though, as al-Khudair points out, there are two conditions: the hadith cannot be very weak and there can be no other acceptable and contradictory text on the topic.²

This opinion is most commonly attributed to and most well-known as being the opinion of Ahmad ibn Hanbal and his close student Abu Dawud, the compiler of the *Sunan*. Al-Khudair states that this opinion has also been attributed to Abu Hanifah, Malik, al-Shafi'ee and ibn al-Humaam.³ Ahmad al-Sideeq al-Maghribi makes the claim that all the leading scholars used weak hadith as acceptable evidence.⁴ However, in this abbreviated discussion, the reply to the proofs for this opinion shall be limited to a discussion of Ahmad and Abu Dawood and may be applied by analogy to the other scholars cited above.

This conclusion concerning Ahmad's opinion is derived from a number of reports. First and most important is Ahmad's statement, "A weak hadith is more loved to me than a person's opinion."⁵ In addition, one time he was asked about a person who had a choice of going to a person who knew hadith but did not know the authentic from the weak or a person who resorted to personal reasoning. Ahmad said that the person should go ask the one who

¹Of course, no such difference occurs concerning fabricated hadith. It is absolutely forbidden to relate fabricated hadith unless, and only if, it is done to expose the hadith as being fabricated.

² Abdul Kareem al-Khudhair, *Al-Hadeeth al-Dhaeef wa Hukm al-Ihtijaj bihi* (Riyadh: Daar al-Muslim, 1997), p. 250.

³ Al-Khudhair, pp. 251-259.

⁴ Quoted in al-Khudhair, p. 260.

⁵He did not mean very weak or fabricated hadith. This is not the proper place to discuss Ahmad's opinion on weak hadith in detail (as that would take many pages). The interested reader is referred to Abdullah al-Turki, *Usool Madhhab al-Imaam Ahmad* (Riyadh: Maktaba al-Riyaadh al-Hadeetha, 1977), pp. 274-281.

knew hadith and not the other one.¹ It is also said about him that he would act on the basis of weak hadith if he could not find any other basis to act upon and there was nothing contradictory to the weak hadith.² He never resorted to analogy (Ar., *qiyaas*) unless he found no textual source whatsoever and even then he would prefer to remain quiet than to give his opinion. Similarly, it is claimed that if Abu Dawood found no *sahih* or *hasan* hadith on a topic, he would record a weak hadith for he considered that stronger than a person's individual opinion.³

One interpretation given to Ahmad's statement that weak hadith are preferred over analogy is that it is in reference to a blatantly wrong analogy (*qiyaas faasid*); that is, an analogy between two actions that do not share important common characteristics or an analogy that violates established principles or rulings of the Quran and sunnah. In such cases, Ahmad would reject the analogy, as is considered acceptable practice by the scholars, and, if that were the only alternative open to him, he would prefer to follow a weak narration.

However, an even more important question is the meaning of "weak hadith" in Ahmad's statement quoted above. One thing is certain, Ahmad did not mean by that hadith which are very weak. Ibn al-Qayyim points out that when Ahmad used "weak" hadith, he never used erroneous hadith, *munkar* ("rejected") hadith or hadith coming from completely non-acceptable sources; he would only use a strong kind of weak hadith, which is similar to what was later called *hasan*.⁴

According to Ibn Taimiya and others, before the time of al-Tirmidhi (and Ahmad was before the time of al-Tirmidhi), in general, hadith were divided into only two categories: *sahih* and *dhaeef* (weak). However, the *dhaeef* were of different levels. There were *dhaeef* that were absolutely rejected and there were *dhaeef* that were close to but not to the level of *sahih*. This latter category could be accepted and acted upon. According to this theory, this stronger category of *dhaeef* is what is known today as *hasan*. Ibn Taimiya wrote,

Weak [among those early scholars] were of two types: weak that cannot be used as evidence, and this is weak in al-Tirmidhi's terminology, and weak that could be used as evidence, and this is *hasan* in al-Tirmidhi's terminology. This is similar to the case of two different levels of illness in fiqh. One type of illness is where the person is considered to be on

¹ Ahmad Ibn Hajr, *al-Nukat ala Kitaab ibn al-Salaah* (Madinah: al-Jaamiat al-Islaamiya, 1984), vol. 1, p. 437.

² Quoted in Abdul Azeez al-Uthaim, *Tahqeeq al-Qaul bi-l-Amal bi-l-Hadeeth al-Dhaeef* (al-Thuqba, Saudi Arabia: Dar al-Hijra, 1992), p. 30.

³ Ibn Hajr, *al-Nukat*, vol. 1, p. 436.

⁴ Shams al-Din Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jauziya, *Ilaam al-Muwaqieen* (Beirut: Daar al-Jeel, 1973), vol. 1, p. 31.

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his deathbed and he is not allowed to give more than one-third of his wealth in charity. The other is where he is barely sick and may do what he wishes with all of his wealth. That is why one finds in Ahmad's and other jurists' statements that they are using weak hadith as proofs. They use as evidence hadith like those of Amr ibn Shaib, Ibraaheem al-Hujari and others. This is what those [early] scholars called weak while they are superior to many *hasan* hadith. In fact, some scholars consider such hadith to be *sahih*.¹

Hence, Ahmad's statements cannot be used as evidence that Ahmad himself ever accepted or acted on the basis of what are today called weak hadith. This opinion, therefore, was not unique to Imam Ahmad. This was the way of all of the early scholars, according to al-Shaatibi.² Ibn al-Qayyim also argues that every scholar would prefer such a "weak" hadith over analogy or personal reasoning.³ Ibn Hazm points out that it was also the view of all of the Hanafis that a "weak" hadith takes precedence over personal opinion and analogy.⁴

With respect to Abu Dawood, he made it clear in the introduction to his work that if there was any defect in a hadith, he would point it out. He stated that if he made no comment, the hadith was *saalih* (صالح) or acceptable. Al-Nawawi states that what Abu Dawood meant by that is that the hadith was *hasan*.⁵ If what al-Nawawi said is correct, if he considered it acceptable to act on weak hadith there would be no reason for him to point out defects in hadith and to use only *saalih* hadith. However, ibn Hajr has shown, through examples, that this is not the correct interpretation of Abu Dawood's approach. What Abu Dawood meant by *saalih* was that the hadith was acceptable to be used as supporting evidence or to be supported by other narration. Hence, it was not

¹ Ahmad ibn Taimiya, *Sharh Hadith Innama al-Amaal bi-l-Niyyaat wa Innamaa likulli Amrin ma Nawa* (Maktaba al-Salaam al-Alamiyah, 1981), p. 11.

² Ibraheem al-Shaatibi, *al-Itisaam* (Alexandria, Egypt: Daar Umar ibn al-Khattaab, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 226.

³ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Ilam al-Muwaqieen*, vol. 1, p. 31.

⁴ Quoted by al-Uthaim, p. 31. In his Ph.D. dissertation, al-Haarithi argues that the expression, "a weak hadith takes precedence over *rai* (opinion, personal reasoning)," does not refer to the case where there is contradiction between but the two, but only when there is agreement. He says that if there is an issue in which *rai* and a weak hadith lead to the same conclusion, then it is better to base one's opinion on the weak hadith rather than on one's opinion. However, if there is a contradiction between "sound analogy" and a weak hadith, then the weak hadith is to be ignored and the sound analogy is to be followed. [See Muhammad Qaasim al-Haarithi, *Makaanah al-Imaam Abu Haneefah bain al-Muhaditheen* (1993), p. 565.] His argument renders the statement, "A weak hadith is more beloved to us than *rai*," virtually meaningless or useless. If one only follows a weak hadith if *rai* or personal reasoning accepts it, then the true judge or authority is *rai* and not the hadith. *Rai*, therefore, takes precedence and is, in reality, the thing that is more beloved to the person. If al-Haarithi's interpretation is correct, and this author is not convinced of that, then this author's discussion in the text above is inaccurate. Allah knows best.

⁵ Al-Nawawi, *al-Majmu*, vol. 7, p. 168.

actually very weak.¹ Furthermore, simply because he recorded weak hadith when he could not find stronger evidence does not necessarily imply that he meant that such hadith are to be considered proofs or to be acted upon. Scholars of hadith recorded weak hadith for many different reasons and one cannot assume from a person's recording of a weak hadith that he means by it that some weak hadith are acceptable as evidence or are to be followed.

Someone may argue that if a person has a choice between two personal opinions, one being supported by a weak hadith and the other not having any such support, the weak hadith would give extra strength to the first personal opinion and it should automatically be followed. However, that is not necessarily the case. It could be the case that the reasoning supporting the opinion that has no weak hadith to support it is very strong while the reasoning behind the other opinion is very frail. If one then follows an opinion simply because it is supported by a weak hadith—which is not considered an acceptable evidence in Islamic law—one will actually be going against what the logical evidences dictate. This type of methodology, where one goes against the stronger argument in favor of something that is not considered an evidence in the *shareeah*, could not be approved of by Islamic legal theory.

The Second Opinion: Conditional Application of Weak Hadith

The second view states that it is allowed to act according to weak hadith if they meet certain conditions. This definitely seems to be the view of the majority of the scholars from the third or fourth century until modern times.² In this introduction, Al-Nawawi claims a consensus on this point.¹ In

¹ ibn Hajr, *al-Nukat*, vol. 1, p. 435. What this necessarily implies is that one cannot conclude that if Abu Dawud was silent about a hadith that such a hadith is at least *hasan*. Indeed, it could be weak but it is not so weak that it cannot be supported or be used as supporting evidence.

² Ibn Taimiya is usually counted among the scholars of the third opinion. For example, al-Khudhair (p. 267) considers him as such but then he only quotes ibn Taimiya's statement, "It is not allowed, in matters related to the Shariah, to rely upon weak hadith that are neither *sahih* or *hasan*." Upon closer inspection, though, it seems that ibn Taimiya may have been an advocate of the second opinion (a conditional use and narration of weak hadith) or his opinion may have changed over time. Ibn Taimiya's views are that one may not narrate or act upon a weak hadith that establishes an act that was not already established in the authentic sources. He does allow for narrating and acting by such weak hadith as long as one knows that it is not a falsehood and if that hadith does not establish any unprecedented deed. A weak hadith, he argues, may not specify a specific time or amount of an act if that has not already been specified in authentic reports. However, he is not concerned if said hadith specifies a specific Hereafter reward or punishment for a deed. He simply states that said reward or punishment cannot be confirmed except through authentic reports. He even states that *Israailiyyaat* (stories from the Jews and Christians) may be narrated for the purpose of exhortation or intimidation as long as it they are not known to be false reports. [See ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 1, pp. 250-251. Ibn Taimiya's views on this question are scattered throughout his works. Some of them have been collected together in Abdul Rahman al-Faryawai, *Shaikh al-Islam ibn Taimiya wa Juhooduhu fi al-Hadeeth wa Uloomihi* (Riyadh: Daar al-Aasimah, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 374-385.] The problem with this approach is that it only takes into consideration the possible problem of performing some act that is not established in the authentic sources. Other issues must also be taken into consideration, including: knowing

another of his works, al-Nawawi wrote, "The scholars say, 'In law, it is not allowed to use anything except *sahih* or *hasan* hadith nor can anything be confirmed but by such hadith.' Weak hadith are not acceptable for such things but they may be acted upon concerning things that do not touch Islamic creed and law, such as the virtuousness of deeds, admonition and so on."²

Those weak hadith that have to do with creed, the attributes of Allah, what is forbidden or permissible, and so on, cannot be related nor may they be used as legal proofs nor may they be acted upon. Those weak hadith dealing with the virtuousness of deeds, exhorting and inciting people to do good deeds and intimidating them away from evil deeds, and so on, may be related and may be acted if they meet certain conditions. According to ibn Hajr, those conditions are as follows:

(i) The hadith in question must not be very weak but it must be from among those types of weak hadith that only have minor defects. For example, the hadith may not be one which is related solely by liars. (All scholars of this view seem to agree on this condition.)

(ii) The hadith is taken as subservient to the confirmed sources, that is, the Quran and accepted hadith. Therefore, it may not be used to establish something that has no basis in the confirmed sources.

(iii) The reward that is stated in the hadith should not be expected by the one who performs the deed but, instead, the deed should be done more out of safety and a hope for some type of reward from Allah nonetheless.

(iv) Subhi al-Saalih, a scholar who has only recently passed away, adds one more condition. This is that the hadith should not be in contradiction to something that is stronger than it.³ This condition was not mentioned by the earlier scholars. Most likely, the reason it was not mentioned by any of the earlier scholars is that if condition (ii) is applied, then this condition becomes superfluous.

Ibn Hajr, who seems to be one of the proponents of this view, adds another condition: the doer of the act should not make the act public so that no one else may act upon that hadith and think something is sanctioned while it is

narrating from non-trustworthy narrators, being careful in attributing statements to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and possibly biasing the weights given by the Shariah to specific deeds.

¹ Al-Nawawi has been criticized for stating there is a consensus on matters while, in reality, there are well-known differences of opinion on those issues. Al-Khudhair (pp. 299-300) gives examples of al-Nawawi claiming a consensus on a point and then al-Nawawi himself quoting those who have differing opinions.

² Yahya al-Nawawi, *Ma Tamassu Ilaihi Haajah al-Qaari li-Saheeh al-Imaam al-Bukhaari* (Makkah: Daar al-Baaz, n.d.), p. 87.

³ Subhi al-Saalih, *Uloom al-Hadeeth wa Mustalahuh* (Beirut: Dar al-Ilm al-Malayeen, 1981), p. 212.

not sanctioned or so that no ignorant people might see the person doing the act and think that the act is an authentic sunnah.¹

Noor al-Deen Itr, an advocate of this second opinion concerning the application of weak hadith, has given the following hadith as an example of a weak hadith that meets the conditions stated above:

مَنْ قَامَ لَيْلَتَيِ الْعِيدَيْنِ مُحْتَسِبًا لِلَّهِ لَمْ يَمُتْ قَلْبُهُ يَوْمَ تَمُوتُ الْقُلُوبُ

“For the one who spends the nights before the two *Eids* in prayer, hoping for a reward from Allah, his heart will not die on the day that the hearts die.” (Recorded by ibn Maajah.) Itr admits that this is a weak hadith and then explains why there is nothing wrong in applying it:

We know concerning the late-night prayers and spending that time in worship is that such is encouraged in both the Quran and the *mutawaatir* sunnah. Also, getting closer to Allah by remembering Him and supplications is encouraged at all times and occasions. That is true in its generality for the two nights before the Days of *Eid*, that contain what they contain of virtue.

This makes it completely clear that the hadith is not sanctioning anything new. It is only stating a portion of what is agreed upon in the foundations of the *shareeah* and general texts, leaving no room for anyone to hesitate in preferring such an act and acting in accord with what it implies.²

Evidence for the Second Opinion

Many people today have taken this view and applied it widely. However, the first question that one must ask is: What is this opinion based on? That is, what is the evidence for this view? The evidences offered are basically three: argument to authority, one logical argument (which is actually mentioned by very few writers) and textual arguments.

The most common argument offered for this view is the argument to authority.³ The first aspect of this argument is to claim that the scholars agree

¹ Ahmad ibn Hajr, *Tabyeen al-Ajab bima warad fi Fadhl Rajab* (Cairo: Maktabah Saleem al-Hadeethah, 1971), p. 22. To this author, it seems that this condition in itself should keep a person from acting upon weak hadith.

² Noor al-Deen Itr, *Manhaj al-Naqd fi Uloom al-Hadeeth* (Damascus: Daar al-Fikr, 1988), pp. 295-296.

³ “Argument to authority” simply means that one quotes known and respected scholars who hold that view. This in itself is not a proof. It is not sufficient for the argument to be considered conclusive. An acceptable argument by the scholars must be given in order for the view to be considered acceptable.

on this point or that there is a consensus on this matter. The second aspect is to quote a number of scholars who were in support of this view.

The only purely logical argument that this author could find in support of this opinion has been stated by al-Haitami. He wrote,

If the hadith is actually *sahih*, then you have fulfilled its right in acting according to it. Otherwise, [if it is not *sahih*,] then acting upon it has not brought about any harm in the sense of permitting something, prohibiting something, or violation of rights, even of anybody else.¹

This opinion is also supported by some hadith that shall be presented and discussed shortly.

Critique of the Proofs for the Second Opinion

As stated above, the most common argument offered for this view is the argument to authority. The first aspect of this argument is to claim that the scholars agree on this point or that there is a consensus on this matter. Al-Nawawi has made such a claim in this introduction. This is simply not correct— as is the case with many claims of consensus— as shall be demonstrated shortly by mentioning those who disagree with this view.

The second aspect of this argument is to quote early scholars who seem to have held this view and therefore, the argument goes, the view must be accepted. The proponents of this opinion point to such great scholars as Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Sufyaan al-Thauri, Abdul Rahmaan ibn Mahdi and Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak as supporting this opinion. But, unfortunately, it seems that they misunderstood what these eminent scholars said. All of them have been reported to have said something similar to, “When it comes to permissible and forbidden, we are very tough on the chain but when it comes to virtuous acts, we ease up on our conditions.”²

Again, scholars familiar with the history of hadith realize that during the time of the four eminent scholars mentioned above, hadith were basically divided into two types: *sahih* and *dhaeef* (weak). Ibn Taimiya showed that the statements the scholars made meant only that when it came to permissible and forbidden they would accept hadith of only the highest degree of acceptability. But when it came to hadith stating the virtuousness of acts, they would drop somewhat their requirements and accept other hadith. All that the statements of the scholars mentioned above really meant is that they would accept hadith of a lower degree in virtuousness of acts and this lower degree of hadith is

¹ al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 36.

² Statements like these have been recorded by al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadi, *al-Kifaayah fi Ilm al-Riwaayah* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiya, n.d.) p. 134.

equivalent to al-Tirmidhi's *hasan*. Therefore, their statements in no way imply that they ever accepted or acted by what is known today as weak hadith.¹

This interpretation is confirmed by a statement of Sufyaan al-Thauri, one of those early scholars. Al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadi quotes him as saying, "Do not accept the knowledge of what is permissible or forbidden except from the most erudite scholars, those who know what have been added to or been deleted from the hadith. For other topics, there is no problem with accepting other *shaikhs*;"² that is, they would only accept the highest quality of narrators, or *sahih* hadith, in legal matters while they would accept *shaikhs* for other hadith. In the terminology of judging narrators, *shaikhs* are those people whose honesty is known but who are not of the highest level of proficiency, therefore their hadith are considered *hasan* and not *sahih*.

This could lead to a problem: Does that mean that they do not accept *hasan* hadith in matters of law? Are not *hasan* hadith considered proofs in Islamic law? As was stated above, it was the opinion of all of the scholars that such *hasan* hadith are to be preferred to personal opinion and analogy. Hence, they did consider them proofs but not at the same level as, for example, the Quran and *sahih* hadith.³

Al-Haitami's logical argument in support of this second opinion was given above. It is probably the strongest argument for this second opinion. However, as shall be shown below, this approach is so problematic that this one strong logical argument cannot overcome all of the arguments against this opinion. Furthermore, Zamarli refutes this argument by pointing out that by taking such an approach, one is over-burdening himself and doing acts that the *shareeah* has not required of him.⁴

A hadith quoted in support of this opinion is the following hadith:

¹Ibn Taimiya discusses this point in many places in the *Majmoo*, e.g., vol. 1, pp. 251-2; vol. 18, p. 249; vol. 17, p. 12 and so on. Muhammad Awwama has written a long discourse refuting this interpretation of ibn Taimiya's. He tried to show that *hasan* was a common technical term before al-Tirmidhi. His arguments and examples, as a whole, are not very convincing. Cf., Dhafar al-Tahaanawi, *Qawaaid fi Uloom al-Hadeeth* (Halab, Syria: Maktab al-Matbuaat al-Islaamiyya, 1984), pp. 100f. In any case, even if ibn Taimiya was incorrect in his interpretation of these statements of the early scholars, the other arguments presented in the text against the use of weak hadith are still valid.

²Al-Khateeb, *al-Kifaaya*, p. 134.

³This does leave one problematic issue with respect to *hasan* hadith. The early scholars would only resort to such hadith if they knew of nothing stronger and if there was nothing to oppose such "weak" hadith, such as a statement of a Companion or some kind of consensus. According to ibn al-Qattaan, one of the greatest hadith scholars of the Western portion of the Muslim world, such hadith are only to be accepted in exhorting to virtuous deeds and should not be accepted in legal rulings unless such a hadith has numerous chains, has been acted upon since the early years, has an authentic hadith to support it or is consistent with the apparent meaning of the Quran. After quoting ibn al-Qattaan, ibn Hajr says that he also leans toward that position expressed by ibn al-Qattaan. Allah knows best. See ibn Hajr, *al-Nukat*, vol. 1, pp. 402-403.

⁴Fawwaaz Zamarli, *Al-Qaul al-Muneef fi Hukum al-Amal bi-l-Hadeeth al-Dhaeef* (Beirut: Daar ibn Hazm, 1995), p. 62.

مَنْ بَلَغَهُ عَنِ اللَّهِ شَيْءٌ فِيهِ فَضِيلَةٌ فَأَخَذَ بِهِ إِيمَانًا بِهِ وَرَجَاءَ ثَوَابِهِ أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ
يَكُنْ كَذَلِكَ

“If a statement from Allah concerning a noble act reaches someone and he then takes it, believes in it and hopes for its reward, Allah will give him that reward even if it were not the case.” This hadith has been related in a number of different ways through different Companions. It has been recorded by al-Dailami and others. However, this hadith is definitely not authentic, as the scholars of hadith themselves have demonstrated.¹ Therefore, it cannot be used as evidence that it is beneficial to act upon weak hadith.

There are two other hadith that are sometimes quoted to support this view. They have similar meanings to the above and they are also as weak as the above hadith.² Therefore, since none of these hadith are acceptable as proofs in the *shareeah*, they cannot be used as an argument to support the case of narrating and acting by weak hadith.

Critique of the Basic Premise of the Second Opinion

In addition to the proofs for the second opinion being questionable, this opinion is extremely problematic. It is problematic at the theoretical and at the practical level. Furthermore, the basic premise of the opinion must be questioned.

The first point or basic premise that the people of this group make is that the hadith must not be concerning law, beliefs and so forth. It must only be concerned with the virtuosity of deeds and encouraging people to do good. However, this is based on the presumption that virtuosity of acts somehow differs from laws in the religion of Islam. There is no reason or proof for that presumption. Indeed, the supporters of the second opinion do not offer any such proof. In other words, statements concerning the virtuousness of an act must be based on the same types of evidence as any other deed in Islam.

Weak hadith are doubtful in nature and there are enough acceptable hadith concerning not only law but also the virtuous acts that one need not stretch his hand into the vast container of doubtful literature. This religion is built on certainty. Al-Dawaani wrote,

There is agreement that a legal ruling cannot be established or confirmed by a weak hadith. Some say that it is permissible, in fact preferred, to act in accordance with weak hadith concerning the virtuosity of deeds. Al-Nawawi clearly states

¹ For details about that hadith, see al-Uthaim, pp. 42ff.

² For the text of and details about these other hadith, see Zamarli, pp. 46-47.

that in his books, especially *al-Adhkar*. There is a problem with this view because the permissibility or preference for a deed is part of the “five legal rulings.”¹ If an action is considered recommended due to a weak hadith, then this legal ruling of recommendation was confirmed by a weak hadith. This contradicts what has been accepted by the scholars that a weak hadith cannot establish or confirm a legal ruling...²

Basically, what al-Dawaani was saying is that in order to call an act a recommended act, it must be supported by acceptable evidence. It is not acceptable to state that something is recommended or preferred on the basis of weak hadith. But that is what such people are doing. Ibn Taimiya also said,

What the scholars say about acting in accordance with weak hadith in what concerns the virtuousness of deeds does not mean that the “liked” status of that act may be established by a hadith that cannot be used as a proof. Saying that an act is liked is to apply one of the legal rulings. Such a status cannot be established or confirmed except by legally acceptable proof. Whoever states that Allah loves a certain action without legally accepted proof is making a legal statement that is not permissible in Allah’s sight. It would be the same if he confirmed an act as being obligatory or forbidden [on the basis of legally unacceptable proof].³

There is a yet another problem with this approach. One is biasing the weights that the true *shareeah* has given certain acts through the use of weak hadith. For example, numerous weak hadith can be given concerning making *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah). Some of these are quite strong in their implications. One may end up concluding that *dhikr* takes precedence over many other acts on the basis of these weak hadith. Therefore, one may be content with making *dhikr* instead of seeking knowledge, spreading Islam or participating in jihad. This is an extremely important point that many, if not almost all, have overlooked.

Critique of the Conditions Stated in the Second Opinion

Beyond the questionable nature of the basic premise of the second opinion, the individual conditions must be studied in detail.

The first condition for the acceptance of weak hadith is: The hadith in question must not be very weak; that is, the hadith must have only minor defects. In reality, those who narrate such hadith rarely, if ever, ensure that this condition is met. Indeed, many times even fabricated hadith are narrated under

¹I.e., an act may be obligatory, preferred (or liked), permissible, disliked or forbidden.

²Quoted in Jamaal al-Deen al-Qaasimi, *Qawaaid al-Tahdeeth* (Isa al-Halabi, n.d.), pp. 118-119.

³Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 18, p. 65.

the guise that one may narrate weak hadith with respect to virtuous deeds.

Even if someone attempts to apply this condition, it must be recognized that it is not that easy to distinguish weak from very weak hadith. Al-Albaani wrote,

It is clear that these conditions require the people of knowledge of authentic and weak hadith to distinguish for the people the following: (1) Weak hadith from authentic hadith... (2) Very weak hadith from the slightly weak... The truth is that very few of the scholars of hadith— not to mention other scholars— are capable of performing the first requirement...¹ And today they are less than a few. And even less than that number are truly capable of distinguishing the very weak hadith from the others. In fact, I do not know of anybody who specializes in that task.²

The second condition is that the weak hadith should be subordinate to the confirmed sources, that is, the Quran and accepted hadith, and may not be used to establish something that has no basis in the confirmed sources. It is difficult for scholars to tell if the topic of the hadith is not concerned at all with law or creed or if there is some source for the described act in the confirmed sources.

For example, suppose there are many weak hadith about praying particular prayers at particular times or on particular days, such as the example given earlier about spending the night before *Eid* in prayer. Should one say that there is no source for these particular prayers in the confirmed sources, therefore these prayers are not to be considered necessarily recommendable? Or is it the case that voluntary prayers are confirmed to be virtuous deeds in the confirmed sources and, therefore, these weak hadith may be applied, as Itr argued?³

Al-Shaatibi explained this point further by saying that any act must fall under one of the following three cases: (1) The confirmed texts (meaning the Quran and acceptable hadith) explain both the general nature and the details of the act. (2) There is no confirmed text that supports the action, neither in general nor in detail. (3) There is a confirmed text that could be considered to describe the act in a general manner but definitely not in detail. He then goes on,

¹ He may be exaggerating when he says, "very few." He names al-Mundhiri, ibn Hajr, al-Sakhaawi and Ahmad Shaakir.

² Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Targheeb wa al-Tarheeb* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

³ In this particular case concerning spending the night in prayer on the night before *Eid*, if this weak hadith is accepted to be acted upon, people will go out of their way to pray the late-night prayers on those nights instead of other nights. This may make them sluggish and not cheerful and energetic on the Day of *Eid*.

There is no problem concerning the authenticity of the first case, like the obligatory and voluntary prayers and how many they are... There are some authentic texts concerning those acts and, therefore, they are confirmed as obligatory, *sunnah* or liked. If a hadith of exhortation to perform those acts or dissuasion concerning not performing them is related and it does not reach the level of *sahih* and it is not so weak that no one accepts it¹ and it is not fabricated or unusable for support, there is no problem with mentioning it for exhortation or intimidation after the action itself has been established through sound means.²

[Concerning the] second case, it is clear that it is not sound and it is an innovation *in toto*...such as somebody standing in the sun for the purpose of worship... Exhortation for something like that is not sound as there is nothing in the law that gives it any basis for being exhorted to or for being intimidated about for leaving.

[Concerning the] third case, one might mistakenly believe that it is like the first case from the point of view that there is some source for the act in general. Its details are then related although they do not meet the standards for acceptability. For example, it is legally established [that it is liked] to perform voluntary prayers. Therefore, people may be exhorted to pray the night prayers during the middle of the month of Shabaan³ as it is supported by the fact that they may be exhorted to perform voluntary prayers in general... But this is not correct. If the confirmed sources establish an act in general, it does not mean that they also confirm the details of any particular act that falls in that general category. If prayer, in general, is established, it does not mean that the noon or afternoon or *witr* prayers are also established. [In fact, they will not be established] until there is some text specifically confirming them.⁴

Furthermore, if these conditions are actually applied, then one is not actually following the weak hadith. One is simply following the authentic sources and the weak hadith has no real influence or effect. If that is the case, then it obviously would be safer, from the point of view of avoiding misquoting the Prophet (peace be upon him), to avoid such weak hadith since there is no real benefit from them anyway.

¹This almost sounds like *hasan* hadith in al-Tirmidhi's eyes.

² This is al-Shaatibi's conclusion. It differs from this author's conclusion that shall be presented shortly.

³There are many weak hadith concerning such prayers.

⁴Al-Shaatibi, vol. 1, pp. 229-230. He then goes on to give some examples.

The third condition is that the reward that is stated in the hadith should not be expected by the one who performs the deed but, instead, the deed should be done more just to be on the safe side and out of a hope for a reward from Allah. However, a Muslim should act on the basis of knowledge and not on the basis of conjecture. This type of reasoning opens the door to many practices that have no support in either the Quran or the sunnah.

A major problem with this view is that it is simply not being put into practice in the manner that the scholars have stated. For example, the scholars of this view state that when narrating such weak hadith, one cannot use a definitive term, such as “The Prophet (peace be upon him) said”. Instead, one must use a weak term, such as, “It has been narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,” or, “It has come to us that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said.” They make this distinction so that the person narrating the hadith cannot be considered one who is quoting the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying something that he did not actually say.

In addition, some of today’s scholars point out that this ruling is not sufficient. The majority of the people do not recognize the difference between saying, “The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,” and, “It has been narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said.” Therefore, they argue, that today it is obligatory upon anyone who uses such a weak hadith, to exhort or intimidate people concerning specific acts, to explicitly mention that such is a weak hadith.¹ On this point, Abu Shaama also says that the statement that one may be lax on hadith regarding virtuous deeds is a mistake according to the experts of hadith, jurisprudence and legal theory. He says that someone must state that a hadith is weak if he knows that to be the case otherwise he will be of those people whom the Prophet (peace be upon him) warned when he said, “If someone relates a hadith on my authority and he thinks it is false, he is then one of the liars.”²

One of the negative effects of this approach to weak hadith is that it makes people lax with respect to narrating hadith. They do not consider it very important to distinguish authentic from weak hadith. This was never the purpose of those scholars who supported this view. For example, in his introduction to *Khulaasat al-Ahkaam min Muhammaat al-Sunan wa Qawaid al-Islam*, al-Nawawi himself wrote,

Everyone must behave in the manner of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), following his statements, actions and what he approved of. [This is for] laws, manners and all the other aspects of Islam. In all of those matters one must base one’s opinion on what is authentic and one must avoid what is weak. One must not be deceived by those who differ from the

¹ Such is the view of Ahmad Shaakir and al-Uthaim. See al-Uthaim, pp. 20-21.

² Abdul Rahmaan Abu Shaama, *Al-Baath ala Inkaar al-Bida wa al-Hawaadith* (Cairo: Daar al-Huda, 1978), p. 50.

authentic sunnah nor may one blindly follow a person who is relying upon weak hadith... All of this is with respect to the authentic sunnah. As for what is not authentic, how can one conclude that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has said it or did it as he is not permitted to say such?... Do not be deceived by those who are very lax in actions and argue legal points on the basis of weak hadith, even if these people are authors, leaders in fiqh or otherwise. One finds this a lot in their books. If they are asked about it, they will say that they do not rely upon what is weak. Or they will say that the scholars allow acting on the basis of weak hadith in stories and virtuous deeds, noble character, asceticism in this world and other aspects... I have asked Allah, the Noble, the Compassionate, the Merciful, for guidance in gathering together an abridged collection of hadith related to legal questions. I have relied only upon *sahih* and *hasan* hadith in it. At the end, I put a section on the weak hadith in order to point them out so that no one may be deceived by them.¹

Finally, many reports that do not meet the standards of acceptable hadith have entered the religion through this second opinion about weak hadith. This has had many negative consequences. For example, in a short talk in a mosque, a speaker quoted the fabricated hadith, "The scholars of my Nation are like the prophets of the Tribes of Israel." When it was pointed out to that speaker that the hadith was fabricated, his answer was, "The scholars say that it is allowed to narrate weak hadith when it comes to virtuous deeds." The hadith is a fabrication not a weak hadith yet, somehow, based on this reasoning people are not careful about the hadith that they quote.

The point is that if someone absolutely insists on following this view concerning weak hadith, then it must also be insisted that he meets the conditions that the scholars have laid down for this view. If he does not meet those conditions, he must be warned about what he is doing. The people in charge of the mosques must not allow him to continue to spread hadith which the scholars state are unacceptable. He should be advised that it would be best for him to completely avoid weak hadith altogether, as shall be demonstrated shortly.

The Third Opinion: Non-Application of Weak Hadith

The third opinion states that one should not act in accordance with weak hadith, no matter the subject or topic of the hadith. This is the opinion of Yahya ibn Maeen, Abu Zakariya al-Naisaboori, Abu Zarah, Abu Haatim, ibn

¹ Yahya al-Nawawi, *Kitaab Khulaasah al-Ahkaam fi Muhimmaat al-Sunan wa Qawaaid al-Islaam* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 59-60.

Abu Haatim, al-Bukhari, Muslim, ibn Hibbaan¹, al-Khattaabi, Abu Shams al-Maqdisi, Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi, al-Shaukaani and Sideeq Hasan Khaan.² Ibn Hazm is adamant against acting in accordance with weak hadith, comparing them to the narrations that are possessed by the Jews and Christians. This view is extremely popular among modern scholars who have researched this question in detail, from the time of Jamaal al-Deen al-Qaasimi and Ahmad Shaakir to Muhammad Ijjaaj al-Khateeb, Subhi al-Saalih, ibn Uthaimen, Abdul Kareem al-Khudhair,³ Fawwaaz Zamarli and al-Albaani.⁴

The basic arguments in support of this view are the following:

(a) The authentic reports are sufficient and there is no need to reach into weak or doubtful reports. They can add nothing to the religion. Indeed, if the conditions stated above for such reports are actually applied, then, in most cases, such weak reports will only be followed in a formal or theoretical matter but will have no real contribution. Hence, one is adding nothing while possibly exposing oneself to the punishment of Allah for narrating something about Allah and His Messenger concerning which he had no knowledge.⁵

(b) Numerous hadith warn against claiming any statement to be a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) when it is not so. For example, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ مِنْ أَعْظَمِ الْفِرْيِ أَنْ يَدَّعِيَ الرَّجُلُ إِلَى غَيْرِ أَبِيهِ أَوْ يُرِي عَيْنَهُ مَا لَمْ تَرَ أَوْ يَقُولَ عَلَى
رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا لَمْ يَقُلْ

“Verily, one of the worst lies is to claim falsely to be the son of someone other than one’s real father, or to claim to have had a dream one has not had, or to attribute to me what I have not said.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ فَلْيَتَّبِعُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ

¹ Ibn Hibbaan stated, “Their [that is, weak hadith] existence is the same as their non-existence.” Quoted in al-Khudhair, p. 264.

² Cf., al-Khudhair, pp. 261-273. As was noted in an earlier footnote, ibn Taimiya is also usually included in this category.

³ However, al-Khudhair (p. 304) says, “That does not mean that weak hadith are rejected in toto. In fact, they can be acted upon while not using them as a proof. For example, one possible meaning [of another hadith] could be given more weight... if there is a weak hadith to support one possible meaning.” One, though, runs into the same problem as mentioned before when discussing preferring weak hadith over personal opinion. One may give one possible meaning more weight due to a weak hadith while in reality that weak hadith is nothing but a mistaken narration that does not deserve to be taken into consideration.

⁴ For quotations from many of those scholars in one place, see al-Khudhair, pp. 261-273 or Zamarli, pp. 26-30.

⁵ See, example, *al-Baqara* 168-169.

“Whoever falsely attributes something to me shall take his seat in the Fire.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) In these hadith and many like it, there is no mention of that having to be intentional. The Companions understood this well as many of them used to perspire when narrating hadith on the authority of the Prophet (peace be upon him) out of fear that they would make the slightest mistake in the narration. How does this compare with the second opinion who states that one may relate and act upon hadith on the authority of the Prophet (peace be upon him) while the scholars are stating that such hadith is not confirmed to be a statement of the Prophet?

(c) If the scholars of hadith declare a hadith to be weak, it means that, according to their research and the evidence to them, there is no reliable or preponderance of the evidence to demonstrate that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) made that statement. In fact, most likely it has not been preserved properly. Had there been strong reason to accept it, even if it were through weak chains, it would have been graded *hasan lighairihi* at the very least.

The general principle is that a person does not base one's actions on what goes against the preponderance of the evidence or probability. If one is told that a bridge will most likely not support his car, the rational person will avoid that bridge. Based on the hadith just quoted above, the attitude toward the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) must be even more cautious. One must avoid putting words into his mouth when there is no firm evidence that he said those words. One should not do that with respect to other individuals, not to speak of with respect to the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. Al-Dhahabi quoted the hadith, “[The greatest lie] is to ascribe to me what I did not say,” and then he said, “This threat is for the one who narrates from his Prophet (peace be upon him) what he did not say while the preponderance of his thought tells him that [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] did not say it.”¹ This is exactly the case of a hadith that the scholars have declared to be weak. On another occasion, al-Dhahabi stated, “Everyone who narrates a hadith that he knows is not authentic, must repent [to Allah] or it will destroy him.”²

Furthermore, Allah has promised to preserve the sunnah. Obviously, the preservation of the sunnah must imply that Allah will preserve it in such a way that the Muslim scholars can distinguish what is preserved from what is not preserved. With respect to weak hadith, the evidence in front of the scholars is that they are not preserved. Hence, they cannot be considered part of the preserved sunnah. In stating them and following them, one is only following the kind of conjecture that Allah has censored in the Quran. Subhi

¹ Quoted in Aasim al-Qaryooti, *Wujoob al-Tahabbut fi al-Riwayah* (Maktaba ibn al-Jauzi, 1987), p. 17.

² al-Dhahabi, *Meezaan al-Itidaal*, vol. 4, p. 97. (Quoted in al-Qaryuti, p. 27.)

al-Saalih wrote, "Nothing aids this religion except certain knowledge."¹ Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani once wrote,

I believe that what we have in the way of confirmed hadith [i.e., meaning *hasan* and *sahih* hadith] is sufficient and we do not have to resort to weak hadith.² [Weak hadith] do not aid us and there is no difference on this point- except through conjecture. And conjecture is nothing but weakness as Allah says, "And they have no knowledge thereof. They follow but a guess, and lo! a guess can never take the place of truth." (*al-Najm* 27) And the Prophet said, "Avoid conjecture as conjecture is the most deceitful speech." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) And we cannot worship Allah by acting according to such conjecture. In fact, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has prohibited us from it as he said, "Beware of the hadith related on my authority, except for what you are knowledgeable of." (*Sahih*, recorded by al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad and ibn Abu Shaiba.) In that statement, he has disallowed us to relate weak reports. It must be even more so the case that it is prohibited to act in accordance with such reports.³

There seems to be little doubt that this third opinion is the strongest opinion. It is the strongest opinion and it is the safest opinion. The first opinion seems to have no basis for it whatsoever. It is not the opinion of those who are claimed to have followed it. The second opinion has no strong evidence for it and it is replete with both theoretical and practical problems. Hence, the third opinion is the only alternative that is left and it is the way of the Companions, Allah willing, who were the most careful in narrating anything from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

As a final word of advice, everyone must be very careful when it comes to narrating hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him). This is part of having the proper love and respect for the Prophet (peace be upon him). Those who do not care whether they are relating authentic, weak or fabricated hadith may fall under the warning of the punishment of the Hell-fire. Even when they coincidentally narrate authentic hadith, they are sinful. Al-Iraqi once said,

Those people [the storytellers] narrated hadith of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) without knowing what is authentic and what is diseased... If they happen to narrate an authentic hadith, they are still sinful in that act

¹Al-Saalih, p. 213.

²Muhammad Ijaaj al-Khateeb, *Al-Mukhtasar al-Wajeez fi Uloom al-Hadeeth* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1985), p. 159, makes the same point and presents a good refutation of those who think otherwise..

³Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Sifat Salaat al-Nabi* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1951), pp. 8-9. Also see his statement in *Ghaayat al-Maraam fi Takhreej al-Ahaadeeth al-Hallaal wa al-Haraam* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1976), p. 3.

because they are narrating something that they have no knowledge about. Even if it turns out to be true, they are still sinful because they have entered into an area concerning which they have no knowledge.¹

Al-Nawawi stated, “I am following the statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) found in an authentic hadith, ‘Let him who was present among you inform those who are absent.’” This hadith was recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim. It is an order from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to convey his words to those who did not hear them. This hadith also shows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) took the steps to make sure that his sunnah was preserved and conveyed. This is a sign that his sunnah was still to be followed even after his death— although some modern day authors may try to imply otherwise. “Those who are absent” includes those who come after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Al-Nawawi stated, “The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said, ‘May Allah make radiant the man who has heard what I said, has preserved it in his memory and has conveyed it in the way that he heard it.’” This is also a very important and well-known hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Abdul Muhsin al-Abbaad has written a 263-page book entirely about this hadith. One hundred and sixty-five pages of that work are a discussion of the various chains and wordings of this hadith. This hadith is, without question, a *mutawaatir* hadith. He concludes that twenty-four Companions narrated this hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him). In addition, it has been recorded in more than forty-five books of hadith. One hundred and seventy-five different chains can be traced for this hadith.

This is further evidence that the Companions themselves knew the importance of memorizing and passing on the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This hadith also emphasizes the importance of passing on the exact wording of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This was something that many Companions tried their best to do. Indeed, they feared making even the slightest mistake in narrating a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

After a discussion of the chains of this hadith, Al-Abbaad discusses the various points and meanings that can be derived from this hadith. This discussion covers fifty-three pages.²

Al-Nawawi stated, “Scholars have compiled forty hadith on faith and belief (*usool*), on practical matters (*furoo*)...” Here, al-Nawawi uses the terms *usool* (“foundations”) and *furoo* (“branches”). The division of the

¹ Quoted in al-Qaryuti, pp. 20-21.

² See Abdul Muhsin al-Abbaad, *Diraasat Hadeeth Nadhara Allahu imraan Sama Muqaalati...: Riwaayah wa Diraayah* (no publication information given), *passim*.

religion into foundations and branches is somewhat controversial and complicated. In one passage, for example, ibn Taimiya describes this division and terminology as a kind of innovation. He says that such was not known among the early scholars but was developed by the heretical group the Mutazilah and adopted by legal theorists after them.¹ Among modern-day scholars, Bakr Abu Zaid is in agreement with ibn Taimiya's assessment.²

The majority of the scholars do not seem to have any difficulty accepting such a division. However, even among those who accept this division there is a great deal of controversy concerning the demarcation line between "foundations" and "branches". For example, some say that the "foundations" are the truths known through rational arguments while the branches are the facts only known through what has been passed on from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Others say that the "foundations" are definitive matters while the "branches" are probable. Another view is that the "foundations" are matters related to faith while the "branches" are the physical deeds.³

It seems that there is no harm in making a differentiation between "foundations" and "branches". This is simply a matter of terminology. It is, of course, extremely important to make it clear what is meant by these terms when they are actually used. Furthermore, any implications or conclusions drawn from these terms must be supported by the Quran and sunnah.

With respect to al-Nawawi's introduction, al-Nawawi is probably referring to matters of belief vis-a-vis practical matters. This is a very common distinction between the two. Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies decided to translate this portion as, "the basic rules of religion" and "secondary matters". That is definitely also an acceptable translation. Since al-Nawawi has not made any conclusions based on these terms and the difference between them, it is not of great importance to try to determine exactly what he meant by them.

Al-Nawawi stated, "However, I have found it best to collect together forty hadith which are more important than all of those. These forty hadith incorporate all of those separate topics. In fact, each hadith by itself is a great general precept from the foundations of the religion. Some of the scholars state that all of Islam revolves around them. Some have said, about particular hadith, that they are one-half of Islam, one-third of Islam and so forth." Al-Nawawi has done an excellent job of selecting hadith of great importance and meaning. The comments that scholars

¹ Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 13, p. 125.

² Bakr Abu Zaid, *Mujam al-Manaahee al-Lafdhyyah* (Riyadh: Daar al-Aasimah, 1996), pp. 100-102.

³ For more details on this matter, see Saad al-Shathari, *al-Tafreeq bain al-Usool wa al-Furoo* (Riyadh: Daar al-Muslim, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 165-312. In his lengthy research, al-Shathari (vol. 1, pp. 275-277; vol. 2, p. 7) concludes that the only acceptable distinction between *usool* and *furoo* is that the *usool* are what are known in a definitive manner while the *furoo* are what are known in a probable manner.

have made about some of these hadith will be noted when the hadith are discussed in detail.

The importance of the hadith that al-Nawawi chose is probably one of the main reasons why his work has outlived many other similar collections. Indeed, there have been hundreds of collections of forty hadith, yet today when one hears the word, "Forty Hadith," in general, one immediately thinks of al-Nawawi's work as if his was the only one or his was the first.

The importance of this collection can be seen in the large number of commentaries that have been written on this work. One of the most famous and most important of those commentaries is ibn Rajab's *Jaami al-Uloom wa al-Hikm*, where he commented on these hadith of al-Nawawi and added eight more to make the work fifty hadith. Even modern day authors are still commenting on this work, as the hadith of this collection are so rich that no work can cover its important matters for all eras. Among the modern day writers, Naadhim Sultaan has written a commentary and there is also a joint commentary by Mustafa al-Bugha and Muhyi al-Deen Mistu.

There are also books of *takhreej* on this collection, wherein the hadith that al-Nawawi quoted are traced to all their sources. A recent, excellent work of that nature is Fauzi ibn Muhammad's *al-Adhwaa al-Samaawiyyah fi Takhreej Ahadeeth al-Arbaeen al-Nawawiyah*.

This work by al-Nawawi has also been translated into tens of languages. Indeed, there are at least five other translations of this work into English; some have a brief commentary, but, unfortunately, none of them have an extensive commentary.¹

Al-Nawawi stated, "I have committed myself to including only authentic (*sahih*) hadith in these forty hadith." A couple of comments must be made concerning this passage from al-Nawawi. In the work itself, al-Nawawi points out that some of the hadith are *hasan* instead of *sahih*. This seems to be a contradiction of this condition that he has laid down for himself. Actually, there is no contradiction here as many times scholars would use the word *sahih*, usually translated as "authentic", not only to mean the hadith of the highest level but also to mean hadith at the level of *hasan*. Hence, it is used in a generic sense to mean "acceptable hadith," whether they be *sahih* or *hasan*. Therefore, there is no contradiction between al-Nawawi saying he only chose *sahih* hadith and then he himself stating that some of them are *hasan*.

The second point that needs to be made is that the grading of hadith is a matter of *ijtihad*. That is, the scholar has to study the hadith and determine its grade. This is not always an easy matter. Two scholars may come to different conclusions concerning one hadith. One of the scholars, for example,

¹ As this book was being prepared for publication, volume one of the English translation of Naadhim Sultaan's commentary on the *Forty Hadith* was published by the Daar of Islamic Heritage.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

may have had access to some information concerning the hadith that the other scholar did not have access to. Hence, they both make their conclusions based on the evidence they knew. In this collection of *Forty Hadith*, there are possibly two, three or four hadith for which the strongest opinion seems to be that they are neither *sahih* or *hasan*. They will be discussed in detail later.

Al-Nawawi stated, “Everyone who desires and looks forward to the Hereafter must be familiar with these hadith because they cover the most important aspects of the religion and they offer direction to all forms of obedience to Allah. This is clear to anyone who ponders these hadith.” Hence, these hadith are deserving of detailed study and understanding. As was stated earlier, if they are understood and applied properly, Allah willing, they will lead the person directly to Paradise. This is why the scholars over the centuries have studied these hadith to the extent that they have. Allah willing, this commentary has been written due to this reason: these hadith are of extreme importance and every Muslim—whether he can read or understand Arabic or not— should be familiar with these hadith and understand them to the best of his ability.

Hadith #1:

“Surely, All Actions are but by Intentions...”

عن أمير المؤمنين أبي حفص عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله
عنه قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول
إنما الأعمال بالنيات وإنما لكل امرئ ما نوى فمن كانت
هجرته إلى الله ورسوله فهجرته إلى الله ورسوله ومن
كانت هجرته لدنيا يصيبها أو إلى امرأة ينكحها فهجرته
إلى ما هاجر إليه

رواه إماما المحدثين أبو عبد الله محمد بن إسماعيل بن إبراهيم

بن المغيرة بن بردزبه البخاري وأبو الحسين مسلم بن

الحجاج بن مسلم القشيري النيسابوري في صحيحهما

اللذين هما أصح الكتب المصنفة.

On the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Abu Hafs Umar ibn al-Khattaab who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying, “Surely, all actions are but driven by intentions and, verily, every man shall have but that which he intended. Thus, he whose migration was for Allah and His Messenger, [then] his migration was for Allah and His Messenger; and he whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take a woman in marriage, his migration was for that which he migrated.”

This was related by the two Imams of the scholars of hadith, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismaeel ibn Ibraaheem ibn al-Mugheerah ibn Bardizbah al-Bukhari and Muslim ibn al-Hajjaaj ibn Muslim al-Qushairi al-

Naisaboori in their collections of authentic hadith which are the most authentic works compiled.¹

Selected Vocabulary

- عن - “on the authority of”
عنه - “Commander of the Faithful,” this was a term that was used for the *khaleefah* or Muslim ruler.
أبي حفص - “the Father of Hafs,” this is typical naming in Arabic.
قال - “he said” or so and so “said”
سمعت - “I heard.”
رسول الله - “The Messenger of Allah”
صلى الله عليه وسلم - “Blessings of Allah and peace be upon him”
يقول - “saying”
إنما - “Certainly... only.” “Surely... but by.” This expression contains the implication both of emphasis and exclusiveness.
الأعمال - deeds, actions; plural of عمل.
بالنيات - This is a compound word or phrase. The ب here stands for “by”, “with” or “according to.” Some also say that the ب is *sababiyah*, which implies a causal relationship in the sentence between actions and intentions. That is, “Actions are ‘caused by’ intentions,” or the intention is the driving force behind the action. النيات is “the intentions,” plural of intention نية.
لكل - This is also a compound word. The ل here means “for” and كل means every.
امرئ - “Man.” The feminine form is امرأة, which is also mentioned later in this hadith.
ما - “whatever,” used, in general, for inanimate objects.
نوى - “he intended.”
فمن - This is also a compound. The ف stands for “thus” or “therefore”. من means “whoever” and is almost always used for beings with life as opposed to ما which is generally used for inanimate objects, as mentioned above.
كانت - Third person, past tense, singular, feminine form of the verb “to be”.

¹A discussion of this hadith could fill an entire book. Besides the many commentaries on the forty hadith of al-Nawawi as well as other books of hadith commentary, there are a number of works that are written solely about this hadith. Umar al-Ashqar's Ph. D. dissertation, *Muqaasid al-Mukalifeen feemaa Yutaabbadu bihi li-Rabb al-Alaameen au al-Niyyaat fi al-Ibadaat* (Kuwait: Maktabah al-Falaah, 1981), is, in essence, entirely a discussion of this hadith. Another excellent work on “intention” is Ahmad ibn Idrees al-Qaraafi, *Al-Ummiyyah fi Adrak al-Niyyah* (Makkah: Daar al-Baaz, 1984). Ibn Taimiyya's commentary on this hadith involves a number of points not mentioned in this commentary. His commentary may be found in the following of his works: *Majmoo Fataawa ibn Taimiyya*, vol. 18, pp. 244-285; *Sharh Hadeeth Innama al-Amal bi-l-Niyyat wa Innama lukilli Amri ma Nawa* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Salaam al-Alamiya, 1981); *Ilm al-Hadith* (Makkah: Daar al-Baz, 1985), pp. 168-200. Saalih al-Sadlaan also has two works related to this hadith. One is a small work *Hadeeth Innama al-Amaal bi-l-Niyyaat: Diraasah wa Takhreej wa Dhabt wa Taleeq* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1414 A.H.). This is incorporated into his larger work, of two volumes, *al-Niyyah wa Atharaha fi al-Ahkaam al-Shariyyah* (Riyadh: Daar Aalam al-Kutub, 1993). Only some of the more important points related to this hadith will be covered here.

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- هجرته - The word هجرة means to abandon something. Here, it refers to the emigration where one abandons the lands of the disbelievers for the land of Islam. The • at the end is a type of pronoun meaning, “his”.
- إلى - The most common usage of this word is “to” but here it would be difficult to translate it so literally.
- رسوله - “His Messenger.” The • at the end represents the “His” portion.
- للدنيا - This is a compound. The ل here means “for the sake of”. دنيا means the worldly life.
- يصيبها - This refers to achieving or getting something.
- ينكحها - “he marries her”.

*Takhreej*¹

This hadith was recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasaai, ibn Maajah, Ahmad, al-Tahaawi (in *Sharh Maani al-Athaar*), al-Daaraqutni, ibn Khuzaima, ibn Hibbaan, ibn Asakeer, ibn al-Jarood, al-Baihaqi, Abu Awaana, Abu Nuaim and many others. In fact, ibn Muhammad lists over ninety works of hadith that record this hadith with their chains back to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).²

As can be seen above, this hadith is recorded in practically all of the major works of hadith. Since it is in almost all of the major works, the following question has arisen: There is no question that Imam Malik knew this hadith and passed it on to others, but did he record it in his *Muwatta*? Imam Malik revised his *Muwatta* on many different occasions. Hence, there are different renditions of his *Muwatta*. In most of the renditions, Imam Malik did not record this hadith. However, one of the well-known and accepted renditions of Imam Malik’s *Muwatta* is that recorded and passed on by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaibani, the close student, companion and colleague of the Imam Abu Hanifah. He went to Madinah to meet and study with Imam Malik. He learned the entire *Muwatta* from Imam Malik and passed it on to his students. This rendition of *Muwatta* also contains this hadith.³

The Chains of the Hadith

The large number of works in which this hadith is recorded may give one the impression that numerous Companions, Followers and so forth recorded this hadith. One may even be fooled into thinking that it is definitely

¹ *Takhreej* here means the study of the hadith. It includes information such as in which books of hadith the hadith is found. It will also include a conclusion about the authenticity of the hadith. Of course, the hadith from *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* in this collection of forty hadith are all authentic hadith. In general, the *takhreej* section will be short unless there is some interesting information that the author feels compelled to discuss. This hadith, hadith #1, for example, has one of the longer discussions of the hadith.

² ibn Muhammad, pp. 43-50.

³ See the discussion in al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, pp. 520-521.

mutawaatir.¹ Actually, this hadith is of the opposite extreme: a *ghareeb* hadith.² The only correct or authentic narrations of this hadith all share the same narrators in the beginning part of the chain. The top part of Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the only authentic narration of this hadith. As a whole, Figure 1 is a representation of the chains of this hadith that are found in what are called “the six books” of hadith.³ Figure 1 depicts who narrated this hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him). At the bottom of the figure, there is a mention of the different books of the “six books” that included the hadith through that particular chain.

Its only strong chains are from Umar ibn al-Khattaab. Similarly, only Alqama narrated the hadith from Umar and only Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem narrated it from Alqama. And no one except Yahya ibn Saeed narrated it from Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem. But from Yahya ibn Saeed, many narrators heard the hadith, as can be clearly seen in Figure 1. However, this in no way affects the authenticity or acceptability of the hadith. As long as these narrators—who were, for the most part, teachers and scholars—are people of integrity and proficiency, the fact that they alone narrated this hadith is not a problem.

A quick study of the different narrators from whom this hadith has come will demonstrate that there is no reason to reject their narration simply because they were the sole narrators of this hadith:⁴

(1) Umar ibn al-Khattaab: He is the famous companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the second caliph in Islam. His integrity, honesty and proficiency has not been doubted by the scholars of hadith throughout history.

(2) Alqama ibn Waqqaas al-Laithi: He was born during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The strongest opinion seems to be that he did not meet the Prophet (peace be upon him) and, therefore, he was not a Companion but one of the Followers. He narrated very few hadith. He narrated from Umar ibn al-Khattaab, Abdullah ibn Umar, Muawiyah and other Companions. Al-Zuhri and others narrated hadith from him. He is declared trustworthy (*thiqa*) by the scholars of hadith, such as al-Nasaai. He died during the reign of Abdul Maalik ibn Marwaan.

¹ *Mutawaatir* means that a hadith is narrated by so many people in each chronological link that it is inconceivable that they all could have agreed upon a lie or all committed the same mistake.

² *Ghareeb* means that in at least one of the links, there is only one known acceptable narrator. (Note that this is only one usage of the word *ghareeb* and some scholars used it in a different sense.)

³ The “six books” of hadith are: *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan al-Nasaai*, *Sunan Abu Dawood*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* and *Sunan ibn Maaajah*. The term the “six books” does not imply that all of the hadith in these works are authentic or that they are the strongest books of hadith. Instead, this term became widespread due to the popularity of the collections of narrators compiled that included all of the narrators that are found in these six works.

⁴ See Sadlaan, *Hadeeth*, pp. 39-41.

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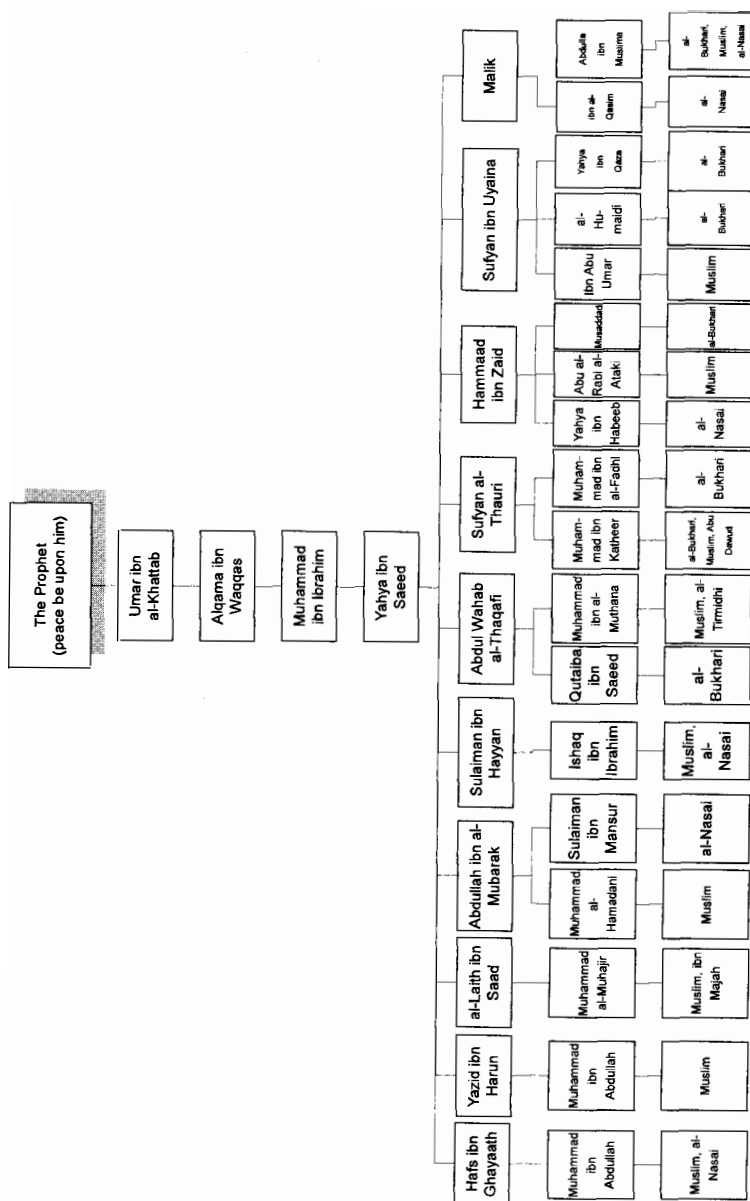


Figure 1. The Chains for the Hadith: "Actions are Based on Intentions..."

(3) Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem ibn al-Haarith al-Qurashi: He was a well-known Imam and trustworthy narrator. He narrated from a number of Companions, such as Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri, Jaabir ibn Abdullah and others. Al-

Auzaai and ibn Ishaq narrated hadith from him. His hadith are recorded in each of the “six books” of hadith. He died in the year 120 AH.

(4) Yahya ibn Saeed ibn Qais al-Ansaari: He was a well-known, trustworthy Follower. He narrated hadith on the authority of Anas ibn Maalik, al-Saaib ibn Yazeed and Abu Umaama ibn Sahl. Among those who narrated hadith from him were Imam Malik and Shubah as well as numerous others, including Yahya al-Qattaan. He narrated approximately 300 hadith. He died in the year 143.

It was from Yahya ibn Saeed that this hadith became widespread, due to the large number of students and fame that he had in general. In fact, according to al-Nawawi, over two hundred people, most of them leading scholars of hadith, narrated this hadith from Yahya.¹ Some claim even more than that. However, in *Fath al-Baari*, ibn Hajr states that he doubts that large number. He said he researched this hadith throughout the different collections of hadith and said that he could not find one hundred people who narrated it from Yahya ibn Saeed.² In any case, there is no question that a very large number of people narrated this hadith from Yahya, perhaps close to one hundred.

The reader may have already noticed a particular aspect of this chain. The three narrators, Alqama, Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem and Yahya, are all from the same generation. They were all Followers. Hence, this chain has one Follower narrating hadith from another Follower who had narrated it from yet a third Follower. Although not rare, this is not the most common form of transmission of hadith.

Note that there are some other narrations of this hadith. Some of them have been narrated from Umar ibn al-Khattaab and others from different Companions. However, all of those narrations are defective. The scholars of hadith have pointed out their defects and have rejected them. Thus, the only authentic narrations of this hadith have come via the chain Yahya from Muhammad from Alqama from Umar ibn al-Khattaab.³

Is The Hadith Weak Because it is *Ghareeb*?

It seems that some people did not accept this hadith because it is *ghareeb*. Indeed, most hadith of this category are not authentic. Imam Ahmad once said, “Guard yourself against *ghareeb* hadith since most of them come from liars.”⁴ However, that does not mean that *a priori* every *ghareeb* hadith is to be rejected. This is not the approach of the scholars of hadith. As is the case here, there is no evidence or reason to reject this hadith. Simply because it has

¹ Al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 528.

² Al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 528.

³ For a discussion of the other narrations, see ibn Muhammad, pp. 45-47.

⁴ Quoted in ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 18, p. 247.

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come through only one chain is not sufficient reason to reject a hadith. Indeed, as Ibn Taimiyya pointed out, there are other hadith of this nature that are also considered authentic by the scholars of hadith and which may be found in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.¹

Is the Hadith Weak Because it is *Shaaadh* or *Munqata*?

There are two other objections leveled against this hadith. The first objection is that the hadith is *shaaadh*.² *Shaaadh* is a type of weak hadith wherein it is shown that a narrator has narrated something that is contradicted by stronger authority. However, in this case, the objection is based on an incorrect understanding of the term *shaaadh*. In particular, it is based on al-Hakim's incorrect definition of *shaaadh*. Al-Hakim defined *shaaadh* as any hadith that is solely related by a trustworthy narrator which has no supporting evidence for it. The correct and accepted opinion for *shaaadh* is that which was given by Imam al-Shafi'ee, "The *shaaadh* report is where a trustworthy narrator reports something in contradiction to what the people report. This does not include a person narrating what no others narrate."³

The second objection is that the chain is *munqata* (broken; missing a narrator). It is claimed by some that Yahya did not hear hadith from Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem and that Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem did not hear hadith from Alqama. However, there are many reports that show that these narrators did, in fact, meet and narrate hadith directly from each other.⁴

Hence, both of these objections are not sound and, thus, are rejected.

Is The Hadith *Mutawaatir*?

On the other hand, there are some people who claim that this hadith is *mutawaatir*. This is also not correct, as is clear from studying the authentic narrations of this hadith. They revolve around Yahya from Ibraaheem from Alqama from Umar. Hence, one cannot claim that this hadith is *mutawaatir*. However, if what is meant by this is "*mutawaatir* in its meaning,"⁵ then this is plausible. There are many proofs from the Quran and sunnah that demonstrate that "actions are but by intention".

¹ Ibn Taimiyya, *Majmoo*, vol. 18, pp. 247-248.

² Al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 526.

³ Quoted in al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 526.

⁴ Al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 526.

⁵ "*Mutawaatir* in its meaning" means that the concept or meaning the hadith states is supported by many other narrations. "*Mutawaatir* in wording" means that the exact wording of a particular hadith has been transmitted in *mutawaatir* form.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

General Comments On This Hadith

This is one of the most comprehensive hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It touches upon almost every deed of Islam. Abu Ubaid said, "The Prophet (peace be upon him) encompassed all of the affairs of this world in one sentence, 'Whoever enters anything into this religion of ours that does not belong, will have it rejected.' And he encompassed all of the affairs of the Hereafter in one sentence, 'Every action is based on its intention.'" Imam Abu Dawood stated that this hadith is one-half of Islam; that is, Islam comprises what is apparent, the deeds of Islam, as well as what is not apparent, the intention behind the deeds. Al-Shafi'ee also said that it encompasses half of knowledge, meaning that the religion concerns both what is external and what is internal. The deeds are the external aspect and the intention behind them is the internal aspect.

Both Ahmad and al-Shafi'ee said that this hadith covers one-third of knowledge. Al-Baihaqi explained this statement by saying, "This is so because the person earns rewards with his heart, tongue and body. Thus, intention is involved in one of these three components."¹ Al-Shafi'ee also said that this hadith is applied in seventy topics of fiqh.² He meant by that, obviously, numerous, if not every topic of fiqh.

Imam Ahmad stated that the foundation of Islam revolves around three hadith: "Actions are but by intention," "Whoever introduces anything into this affair of ours that is not from it shall have it rejected," and, "The permissible is clear and the forbidden is clear."³ Abu Dawood stated that fiqh revolves around five hadith: "Actions are but by intentions," "The religion is sincere advice," "The permissible is clear and the forbidden is clear," "There is no harming or reciprocating of harm," "Whatever I forbid you, remain away from. Whatever I order you to do, fulfill as much as you can."

Abu Ubaid⁴ said about this hadith, "There is no report of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that is more comprehensive, self-sufficient and having more important points to it than this hadith."⁵

The basis of any good deed is sincerity to Allah as Allah revealed His books, sent His messengers and created this creation for the purpose of His worship. Therefore, the pious forefathers preferred to begin all their meetings and gatherings with this hadith. Similarly, many scholars preferred to begin their works or collections with this hadith, such as al-Bukhari in *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Abdul Rahman ibn Mahdi said, "It is a must for everyone who is to

¹ See ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 11.

² Quoted in al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, vol. 13, p. 53; ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, p. 5.

³ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, p. 5.

⁴ In some cases, this is mentioned as a quote from Abu Ubaid while in other cases it is mentioned as a statement of Abu Abdullah. The latter would imply al-Bukhari.

⁵ Quoted by ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 17.

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write a book to begin with this hadith in order to instill within the student the need for proper intention.”¹

The Circumstances Behind the Hadith

In the same way that there is the science of *asbaab al-nuzool* (circumstances surrounding the revelation of particular verses of the Quran), there is also the science of *asbaab wurood al-hadith* (circumstances surrounding particular speech of the Prophet, peace be upon him).² Many times, it is by knowing the circumstances surrounding a Quranic revelation or a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that one understands the correct meaning of said verse or hadith. The events surrounding a verse or hadith shed a great deal of light on the correct interpretation of that statement. Hence, to completely understand any verse or hadith, it is essential to determine whether or not there were particular incidents that led up to that verse or hadith.³

Saeed ibn Mansoor and al-Tabaraani record on the authority of ibn Masood that this hadith was stated concerning a man who wanted to marry a woman named Umm Qais but she refused to marry him unless he would migrate from Makkah to Madinah. Therefore, he migrated in order to marry her. Ibn Masood said that afterwards he was called “the migrant of Umm Qais”. According to ibn Hajr the chains of this narration are authentic. However, he points out that there is nothing in that narration that explicitly states that it was the cause for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to say, “Actions are but by intention...” Ibn Hajr does make the point that this statement does apply to that particular person even though he probably was not the cause behind the statement.⁴

About The Narrator: Umar ibn al-Khattaab⁵

Umar ibn al-Khattaab (39 B.H./583 C.E.-24 A.H./644 C.E.) was the greatest Companion of the Prophet (peace be on him) after Abu Bakr. He was a strong-willed person and very well respected in Makkah. Ahmad records that the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed that either Abu Jahl or Umar ibn al-

¹ Quoted in al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, vol. 13, p. 53; ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, p. 5.

² There are many books which are collections of *asbaab wurood al-hadith*. These include Jallaal al-Deen al-Suyooti, *Asbaab Wurood al-Hadeeth Au al-Luma fi Asbaab al-Hadeeth* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1984); Ibraaheem ibn Hamzah al-Husaini, *al-Bayaan wa al-Tareef fi Asbaab Wurood al-Hadeeth al-Shareef* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Ilmiya, 1982).

³ Like the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the verses of the Quran, it is not necessary that every hadith have particular incidents that have led to such a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

⁴ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 10-11.

⁵ In general, the information about the Companions who narrated the hadith is taken from the respective entries in Ahmad ibn Hajr, *Al-Isaadah fi Tamyeez al-Sahaaba* (Riyadh: Maktaba al-Riyadh al-Hadeetha, 1978).

Khattaab would be guided to Islam.¹ By the grace and mercy of Allah, He guided Umar to embrace Islam five years before the Emigration to Madinah. As ibn Masood said, they were greatly strengthened by his conversion and continued to gain strength after Umar's conversion to Islam.² Umar participated in all of the battles of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

He succeeded Abu Bakr as Caliph, led the defeat of the Persian and the Roman empires, extended the rule of Islam from Iran to Egypt, and laid down the institutions of the new government and society. He is known for his profound knowledge of the Quran and hadith, and for creative insight into fiqh.

Umar was stabbed by a slave while he was leading the *Fajr* Prayer. He was stabbed either by a Christian or a Magian slave who was upset with a decision that Umar had made. He died a few days afterwards. He was one of the famous ten who was given the glad tidings of Paradise by the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself.

The virtues of Umar ibn al-Khattaab may be found in many hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). For example, the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said, "While I was sleeping, I saw myself drinking [milk], and I was so contented that I noticed its wetness coming out of my fingernails. I then gave that milk to Umar." The people said, "How do you explain that?" He said, "It was religious knowledge." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

On another occasion, the Prophet (peace be upon him) told Umar, "O ibn al-Khattaab, by Him in whose hand is my soul, never does Satan find you going one way but that he takes a way other than yours." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) One time the Prophet (peace be upon him) was on Mount Uhud with Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthmaan. The mountain began to tremble and shake. The Prophet hit it with his food and said, "O Uhud! Be firm. Upon you is none but a Prophet, a sincere one and a martyr." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) Finally, in another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also said, "Among the nations before you there used to be people who were inspired [although they were not prophets]. If there are any such persons among my followers, it would be Umar [only]." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

He narrated a large number of hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him). In the books of hadith, one can find at least 530 hadith ascribed to his authority.³ Umar ibn al-Khattaab made sure that the other Companions were very careful when it came to narrating hadith. He even once threatened Abu Moosa al-Ashari unless Abu Moosa provided another witness for a hadith he had quoted from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

There is a famous story about Umar's conversion. It is said that he was on the way to kill the Prophet (peace be upon him) when someone told him that

¹ See Ibraaheem al-Ali, *Saheeh al-Seerah al-Nabawiyah* (Jordan: Daar al-Nafaa'is, 1995), p. 79.

² Recorded by al-Bukhari.

³ These are the number of hadith found in the major works of hadith on his authority. This number, though, includes reports which are not considered authentic. The number, therefore, simply gives an idea of the rough number of hadith that the specific Companion passed on.

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his sister had embraced Islam. Hence, he decided to go to his sister and take care of his family first. Upon coming to his sister's house, he heard the people inside the house reciting the Quran. They hid the Quran before letting him in. He requested to see what they were reading but his sister refused. He then struck his sister and she started to bleed. Umar then felt sorrowful and compassionate. He again requested to see what they were reading. His sister told him that he must go and wash himself completely and then he could touch what they were reading. He did so and came back and read the Quran. This touched his heart and he embraced Islam. Unfortunately, this story does not seem to be authentic as there is no strong chain to support it.¹

“Surely, actions are but driven by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended.”

What follows is a detailed discussion meant to derive the correct meaning of this portion of the hadith. The approach of many scholars over time is somewhat complex and may be difficult to understand. The reader who is seeking only the conclusions of this discussion may skip to the section, “Summary of the Meaning of ‘Surely, Actions are..’”

The Meaning of *Innamaa* (إنما)

The word *innamaa* implies emphasis and exclusiveness. So it should be translated something like, “Verily [or certainly] only...” Linguists and grammarians differ concerning the semantic and syntactic ways by which *innamaa* shows exclusiveness. The important point is that they all agree that it does imply exclusiveness—in general, as there could always be exceptions. So this hadith is translated as, “Surely, all actions are but by intention.” It is not, “Actions are by intention.” That would not be sufficient. Indeed, every action is based on its intention without any exception to this principle.

Exclusiveness means that the stated ruling applies to what is stated and is denied for anything else. From the Quran, it is clear that this is the meaning of *innamaa*. There are some pairs of verses in the Quran in which exactly the same meaning is expressed but in one case the word *innamaa* is used while in the other case the word *إلا* or “except, but” is used. For example, Allah says in the Quran,

إِنَّمَا تُجْرَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

“Surely, you will be requited only for what you used to do” (*al-Tahreem* 7).

¹ See al-Ali, p. 80; Akram al-Umari, *al-Seerah al-Nabawiyyah al-Saheeha* (Madina: Maktaba al-Uloom wa al-Hikam, 1993), vol. 1, p. 180.

وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

“And you will be requited nothing except for what you used to do” (*al-Saaffaat* 39).

There is an important dispute among the linguists and grammarians as to whether it is literally (*haqeeqi* حقيقي) for exclusion or only non-literally (*majaazi* مجازي). Ibn Attiyya states that it does not literally mean exclusiveness, but the majority of the scholars disagree with him.¹ The difference results in the following: according to ibn Attiyya, when *innamaa* is used, one has to have proof that it is exclusive. According to the others, it is understood to be exclusive unless there is proof showing otherwise. Hence, the approaches are actually the opposite of one another.

One must also be careful and understand that there is such a thing as “relative exclusiveness”. This would be understood from the context and other related evidences. For example, note the following verses of the Quran:

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ

“You [O Muhammad] are only one who warns” (*al-Rad* 7). This is a case of relative exclusiveness. That is, the Prophet (peace be upon him) warns but his role only as warner is only toward those who refuse to believe in him and submit to him. It does not mean that he does not have any characteristics other than that. With respect to the believers, he is much more than simply one who gives a warning. He is also the bearer of glad tidings. He is also the example for them to follow.

Another verse that must not be misunderstood is *Muhammad* 36:

إِنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ

“The life of this world is but play and pastime.” This is the case only with respect to those who are overcome by this world and only desire this world. Otherwise, this world can be a source of much good if it is used in preparation for the Hereafter.

“All actions” (الأعمال)

The word used in this hadith is the plural of the word “deed” or “action”. In this hadith, the word begins with ال, that means that it is a general term and includes all actions that fall under the possible meaning of this term.² Thus, it includes actions of the body and speech, obligatory and voluntary

¹ Quoted in Al-Shanqeeti, *Kauthar*, vol. 1, p. 134.

² A general term includes everything that falls within its meaning. However, it may be particularized; that is, it may be shown that exceptions are made. This will be the case here as involuntary actions will be excluded from the actions mentioned in this hadith.

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deeds, small and large deeds. Some people exclude speech as they do not consider it a type of action. Ibn Daqeeq al-Eid called this opinion strange or far-fetched.¹ Al-Shanqeeti concludes that metaphorically speaking, speech is a kind of action but not in a literal sense.

However, many scholars restrict this hadith to the actions of the responsible believers only. Their argument is that the hadith refers to acts of worship and acts of worship are only proper from responsible believers. Others restrict the meaning to *shareeah* acts only, that is, acts of worship plus acts related to legal matters. Nevertheless, there does not seem to be any evidence to restrict the term only to the actions of the believers. Indeed, there does not seem to be any evidence to restrict the meaning of the word to the acts of worship or to acts of the *shareeah* only.

It does, though, seem that acts here must be restricted to conscious, intentional acts. Acts are sometimes performed unintentionally, without any will or purpose to do so. Hence, they are done without intention and the hadith, then, could not be referring to such acts.

The Letter *Ba* (ب)

The letter *ba* has many meanings in the Arabic language. In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Verily, all actions are but *ba* intention.”

There are two interpretations for this letter in this particular hadith. The first interpretation is that the *ba* is what is known as *ba al-musaahibah* (the *ba* of accompaniment). In this case, the hadith would mean: Actions are accompanied by intention.

A second interpretation is that the *ba* is what is known as *ba al-sababiya* (the *ba* of causation). This is a *ba* that is showing a causal relation. Therefore, for this particular hadith, the meaning would then be: Actions are “caused” by intention. Al-Aini says that this is definitely not the case while Al-Shanqeeti states that either one is possible. If this were the case, it would mean that the reward is confirmed due to the intention as it is the intention that has led to the act in the first place. This seems to be the strongest view and it is the understanding accepted in this commentary.

According to al-Aini, al-Karmaani mentions that this is a different type of *ba*, one which is known as *ba al-isti'aaanah* (the *ba* referring to something used as an aid). This would imply something like, “Actions are done with the help of intention.” Most of the commentators on this hadith do not mention or consider this last view.²

¹ Quoted in Al-Shanqeeti, *Kauthar*, vol. 1, p. 134.

² Mahmood al-Aini, *Umdah al-Qaari Sharh Saheeh al-Bukhaari* (Beirut: Daar al-Turath al-Arabi, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 24,

The Meaning of *al-Niyyah* (النية)

An important aspect that must be discussed is the meaning of the word “intention” (Ar., *niyyah*). Saalih al-Sadlaan discusses the linguistic roots of the word *al-niyyah* and then has a passage that describes the meaning of the word in this context,

The real purport of intention: Some say that it is seeking something. Some say that it means seriousness in one’s seeking. For example, ibn Masood once said, “Whoever intends this worldly life will not be able to achieve it,” that is, one who seriously seeks it. Some say that it means to intend something in the heart. Others say that it means resolve in the heart. Some say that it comes from the word *al-nawa* which means distance as if the intention for something implies seeking something with purpose and resolve that one cannot reach by his limbs and apparent actions due to its distance from him. Hence, this intention becomes the means by which he achieves it. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah defined intention as the knowledge of a doer of what he is doing and what is the purpose behind [this action]. He stated that the intelligent, voluntary actor does not do anything without first conceiving it and wanting it. This is the reality of intention. Intention is not something external to the conceptualization of the person and his purpose to do it... Al-Suyooti said, “Intention describes the driving force in the heart towards what the person sees to be in conformity with what he wants, of either bringing about good or putting off harm, both present and future.”¹

The meaning of *niyyah* can be described in English as: endeavor, intention, purpose, resolution, goal, aim, resolve, determination, and so forth. It is not just a thought that comes to one’s mind but it is a determination, want and aspiration to do something. Therefore, if one has the intention or *niyyah* to do something it means that he will do it as long as there is nothing preventing him or as long as he does not change his intention. For example, if one intends to fast on Monday and then Monday comes and there is nothing to prevent him from fasting, yet he does not fast, this means that he did not truly have the intention once Monday actually arrived.

This is the linguistic meaning of the word *niyyah* and there is no evidence that the *shareeah* meaning of the word is different. However, the jurists use it in a slightly different sense. They refer to it as the intent in the heart that must accompany and precede any act of worship.

¹ Sadlaan, *al-Niyyah*, vol. 1, pp. 98-99.

The place of the intention

According to ibn Taimiya, the scholars agree that the “place of the *niyyah*” is the heart or the conscience and it is not the tongue.¹ What this means is that making a statement is not the same thing as having an intention to do something. Therefore the innovation of saying, for example, “I have the intention to pray two *rakats*...” is nonsensical. The Prophet (peace be upon him) never used to make such statements.²

Another example is the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him),

مَنْ لَمْ يُبَيِّنِ الصِّيَامَ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَلَا صِيَامَ لَهُ

“Whoever does not make the intention to fast during the night of Ramadhaan (for the next day) he will not be rewarded for the fast.”³ This means that if one knows that the next day is a day of Ramadhaan and he knows that he is obliged to fast Ramadhaan and therefore his object is to fast the next day, then he has performed the “intention.” But if the same person were to state, “I intend to fast tomorrow...” yet in his heart he has no feeling or object to fast, then he has not, in fact, performed the intention. With respect to intention, what matters is what is in the heart.

Some scholars say that it is preferred or recommended (Ar., *mustahab*) to actually silently pronounce the intention before beginning a particular deed. They agree that the heart is the place of the intention but they argue that silently stating the intention makes the person more aware of his own intention. To say that something is *mustahab* is a *shareeah* judgment. One may not call an act *mustahab* without some proof from the Quran and sunnah. Since there is no proof for silently stating the intention, it cannot be concluded that it is *mustahab*.⁴

A statement from al-Shafi’ee has been misinterpreted and has led some to believe that he preferred the stating of the intention before, for example, the prayers. When al-Shafi’ee stated the difference between the prayer and the inviolable state of the pilgrimage, he stated that the prayer begins with a statement; some people concluded that he meant the mentioning of the intention but this is incorrect. Actually, he was referring to the opening *takbeer* of the prayer.⁵

¹ Quoted in al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 115.

² The only possible exception is the case of Hajj. The scholars have discussed why that exception exists. See al-Sadlaan, *al-Niyyah*, vol. 2, pp. 28-29.

³ With that wording, this was recorded by al-Nasaai. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1114.

⁴ See al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, pp. 125-126.

⁵ See Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 18, p. 262.

Other Words Similar to *Niyyah*

Although the word *niyyah* and its derivatives may be found throughout the hadith, the Quran usually uses different words that are equivalent to *niyyah*. These words are *al-iraada* (الإرادة - volition), *al-qasd* (القصْد - purpose) and *al-azm* (العزم - determination). These words are all very close to each other in meaning but they each have some specific characteristics that separate them from each other. They all imply the want to do or not to do something specific. In fact, they are all sometimes used for the same meaning in Arabic.

The *niyyah* is a subset of what *iraada* or will encompasses. *Iraada*, according to al-Qaradai, encompasses intention, resolve, consideration, desire, purpose, choice and will. One sees that the place of it is the heart. This expression is used in the following verses of the Quran:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصَلُّهَا مَذْمُومًا مَّدْحُورًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا

“Whoever wants the quick-passing short-live [enjoyment of this world], We readily grant him what We will for whom We like. Then, afterwards, We have appointed for him Hell. He will burn therein, disgraced and rejected— far away from Allah’s mercy. And whoever wants the Hereafter and strives for it, with the necessary effort due it, while he is a believer, then such are the ones whose striving shall be appreciated, thanked and rewarded [by Allah]” (*al-Israa* 18-19).

Qasd (“purpose”) implies turning toward something and desiring it. It is sometimes used to mean the same thing as *niyyah*. Indeed, it is very close in meaning to it. However, the term *qasd* can be used for what a person wants for himself as well as what he wants from others. The word *niyyah* cannot be used in the former sense. Second, the word *qasd* can only be used for an act which is within the ability of the person himself while *niyyah* can be used for an act that is beyond a person’s ability. That is, a person can have the intention that if he had a specific amount of money, he would give it all away. He may have that intention although that act may not be in his power since he does not have that money. For something like that, the word *niyyah* can be used but not *qasd*.

The third word is *azm*. *Azm* is the resolve of the heart to fulfill a matter. This word can be found in the Quran also. In fact, in the Quran it has four meanings: purpose, patience, resolve and fulfillment. It also implies resolve to do something without any hesitation or doubt concerning that matter. Of the different terms, *azm* is the strongest with respect to having a resolve to

¹ See al-Sadlaan, *Niyyah*, vol. 1, pp. 107-111.

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do something. In fact, intention, want and purpose all precede *azm*. *Azm* is the end all of these different concepts.

Niyyah, *qasd* and *iraada* all imply knowledge and action. First there must be knowledge of the act that one wants to fulfill. Then action must follow, as long as there are no preventative factors. In fact, no action will be completed unless it has three components: knowledge of the act, want to do the act and ability to do it. No one wills something that he does not know and no one can do something that he has not the ability to do.

When intention (*niyyah*) is related to an act being done at present, it is also called *qasd*. If it is in relation to an act to be done in the future, it is called *azm*. *Iraadah* is used for both present and future acts.¹

Niyyahand Ikhlāas

A person's intention may be noble or evil. However, for the believer, the goal is to make his intention, that is, the motive for his deeds, purely for the sake of Allah. This is another very important Quranic term known as *al-ikhlaas* (الإخلاص). This is an essential part of the pure monotheism that was taught to all peoples by their respective prophets. Allah says in the Quran,

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ

“And they [the previous peoples] were commanded not but that they should worship Allah, and worship none but Him Alone sincerely, and offer prayer perfectly, and give zakat. That is the right religion” (*al-Bayyinah* 5).

Before embarking upon any act of worship, one must make certain that he is doing that act of worship purely for the sake of Allah. If he strays from that goal, then he is either committing a major form of *shirk* (acribing partners to Allah) that takes him out of Islam or a minor form of *shirk*.

Is Something Left Out of the Sentence?

Introductory Discourse

In the Arabic language, it is not unusual for a sentence to have something left out of it. The same kind of speech is found in the English language. For example, there is what is known as ellipsis. Ellipsis is defined as, “the omission from a sentence of a word or words that would complete or

¹ Other words that have some similarity with intention but which will not be discussed here are: الهم، شاء، الميل، هوى، شهى، ظن، عن، رغب، الهاجس، الخاطر، حديث النفس، ابتغى
For a discussion of these terms, see al-Sadlaan, *al-Niyyah*, vol. 1, pp. 115-126.

clarify the construction.”¹ In Arabic, this can happen in more than one case. One such case is known as *idhmaar* (إضمار) or “suppression”. This is very close to the definition of ellipsis just given. Another case is that of *taqdeer* (تقدير), where a missing word or words must be assumed or are implied.

In general, for any sentence, it is a given that *idhmaar* or *taqdeer* need not to be resorted to. That is, every sentence is to be understood as it is and it is only when it cannot be understood as it is that the presence of either *idhmaar* or *taqdeer* is understood.

The use of *idhmaar* and recourse to *taqdeer* is part of Arabic speech. Examples of their usage can be found in the Quran. In general, *taqdeer* occurs, that is something must be assumed, when:

(a) The statement is simply not correct or true unless something is assumed— for example, a hadith states,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَضَعَ عَنْ أُمَّتِي الْخَطَأَ وَالنَّسْيَانَ وَمَا اسْتَكْرَهُوا عَلَيْهِ

“Mistakes, forgetfulness and acts out of coercion have been removed from my *Ummah* (Nation).”² This statement could not mean its literal meaning because such acts do occur among this Nation. They exist among this Nation and hence they have not been removed. Therefore, the hadith must either mean that the ruling and consequences of such acts have been removed or the sin of such acts have been removed.³

(b) The statement does not make rational sense. For example, in the Quran, Allah states in *Yoosuf*, verse 82,

وَسَأَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ

This literally means, “Ask the city.” A city does not speak. However, the words “inhabitants of” are understood. So the sentence means, “Ask the inhabitants of the city.” This is similar to the statement in English, “I spoke with New York last night,” which, of course, means, “I spoke with someone in New York last night.”

(c) The speech is not correct from a *shareeah* point of view. For example, a verse in the Quran (*al-Nisaa* 23) states,

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ

This literally means, “Your mothers are forbidden to you.” However, an object in itself cannot be forbidden. What is forbidden is an action with respect to that

¹ Webster’s *Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Portland House, 1989), p. 464.

² This is a variation of Hadith #37 in this collection. With the above wording, it has been recorded by Abu Nuaim. It will be noted later that this is not the correct wording of the hadith.

³ In general, the first interpretation is attributed to the Shafi’ees while the latter is that of the Hanafis. This concept will be discussed in greater in the commentary to Hadith #39.

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object. Hence, this verse is clearly understood to mean, “Your mothers are forbidden to you [in marriage].” The exact same form of speech can be found in the English language. If someone says that “alcohol is prohibited,” he does not mean that the substance is prohibited but he means that certain acts with respect to that substance are prohibited. For example, he may mean, “The consumption of alcohol is prohibited,” “The selling of alcohol is forbidden,” or, “The production of alcohol is forbidden.”

(d) The grammatical construct requires extra speech. This could be an example of *idhmaar*.

Again, as stated above, in general, one does not resort to *taqdeer* or assuming non-stated words unless one absolutely has to. That is, it is taken as a given that any speech contains all of the words that it needs. Only when that cannot be considered the case, as in the different cases described above, does one then assume that something must have been left non-stated. When this occurs, one then has to determine what has not been stated and what is implied. According to the Hanafis, since such an assumption is done in a case of necessity, one must assume the least possible to make the statement complete. Others state that one must assume what seems to be closest to the meanings of the words that have been stated. For example, if a thing itself is being denied, then an assumption that is closest to denying an entire thing must be selected, as shall be made clearer below in this case.¹

Has Something been Left Out of the Statement, “All actions are but by Intention”?

The scholars differ as to whether the statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him), “All actions are but by intention,” is in need of *taqdeer*, *idhmaar* or neither. Furthermore, they also differ as to what should be assumed.

One of the arguments of those who say that the sentence is in need of some missing words is that there is something missing between the preposition and the word it governs. Imagine, if someone said in English, “The car in the garage.” This is a clause and not a complete sentence. Something has been left out that will make this a complete and correct sentence. This statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him), according to some, is very similar to that kind of clause in English.²

Some argue that this hadith is missing something because it is simply not true unless it is assumed that something is missing. These people argue that there are actions that have occurred without any intention behind them— involuntary and unintentional acts. But this hadith, without any *taqdeer*,

¹ This difference of opinion between the Hanafis and others is well documented in the literature on Islamic legal theory (*usool al-fiqh*). See, for example, Fathi al-Duraini, *Al-Manaahij al-Usooliyah fi al-Ijtihad bi-l-Rai* (Damascus: Daar al-Rasheed, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 365-376.

² Although in English such is considered bad grammar, in Arabic, it is simply in need of assuming the missing words.

implies that there is no action except with intention. So like the case mentioned above concerning mistakes and so forth among this Nation, something has to be assumed to make the statement correct and truthful.¹

So then comes the next question: What is it that should be assumed? Ibn Hajr and Al-Mubaarakfoori have given the most complete list of suggestions. These include: "The completeness of actions," "The correctness of actions," "The completion of actions," "The consideration of actions," and so forth.²

In other words, all of the following have been offered as solutions to the meaning of this sentence:

"The soundness of an act is dependent upon intention." "An act is not sound but by intention." The argument presented here is that the hadith virtually denies the existence of acts that are void of intention. Hence, the closest approximation to that is to deny the validity of an act. This is applying the principle that the *taqdeer* should be as close as possible to the literal meaning of what is stated in the text.

"The completeness of an act is dependent upon intention." "An act is not complete except with intention." For the most part, this is the view of the Hanafis. The argument for this case is that not every action requires an intention for it to be considered sound. For example, the paying back of a debt is not in need of intention. If someone returns money to someone else, his responsibility is fulfilled even if he had no real intention of doing such in his heart. Similarly, the removal of impurities is good and proper even though someone did not intend to remove those impurities. Furthermore, this is the minimum amount that may be assumed to make sense out of the sentence.

"The reward of an act is dependent upon intention." This is also a view of the Hanafis. They argue that if the intention is not there, the reward will not be present. This is particularly true for those acts that they say do not require intention. For example, for them, ablution (*wudhu*) does not require intention. If one has the intention to make ablution, he will be rewarded. Otherwise, his ablution is still sound and suitable for the performance of prayer.

Those who say that there is no *taqdeer* state that *taqdeer* is only to be resorted to when absolutely necessary. If there is no need for it, it cannot be resorted to. In this case, they say, that there is no need for it. This is the view of Umar al-Ashqar. However, he is forced not to take the sentence in its complete literal sense. He wrote, "What is apparent to me is that the hadith is not in need of *taqdeer*. This is because what is meant by deeds are the *shareeah* (lawful and correct) deeds, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sent to explain the *shareeah*. The hadith indicates that the *shareeah* deeds are brought about and exist by intention. If the intention is not there in the deed, then the *shareeah*

¹ Cf., al-Mudaabaghi, pp. 49-50.

² Muhammad al-Mubaarakfoori, *Tuhfah al-Ahwadhi bi-Sharh Jaami' al-Tirmidhi* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 5, p. 283.

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deed is not there...”¹ That is, from the *shareeah* point of view, it is as if the deed did not even take place if the proper intention was not present. Obviously, realistically speaking, the deed physically did occur. In other words, the condition or pillar of the deed does not exist and, hence, the deed itself does not exist from a *shareeah* point of view. This means that there must be intention for every deed unless there is proof that shows otherwise.²

However, ibn Taimiya calls this a case of *taqdeer*. After mentioning all the assumptions mentioned above, he writes,

According to the majority opinion, the hadith is to be understood at face value and in its general sense. It does not mean by intention good deeds only. Instead, it is in reference to the praiseworthy intention and the blameworthy intention as well as the praiseworthy or blameworthy deed. This is why he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] said to complete it, “Whose emigration was to Allah and His Messenger...” He mentioned the praiseworthy intention of emigration to Allah and His Messenger. The blameworthy intention is the emigration for a woman or wealth. That is why he mentioned them in detail after a general, unspecified reference. He said, “All actions are but by intention and for everyone is what he intended,” then he explained that by his statement, “Whose emigration was...”³

It seems, Allah knows best, that one must stick as closely as possible to the literal meaning of any statement of the Quran and sunnah unless there is overriding evidence to do otherwise. In this case, the way that could be done is to understand the word, “deeds,” to be in reference to every conscious, intentional act that a person performs. Thus, the only acts that are excluded are those that are done in a completely involuntary sense or by coercion. In that case, there is no need for any additional *taqdeer*. Every voluntary act is accompanied by an intention, as is clear by the definition given for “intention”.

Therefore, the correct translation for this phrase, and Allah knows best, is that every conscious act has an intention behind it as its driving force that brought it about. The intention could be praiseworthy or blameworthy. This view is supported by ibn Rajab commentary on this hadith. He wrote,

There is a difference of opinion concerning the *taqdeer* of “All actions are but by intention.” Many of the later scholars assert that the *taqdeer* (assumed missing word) is “sound”, “considered” or “accepted” deeds are accompanied with intention. As for those that do not require intention, such as eating, drinking... they are not in need of intention and, hence,

¹ Al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 64.

² See al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 65.

³ Ibn Taimiyah, *Sharh*, p. 16.

they exclude them from being part of the deeds mentioned here.

Others say: The words “actions” is to be left according to its general nature, without any particularization. Some of them say that this is the opinion of the majority, as if they mean the majority of the earlier scholars. This can be found in the speech of ibn Jareer al-Tabari, Abu Taalib al-Makki and other early scholars. This is the apparent approach of Imam Ahmad...

According to this opinion, they understand the hadith to mean: deeds occur or come about due to intention. So this is an informative statement indicating that conscious-voluntary acts do not occur except from the intention of the doer. It is the cause for the action and its existence.¹

The intention could be an essential component of the act to be accepted by Allah or not. However, the second sentence captures this other very important aspect related to the concept of intention.

“Every man shall have but that which he intended.”

In this statement there is once again the presence of exclusiveness. The word *innamaa* has been repeated. In addition, in the Arabic construct of these words of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the predicate precedes the subject. This also indicates exclusiveness.

Some scholars, including al-Qurtubi, consider this statement as simply emphasizing the previous statement. He states that the first sentence has been emphasized by the second statement to demonstrate the importance of *ikhlaas* (acting solely for the sake of Allah) and to warn people against *riyaa* (acting just to be seen). However, this view does not seem tenable because the two statements are saying different things.

Another basic principle of language and Islamic legal theory is that a statement adds meaning, not just emphasis, unless there is proof to show otherwise. Concerning these two sentences, ibn Uthaimen wrote,

The scholars differ about these two sentences. Some scholars say that they have one meaning, the second just emphasizes the first. However, this is not correct and that is because the general ruling in speech is one of giving new information and not stress. If one ponders over these two sentences one will see that the differences between them are great.

The first sentence is the cause and the second is the consequence. The first one is a cause in which the Prophet

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 64-65.

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(peace be upon him) makes it clear that every action must have an intention behind it. Every deed performed by a human while he is rational and acting voluntarily must have an intention. It is not possible for a rational, voluntarily acting person to perform a deed without an intention. In fact, some scholars even say, “If Allah obliged us to perform acts without any intention, He would be obliging us to do something that we are not able to do.”

Such is correct. How can you perform a deed while you are rational and freely acting, without being coerced, and do it without an intention? That is impossible because the deed results from want and ability. The want is the intention. Therefore, the first sentence means that there is no doer but that he has an intention. However, intentions differ. In fact, they differ as greatly as the distance between the heavens and earth. One may have the loftiest of intentions while another person’s intention is in the gutter. In fact, you can see two people do exactly the same deed. They are corresponding deeds with respect to their beginnings, middle, endings, actions, movements, statements and deeds. However, between them is like the distance between the heavens and the earth due to their different intentions.

Therefore, the basic premise is that there is no deed done without an intention. The consequence of that is in the Prophet’s words, “And for everyone is what he intended.” If you intended [the pleasure of] Allah and the Hereafter in your *shareeah* deeds, that will be achieved for you. If you intended this world, then you may achieve it or you may not. Allah says,

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ

“Whoever desires the quick-passing [transitory enjoyment of this world], We readily grant him what We will for whom We like” (*al-Israa* 18). He did not say, “We readily give him what he wants.” Instead, He said, “What We will— that is, what Allah wills— to whomever We want— not for every human being.” Hence, He restricted both “who” is given and “what” is given. There are some people who are given of this world and there are some who are given hardly anything of this world.¹

According to other ways of interpreting the first sentence, “All actions are but by intention,” it means that an action is not even considered except with

¹ Muhammad ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaaadh al-Saaliheen* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 12-13.

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intention— that is what is stated in the first phrase. Then, the reward for a person's deed is dependent on the extent of his intention. Therefore, this second statement comes afterwards because it is dependent upon the reality of the first statement.

Ibn Rajab has an illuminating discussion on this part of the hadith. He wrote,

The statement, "Verily, for every man is but what he intended," is a statement about the *shareeah* ruling. That is, the portion for the doer from his deed is his intention. If it was sound or pious, his deed is sound and he shall have its reward. If it was evil, then his deed was evil and upon him is its burden.

It is possible that the *taqdeer* of "Verily, all actions are but driven by intention," is that deeds are pious, evil, accepted, rejected, rewarded or not rewarded based on the intentions. So it is a statement about the *shareeah* ruling. That is, the goodness or impropriety of a deed is according to the goodness or impropriety of the intention...

His statement after that, "Verily, for every man is but what he intended," is information that he will only get from his deed what he intended. If he intended something good, then he will get good. If he intended evil, he will receive evil. This is not a pure repetition of the first sentence. The first sentence indicates that the goodness or evil of an act is according to the intention that brought it into being. The second sentence indicates that the reward for the doer for his deed is according to his pious intention. His punishment for his deed is based on his evil intention. His intention could be permissible [neither praiseworthy or blameworthy] and the deed could be permissible. He shall then neither receive reward nor punishment. The deed itself— its goodness, impropriety or permissibility— is according to the intention behind it that brought it about. The reward, punishment or neutral result for the doer is according to his intention that caused the deed to be good, evil or permissible.¹

There is still a problem here. Not everyone gets what he intended. For example, someone may emigrate to marry a woman and then the woman refuses to marry him. One cannot then say that he got but what he intended. Furthermore, the disbelievers do not intend to be punished for their deeds although Allah states that such will eventually happen.

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 64-65.

Hadith #1: All Actions are but by Intentions...

However, taking this hadith in its totality, the remainder of this hadith sheds some light on this point. It shows that there are general categories of intention. There is the pure and pious intention of performing a deed for the sake of Allah. There is also the religiously neutral intention where one seeks something permissible of this world. This is the understanding some scholars have of the emigration for the sake of this world or for marriage. Then there is the blameworthy, evil intention. Perhaps this hadith does not cover such intentions. Or, perhaps, it is implied but out of disdain for it, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not mention it. (For example, one could imagine a man emigrating for the purpose of committing fornication with a woman.) Or, perhaps, one could understand emigration for the purpose of marrying as evil since it is an outwardly pious act, but the intention is completely wrong for that act.

In each and every case, the person will get but what he intended. If the intention was for the sake of Allah—which is the only pious intention—then He shall receive the pleasure of Allah and reward from Him. If the intention was religiously neutral, the result will be something religiously neutral, although it may not be the exact result the person intended but Allah does not wrong any soul and He gives to those who strive. Again, taking the hadith as a whole, there is nothing to force the conclusion that he must get the exact thing that he strove for. Instead, it means that if the intention was evil, the result will be evil—that is, it will be something evil for him in the long-run.

This understanding of the hadith is supported by the following verse from the Quran:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَلَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَوْنَ ● أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“Whoever desires the life of the world and its glitter, to them We shall pay in full (the wages of) their deeds they did therein, and they will have no diminution therein. They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but Fire; and vain are the deeds they did therein. And of no effect is that which they used to do” (*Hood 15-16*).

Summary of, “Surely, all actions are but driven by intentions and, verily, every man shall have but that which he intended.”

Every conscious, intentional act that a rational person performs is driven and brought into being by his intention. Without that intention behind the act, the act would not have been performed. Now, this intention must fall into one of three categories: a good, pious intention, a religiously neutral

intention or an evil intention. (An evil intention includes, in general, any intention to perform a sinful act regardless of any claim of a good motive.)

In all cases, the person shall get only what he intended. If his intention was good and pious, it means that the act was for the sake of Allah. His intention was good so the end result will be good. As Allah says,

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَنِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ

“Is there any reward for good other than good?” (*al-Rahmaan* 60). It will be good for him in the Hereafter— as long as he does not do anything to nullify his deed— and it is also good for him in this life. The most important aspect, however, is concerning the Hereafter.

If the person intended something permissible or religiously neutral, then he will get what he intended— that is, something permissible, without punishment or reward in the Hereafter. He may not get exactly what he intended, like someone who migrates to marry a woman only to have her refuse to marry him. But Allah does not wrong anyone and He gives to those who strive, even if they strive for this world. For those who strive only for this world, He gives them of it although in the Hereafter they may receive nothing. Again, Allah says,

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَلَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبِطُلٌ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“Whosoever desires the life of the world and its glitter, to them We shall pay in full (the wages of) their deeds they did therein, and they will have no diminution therein. They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but Fire; and vain are the deeds they did therein. And of no effect is that which they used to do” (*Hood* 15-16).

If the person intends evil— assuming this case is covered by this hadith, which is most likely the case since the word “actions” is general— then the result will be what he intended. That is, it will be evil for him. Either he will be punished for it in this life or in the Hereafter (granted he does not repent later). Allah does not wrong any soul. The act driven by an evil intention will result in what the person intended: evil. But it will be evil for himself. He intended evil and this is what he will get, although he definitely did not intend evil for himself. Allah says,

وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

“And you will be requited nothing except for what you used to do” (*al-Saaffaat* 39).

Hadith #1: All Actions are but by Intentions...

Other Important Points Related to This Portion of the Hadith

Intentions go beyond Actions

The actions of the heart (i.e., *niyyah*) can take one beyond what he can actually do by his physical deeds. (Recall that the word *niyyah* can also be used for actions beyond one's ability.) During the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), a man prepared to go out for jihad but died before being able to do so. His daughter said to him, "I wished you had died a martyr, for you had prepared for it." The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated,

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَدَّأَوْ قَعَّ أَجْرَهُ عَلَيْهِ عَلَى قَدْرِ نِيَّتِهِ

"Allah has given his reward for him according to the extent of his intention."¹ In a hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was on an expedition and he stated,

إِنَّ أَقْوَامًا بِالْمَدِينَةِ خَلْفَنَا مَا سَلَكَنَا شِعْبًا وَلَا وَادِيًا إِلَّا وَهُمْ مَعَنَا فِيهِ حَبَّهِمُ الْعُدْرُ

"In Madinah there are a people we left behind. We do not pass through any ravine or valley except that they are with us [in reward]. They have been kept behind due to valid excuses."

This concept, that a person's intention may go beyond his actions, could be partially what the phrase, "and every man shall have but that which he intended" alludes to. However, although many scholars discuss this point under this hadith, it seems that this is not what the hadith is referring to whatsoever. That is, the hadith is specifically concerned with the relationship between actually performed deeds and intention. In any case, this aspect does highlight the importance of the intention itself and how Allah views it.

What types of Acts are Included

The statement, "Verily, all actions are but driven by intention" applies to all types of deeds: statements and physical deeds, obligatory, recommended or permissible deeds. Ahmad ibn Hanbal said, "I love that for every action, whether they be prayers, fasts, charity, or any type of good deed, there would be the intention preceding it." Zaid al-Shaami said, "I love to make an intention for everything, even eating and drinking."

There is some difference of opinion whether or not this includes the non-performance of certain acts. Is "not performing" or "avoiding" something

¹ Recorded by Malik, al-Nasaai and others. In a footnote, al-Ashqar notes that its chain is *sahih*. See al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 58.

to be considered an act in itself? It seems that the strongest opinion is that if someone avoids a certain deed for the sake of Allah, then he will be rewarded. That is, he consciously and willingly does not do something, then he will be rewarded for that. This, for example, would be the case of someone who deliberately does not look at a woman standing next to him. If someone avoids specific deeds but not for the sake of Allah, then he will not be rewarded. For example, if a woman is standing next to a Muslim male but he does not look at her because he is busy reading a newspaper and does not notice her, he has not avoided looking her for the sake of Allah and hence he had no intention of not looking at her.

Allah only accepts the Deeds done sincerely for Him and in Accordance with His *Shareeah*

It should also be realized that any deed that is not done for the sake of Allah will not be accepted by Allah. If a deed is done with the sincere intention of pleasing Allah and following His commands, then that deed will be rewarded by Allah regardless of what aspect of life that deed deals with. The act could be related to an act of worship, a business transaction, treatment with friends or neighbors and so forth. Ibn Ajlaan said, "A deed is not useful unless accompanied by three things: awareness of Allah (*taqwa*), good intention and correctness of the deed."¹

There is also another point that needs to be emphasized and that is that if the intention is actually existing, the good deed must follow. That is, there are many people who claim that they have good intentions while, at the same time, they are not applying the Quran and sunnah. This negates their claim that they have a good intention. The intention is the cause that brings about the act. If the intention is truly there, the act is forthcoming.

Actually, the deeds may be, on an external level, seemingly good but in the heart there is no goodness. This is the case with the hypocrites who try their best to outwardly display good deeds.² However, the opposite cannot be the case. Since actions are the result of intention, if there is a good intention in the heart and no obstacles are present preventing the deed, then the good deed must follow. If there is a sincere will and desire to obey Allah, the person will obey Allah. In general, there is no such thing as a person having the ability to obey Allah but instead disobeying Him while rightfully claiming that his intention is good. In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has categorically denied this claimed situation.

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 71.

² A hypocrite may be able to hide his hypocrisy from many people but almost always there are signs or clues in his behavior that demonstrate his hypocrisy.

Hadith #1: All Actions are but by Intentions...

“Intention and Intention”

Any deed performed with the sole intention of pleasing Allah which is also consistent with His *shareeah* is an act of worship or *ibaadah*. At the same time, though, there are some deeds that must be accompanied with an intention for them to be accepted by Allah. These deeds include, according to the majority opinion, ablution, *ghusl*, *tayammum*, prayers, *zakat*, fasts, pilgrimage, *itikaaf* and other acts of worship.

For example, someone could go the entire day without eating due to lack of food or for health reasons but this would not be the same thing as fasting as an act of worship. Therefore, whenever anyone wishes to fast as an act of worship, one must first make the intention to perform that act of worship. Therefore, in order to distinguish the act of worship from any other customary act, the intention must be present in the heart of the person.

Also, with respect to prayers and other acts of worship, some such deeds are obligatory while others are only voluntary. When someone stands to fulfill the obligatory prayer, he must have the intention that it is the obligatory prayer— not a voluntary prayer— before he begins the deed.

Also, cleaning one’s body may be done solely for the sake of becoming clean or it may be done with the intention of purifying oneself for the sake of worship. In this latter case, the act of cleaning itself is an act of worship (according to everybody except the Hanafis¹) and, therefore, one must have the intention to purify oneself before doing so.

There are some deeds whose validity is not in need of an intention. For example, cleaning one’s clothing from impurities is a precondition for the prayer. If someone has a shirt that has some impurity on it and then throws it into a washing machine that physically removes the impurities present, the shirt will be permissible for use in the prayer even if the person did not have the intention to remove the impurity. That is, in a case like this, the intention is not a necessity.²

Same Acts, Different Intentions

Later in this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Thus he whose migration was for Allah and His Messenger, his migration was for Allah and His Messenger, and he whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take some woman in marriage, his migration was for that which he migrated.” In these few words the Prophet (peace be upon him) described how the same deed can be a source of reward for some and possibly a source of punishment for others.

¹ See al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, pp. 301-320.

² Ibn Taimiyya (*Majmoo*, vol. 18, p. 258) states that some of the later scholars of the Shafi’ee and Hanbali schools of *fiqh* were of the opinion that one must have the intention to remove impurities. According to ibn Taimiyya, this is an awkward or strange opinion.

Therefore, the same act will be rewarded or punished differently by Allah due to the *niyyah* of the person. For example, if a person attends the prayer with the purpose of pleasing Allah and gaining His pleasure and out of fear of His punishment, then he may be rewarded up to seven hundred times (or more) for that deed with that proper intention. The effects of his greater fear, hope and love of Allah make his deed even greater than other people performing the same deed but who are missing that quality. Ali ibn al-Madeeni once said, “A small act may be made great due to the intention behind it and a great act may be made small due to the intention behind it.”¹

Furthermore, a person may also attend the prayer in the mosque with many “intentions”— all of them valid intentions that have only one final goal, the pleasing of Allah. He may attend the mosque to pray in congregation, to improve the quality of his prayer, to set an example for others, to support the mosque and to meet with the others in the mosque to strengthen the ties of brotherhood. Hence, his action of going to the mosque will be greatly pleasing to Allah due to all of those intentions he had.²

If someone attends the prayer simply because he knows it is an obligation and he fulfills it lazily and not desiring to please Allah much, then he will be rewarded accordingly. If one attends the prayer, for example, simply not to be punished by his father, then he may be punished by Allah for that deed as he did not fulfill the obligation of performing the prayer on his own. And if one attends the prayer simply to fool the people into thinking that he is a very pious person, then he will be severely punished for his act of show or *riyaa*, for the Prophet (peace be upon him) called this a type of *shirk*.

A similar example can be given for studies of a secular nature. If one studies for the sake of Islam, helping the Muslim community and becoming superior to the unbelievers, he will be rewarded accordingly. If one studies in order to be called a knowledgeable person or just to get ahead in this world, then his reward/punishment will be accordingly. The same types of examples can be given for any act.

The acts that are not performed for the sake of Allah are performed for a number of other reasons. Sometimes people perform deeds purely for the sake of show, as Allah states that the hypocrites do. Allah says,

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَدِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَدِيعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا
كَسَالَىٰ يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 71.

² In *surah Taha*, verse 18, the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) mentions a number of uses for his staff. Ibn Hubaira cites that as an example where one act or object may have many good purposes for it and the person will be rewarded for all of those good things he intended. See Al-Wazeer ibn Hubaira, *Al-Iftsaah an Maani al-Sihaah* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1996), vol. 1, p. 136.

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“Indeed, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but it is Allah who has outwitted them. When they stand up to worship they perform it lazily, without enthusiasm, and to be seen by people, and are mindful of Allah but little” (*al-Nisaa* 142). Allah also says,

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ
يُرَءَوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ ﴿٤﴾

“Woe to worshippers who are heedless of their prayer; who perform it to be seen yet refuse small acts of kindness” (*al-Maaoon* 4-7).

Also, Allah describes the unbelievers performing deeds simply for show:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِن دِيَرِهِم بَطْرًا وَرِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَيَصُدُّونَ
عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ

“Be not as those who came forth from their dwellings boastfully and to be seen by people, and to hinder (others) from the way of Allah, although Allah is surrounding all they do” (*al-Anfaal* 47). The unbelievers went to the battle just to show how brave and courageous they were; that is, they went out for war just to be seen by the people.

Sometimes a deed will be done for the sake of Allah and also for the sake of show; in that case, if the motivating factor was show, the deed would be rendered useless. In *Sahih Muslim* there is a hadith recorded from Abu Huraira from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that Allah said,

أَنَا أَغْنَى الشُّرَكَاءِ عَنِ الشِّرْكِ مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا أَشْرَكَ فِيهِ مَعِيَ غَيْرِي تَرَكْتُهُ وَشِرْكَهُ

“I am so self-sufficient that I am in no need of having an associate. Thus, he who does an action for someone else’s sake as well as Mine will have that action renounced by Me to him whom he associated with Me.”

Another hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) states,

عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ
الرَّجُلُ يُقَاتِلُ لِلْمَعْمَرِ وَالرَّجُلُ يُقَاتِلُ لِلذِّكْرِ وَالرَّجُلُ يُقَاتِلُ لِيَرَى مَكَانَهُ فَمَنْ فِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ قَالَ مَنْ قَاتَلَ لِتَكُونَ كَلِمَةَ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا فَهُوَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

Abu Moosa narrated that a man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said, “A man fights for the bounty, another man fights to be mentioned [among

those who fought] and another fights for show. Which is the one who fights for the cause of Allah?" He answered, "The one who fights to make the word of Allah supreme is the one who [fights] for the cause of Allah." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Many of the early scholars, including Ibaada ibn al-Saamit, Abu al-Darda, al-Hasan, Saeed ibn al-Musayyab and others, stated that any deed performed for Allah's sake as well as for some other reason will be fruitless. Ibn Rajab stated, "I know of no difference of opinion on this point among the pious forefathers although some later scholars did differ on this point."¹

If someone mixes his intention for jihad with some other intention, but not for the sake of being seen, then his reward will be lessened but his deed may not be rendered void according to some of the later scholars. For example, if someone goes out for jihad with the intention of making Allah's word supreme and also to earn some booty, then his reward will be lessened but he will still be rewarded for his jihad. Abdullah ibn Amr stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "If a warrior receives some booty, then one-third of his rewards would have already been given to him. If he returns without any booty, then his reward [in the Hereafter] will be complete." (Recorded by Muslim.) There are some hadith that seem to state that if someone goes out for jihad for some worldly purpose, he will receive no reward for his jihad. It seems that the meaning of that hadith is that if someone goes for jihad solely with a worldly purpose in mind, he will not be rewarded for his jihad. Imam Ahmad stated that everyone will be rewarded according to how much he intended to perform the jihad even if this intention was mixed with other intentions but the reward of the person who goes out just for the sake of jihad will be rewarded the most.²

If someone intends to do a deed for the sake of Allah and then some other intention occurs to him during the course of the deed, such as being seen by the people, does that mean that his entire deed would become void? If it is just a thought that occurs to him that he then instantly repels, it will not harm his deed. The real question is if that feeling persists with him. Both Imam Ahmad and ibn Jareer al-Tabari stated that they hoped that in such a case the person will still be rewarded due to his original intention. Al-Tabari points out that this applies to an action that cannot be broken up into parts, for example, prayers or fasting. With respect to deeds like reciting the Quran or making *dhikr*, that can be broken into smaller parts, then the person's reward will end when he changes his intention.³

Finally, if someone does a deed with the intention of pleasing Allah only and then the people praise him for that deed or he receives some recognition, his rewards from Allah will not be affected. The Prophet (peace be

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 81.

² See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 82.

³ See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 83.

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upon him) was asked about a person who performed a deed for the sake of Allah and later the people praised him for it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

تِلْكَ عَاجِلُ بُشْرَى الْمُؤْمِنِ

“That is a prompt part of the good tidings that the believer receives.”
(Recorded by Muslim.)

The *Niyyah* Permissible Deeds

According to the jurists, a permissible (*mubaah*) deed is a deed that entails no punishment or reward from Allah. Similarly, when the deed is not performed, the person will not be rewarded or punished by Allah.

That is the strict definition from the jurists and there is nothing wrong with that definition. But at the same time, a permissible act may be rewarded by Allah if it was performed solely because the person knew it was permissible and as a means of getting closer to Allah. For example, if a person eats with the intention of becoming stronger in order to fulfill his religious duties, then he will be rewarded by Allah for performing that deed that the jurists would call permissible. It is said that some of the early Muslims would rest only in order to revive themselves for their striving in the way of Allah.

Fulfilling one’s worldly responsibilities in a permissible and legal means is also a source of reward from Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once said,

وَلَنْ تُنْفِقَ نَفَقَةً تَبْتَغِي بِهَا وَجْهَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا أُجِرْتَ عَلَيْهَا حَتَّىٰ مَا تَجْعَلُ فِي فِي امْرَأَتِكَ

“You do not spend anything for the sake of Allah’s Countenance except that you will be rewarded for it, even [the food] that you put in the mouth of your wife.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.¹)

In *Madaaraj al-Saalikeen*, ibn al-Qayyim stated, “The most exclusive [group of] people who get close to Allah are those who change the nature of their permissible deeds into acts of obedience to Allah.” He also said, “The customary-mundane deeds of those people who truly know Allah are acts of worship [for them] while the ritual acts of worship are customary deeds for the masses.”² What he said is very true. The masses of Muslims approach the

¹ In his commentary to this hadith, al-Nawawi understood this hadith in a very literal sense. He then stated that this kind of action, literally putting food in the mouth of one’s wife, is usually done when the two spouses are getting close to each other and enjoying each other’s company. Even in that state, if it is done because it is known to be a permissible act, one will be rewarded by Allah.

² Saalih al-Alayawi, *Mabaahith fi al-Niyyah* (no publication information given), p. 15.

prayers, fasting and other deeds as common daily practices that they must perform simply because it is part of the culture or way of life. They have no strong intention in their hearts or feeling of doing the act for the sake of Allah. If the quality of the act is poor, it does not matter much to them because they are doing it just to finish. Hence, these important rites of worship become simply customary with no meaning or effect to them. The one who truly knows Allah is at the opposite extreme. Even the “mundane” deeds he performs are filled with purpose and intent. Hence, they become acts of worship that are pleasing to Allah.

Similarly, al-Nawawi, while commenting on the hadith that states that a person will be rewarded for having sexual intercourse with his wife, wrote, “This hadith is evidence that the permissible deeds become acts of obedience if they are accompanied by righteous intentions. So sexual intercourse becomes an act of obedience if it is performed with the intention of fulfilling the rights of the wife and treating her in the manner that Allah has ordered him to treat her; or if it is performed with the hope of giving birth to a pious child; or if it is done to fulfill his needs or his wife’s needs and to keep them away from forbidden acts or looking at forbidden acts and so on.”¹

Hence, the striving Muslim should try, to the best of his ability, to perform every act in a completely conscious manner. He should think about what he is doing before he does it. He should think about the purpose and the goal of his action, no matter what kind of action that might be. No matter how mundane the act might be, if the person really thinks about why and for whom he is doing it, it can move to the realm of worship of Allah.

Can a Person Control His Intention?

Al-Ghazzaali wrote,

You should know that some ignorant people hear what we say about having the proper intention and the Prophet’s statement, “All deeds are based on their intentions,” and the person says to himself while studying or doing business or eating, “I have the intention to study for the sake of Allah,” or “I eat for the sake of Allah,” and he believes that such is the intention. That is not so. That is simply the person talking to himself or the speech of the tongue or thought or movement from one stage to another. The intention is completely different from all of that. The intention is the thing that drives the person and makes him seek some goal that is either to appear at the present time or in the future. He cannot create this drive or make it appear in himself. That is like a person whose stomach is full saying, “I have the intention to desire food,” and then he goes to eat. Or

¹ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*.

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an idle person saying, “I have the intention to love so and so,” without any meaning to it.¹

Ibn Khaldun stated that most people do not have control over the inner aspects (that is, the intention) of most of the deeds that they perform. If that is so, how is it that Allah has ordered the believers to have pure intentions and judges their deeds by the intentions behind the deeds?² This question was answered by al-Shaatibi who wrote,

If Allah orders something that seems outside of the control of the humans, then one must look at the context of the order [in order to understand it. For example,] Allah says, “And die not save as Muslims.” And a hadith states, “Be a slave of Allah who is killed and do not be a slave who kills.” And the Prophet also said, “And do not die while you are an oppressor,” and so on. But what is being ordered is only what is in the hands of the human and that is [in these examples] to follow Islam, to avoid oppression, to refrain from killing and to submit to the order of Allah. The same is true for all similar commands.³

Actually, it seems that al-Ghazali's statement, “He cannot create this drive or make it appear in himself,” is not quite correct. There are means to bring such a drive about. On this point, al-Sadlan has a very important passage that is deserving to be quoted at length:

Intention is one of the actions of the heart and, in general, the actions of the heart are under the control of the person and fall under his personal choice. He is ordered to make his intention pure, unadulterated and to define what is his purpose. He is forbidden to commit *shirk* in his intention, not to purify it or to deviate in his intention to something that he is not ordered to do. That is all under the ability and capability of the responsible person. If that were not the case, the order to have purity and prohibition of *shirk* would be an obligation that one could not fulfill...

¹ Quoted in al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 39.

² This question needs only be answered if the statements of al-Ghazali and ibn Khaldun are correct. Umar al-Ashqar stated that there have been some experiments whose results have contradicted their statements. For example, Peter Lang, at the University of Pittsburgh, came up with amazing results when he asked some people to mentally control the number of heartbeats they have per minute and they were able to do so. Similarly, Ilmud and Green, of Kansas, asked some women and children to mentally control the temperature of their hands and they were, after some time, also able to do so. Ashqar concludes that these studies should lead to a renewed study of the question of the ability to control one's intentions especially since there is no sound, textual evidence for al-Ghazali's and ibn Khaldun's statements recorded above (al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 40). Al-Sadlan's discussion, to be presented shortly, should be considered a sufficient response.

³ Quoted in al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 41.

Therefore, the person has the ability to define his intention and to direct it and make himself pure in the same way that he has the ability to turn his intention away from what he is legally not supposed to do. This is because Allah has given humans intelligence and has given them will and free choice. Allah has made clear for them the path of goodness. He has clarified it for the human. He has called the human to it. He has promised the doer of good a great reward and abundant recompense. He has also made clear to them the path of evil, has warned them about it, has threatened the one who follows it and has shown the consequential punishment in this life and the Hereafter. Furthermore, He has sent messengers, revealed books, given proofs and arguments, and has made all the arguments clear.

رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ ۗ

“[He has sent] Messengers as bearers of good news as well as of warning in order that mankind should have no plea against Allah after the [advent of the] Messengers” (*al-Nisaa* 165). Allah also says,

وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

“And We never punish until We have sent a Messenger (to give warning)” (*al-Israa* 15). Therefore, intention is one of the deeds that a responsible person is capable of performing. However, it is upon him to follow the steps and causes that will lead him to purity in his intention. That is by learning about Allah through pondering over His creation and great bounties. He should consider the great reward for the one who obeys Him and the great punishment for the disobedient. He should think about the numerous benefits that accrue to the person who obeys Him in this life and the Hereafter. When he does that, his soul will push itself to fulfill Allah’s commands in a sincere and pure manner. If the person is overcome by thinking about the Hereafter and his heart is filled with the love of Allah, fear of Him and hope in Him, it will be very easy for him to prepare his intention, for the heart always leans to [what it sees as] good [for the person].

If he follows the causes that take him away from obeying Allah, and he then leans towards them and his heart is attached to them, his recompense will be that he will love them and become accustomed to them. In that case, it will be hard for him to purify his intention and avoid disobedience. Allah has said,

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فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ

“So when they turned away, Allah turned their hearts away. And Allah guides not the people who are disobedient” (*al-Saff* 5). Allah also says,

أَفَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا

“Is he, then, to whom the evil of his deeds is made fair-seeming, [so that he considers them as good, equal to one who is rightly guided]” (*Faatir* 8). There is no doubt that following the causes of disobedience and sins hardens the hearts and weakens purity and sincerity. Every time disobedience is increased, the hearts become even harder and become even further away from obeying Allah.

If it is accepted that intention falls within the free choice of a human and the human is able to direct his intention to good or evil, then there is no difficulty or hardship in bringing about one’s intention, as some of the ascetics have claimed. Al-Ghazzaali, in *Ihya Uloom al-Deen*, has quoted many of the early scholars stating how difficult it was for them to bring about their intention and how they would refrain from acting for days until their intention was present for that deed. As for those quotes he presents, if they are authentic from the one who is being quoted, they are simply personal opinions and cannot be relied upon or used to refute a general principle of obligation that is found in the religion. There is no example from the Prophet (peace be upon him) or any of the Companions of them making the intention present or in existence, nor was that something well-known or widespread among the early scholars...¹

Therefore, the Muslim must do his best to be sincere to Allah and to seek to please Him by following those means that will take him closer to Allah— such as trying to know Allah better, pondering over His creation and blessings, recognizing His attributes and so on. By doing so, the person will

¹ Al-Sadlaan, *al-Niyyah*, vol. 2, pp. 441-444. In this passage, al-Sadlaan has made two very important points. First, many of the narrations from early scholars concerning matters of purification and behavior are simply not authentic. Hence, their authenticity must be established first. The second point is that many times such statements are simply matters of opinion. In the same way that a person may make mistakes in matters of fiqh, one may make mistakes in matters of purification and behavior. Hence, such statements must be judged in the light of the Quran and sunnah. If they are compatible with them, they are to be accepted. If they are not compatible with them, they are to be rejected— no matter how pious or ascetic the person who said them is known to have been.

drive himself to obey Allah more and be more sincere towards Him. If this sincere intention overtakes him, his heart will be filled with the love of Allah, fear of Him and hope in Him; therefore, it will be simple for him to desire what Allah asks of him to perform and to work solely for His cause. In that case, his intention will be to sincerely serve Allah and his soul will automatically drive him to do those deeds that please Allah.

A person is helped to reach this state by understanding what kind of forces may be working upon his heart. By understanding these, a person knows where to turn for help. He also understands the sources of his problems and his straying from the straight path. Al-Haarith al-Muhaasabi has stated three types of forces working upon one's heart.¹

The first is a source of inspiration and guidance from Allah that He has put into the hearts of the believers. A hadith states:

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا وَعَلَى جَنْبَيْهِ الصَّرَاطِ سُورَانِ فِيهِمَا أَبْوَابٌ مَفْتُحَةٌ
وَعَلَى الْأَبْوَابِ سُتُورٌ مُرَخَّاةٌ وَعَلَى بَابِ الصَّرَاطِ دَاعٍ يَقُولُ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ادْخُلُوا الصَّرَاطَ
جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَتَفَرَّجُوا وَدَاعٍ يَدْعُو مِنْ جَوْفِ الصَّرَاطِ فَإِذَا أَرَادَ يَفْتَحُ شَيْئًا مِنْ تِلْكَ
الْأَبْوَابِ قَالَ وَيَحَكْ لَا تَفْتَحْهُ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ تَفْتَحْهُ تَلِجْهُ وَالصَّرَاطُ الْإِسْلَامُ وَالسُّورَانِ
حُدُودُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى وَالْأَبْوَابُ الْمَفْتُحَةُ مَحَارِمُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى وَذَلِكَ الدَّاعِي عَلَى رَأْسِ الصَّرَاطِ
كِتَابُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَالدَّاعِي فَوْقَ الصَّرَاطِ وَاعِظُ اللَّهِ فِي قَلْبِ كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

“Allah has laid down a parable of a straight path on the sides of which are walls with open doors and curtains hanging down over the open doors. At the top of the path there is a caller, saying, ‘Go straight, all of you, on the path and do not deviate.’ Above that one is another caller who says, whenever anyone tries to open any of those doors, ‘Woe to you! Do not open it, for if you open it you will go through it.’ The path is Islam, the open doors are the things Allah has forbidden, the curtains hanging down are the limits Allah has set, the crier at the top of the path is the Quran, and the one above him is [one who] admonishes for Allah’s sake [and] who is in every Muslim’s heart.”²

This is the first source that aids a person in being sincere to Allah in his heart. Beyond that, if and when he truly turns to Allah, Allah turns to him in an even greater way.

¹ See al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, pp. 361f. The three types are from al-Muhaasabi but the discussion here does not follow his discussion.

² Recorded by Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, pp. 721-722.

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However, the other two forces working on a person's heart are Satan, through his whisperings and enticements, and the soul itself. Sometimes the straying from being sincere to Allah is due to whisperings from Satan while at other times it is more related to desires and passions that a person has developed in his own soul.

About the first, once again, if the person turns to Allah, Allah will remove the effect of Satan from his heart. Allah has said,

وَأَمَّا يَنْزَعَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“If an evil whisper comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge with Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, All-Knower” (*al-Araaf* 200). Once again, if the person turns to Allah, Allah will remove such whispers from his heart.

About the soul leading one to do evil, Allah has described it in the following manner:

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“[Yusuf said:] Verily, the (human) self is inclined to evil, except when my Lord bestows His Mercy [upon whom He will]. Verily, My Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (*Yoosuf* 53).

Hence, the individual must always strive to be aware of these forces acting upon his heart. He must always try to be awake and never let himself become neglectful. If he becomes neglectful, he will stray from his one purpose in life: being true and sincere to Allah in his worship of Him. He must always try to follow those steps that will increase his faith and keep him from straying. He must always turn to Allah and ask Allah to guide him to sincerity and purity for His sake.

The Hadith Points Out the Importance of Knowledge Before Acting

This hadith clearly demonstrates that a Muslim must have knowledge before acting. A person must have the intention to do an act which is proper or, at least, permissible. However, he cannot have such an intention unless he first knows that the act is proper or permissible. If a person does an act without knowing the ruling of that act, then he cannot claim that his intention was pure. His intention is characterized by his understanding of that act and whether or not that act is permissible. If he did not care whether the act is permissible or not, then he did the act with a careless intention. That is, his intention was that he did not care if the act was permissible or not.

Allah states in the Quran,

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ
أَحَدًا

“So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of His lord” (*al-Kahf* 110). Commenting on this verse, ibn al-Qayyim wrote,

This is in reference to the only type of deed that Allah will accept. The deed must be in accordance with the sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and done solely for the Countenance of Allah. A doer cannot possibly fulfill both of these conditions unless he has knowledge. If he does not know what has been narrated from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), then he cannot intend that. If he is not knowledgeable of whom he worships, he cannot intend Him alone in his deeds. If it were not for knowledge, his deed could not be acceptable. It is knowledge that guides to sincerity and purity and it is knowledge that indicates what is the actual following of the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him).¹

Proper Intention and “Wrong” Results

A person’s intention determines the reward for the deed even if the result of the deed is not what the person desired. Once a father gave some charity to the person in charge of the charity and he, unknowingly, gave the charity to the man’s son. The father said to the Prophet (peace be upon him), “I did not desire it to go to him.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him, “For you is what you intended,” and he told the son who received the charity, “For you is what you have received.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) Similarly, if someone gives charity to a certain person because he believes that person to be poor, although the truth is otherwise, he will still be rewarded due to his intention. This once again demonstrates the importance and place of intention.

Proper Intention is One of The Greatest Forms of Worship

The intention behind a deed is something that only the person and Allah are aware of. It is private between the person and Allah. There is no way for any insincerity to exist in this matter, as opposed to outward deeds that are seen by others. Therefore, it will be greatly rewarded by Allah as the person cannot seek any worldly benefit from it whatsoever. Perhaps this is partially

¹ Quoted from Ali al-Saalihi, *Al-Dhau al-Muneer ala al-Tafseer*, (Riyadh: Muassasat al-Noor, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 173.

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what Sahl ibn Abdullah meant when he said, “There is nothing more difficult upon the soul than *ikhlaas* (purity for the sake of Allah) because the soul itself gets no portion from it.”¹

al-Niyyah and *al-Ikhlaas* : The Heart of the Matter

The importance of this question of *niyyah* (“intention”) and *ikhlaas* (“purity in one’s deeds,” that is, acting solely for the sake of Allah) cannot be overstated. It is really the key matter around which all of this creation revolves. It must be the goal and purpose of the human being beyond which there can be no other goal or purpose. Allah has stated,

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I (Allah) created not jinn and men except that they should worship Me (alone)” (*al-Dhaariyaat* 56). Purity of intention is, in actuality, the differentiating point between worshipping Allah correctly and not worshipping Him correctly or at all. It is what differentiates the one who worships only Allah and the one who worships something along with Allah.

Ibn Hazm stated, “Intention is the secret of servitude and its spirit. Its place, with respect to deeds, is like the soul with respect to the body. It is inconceivable to consider a deed of servitude that is not accompanied with its soul. In that case, it is like a dilapidated body.”² Al-Ashqar also wrote,

The truth to which the Quran and sunnah testify is that the real thing that is obligated by the *shareeah* rulings is the person’s soul. The body is just a tool for it. If a deed is without what the soul has been ordered to fulfill— which is purity of intention— then the deed that the body performs is a type of useless play and straying.³

Allah asks of His servants purity in the hearts. Although this purity is reflected in the deeds itself, it is the purity as a result of intention that is the key to Allah being pleased with a certain deed. Allah created death and life in order to test mankind to see who are the best in deeds. He did not create mankind and test them to see who performs the most deeds with the least quality. Allah has stated,

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 84. The only way this statement could be considered correct if it is understood in the above manner. Otherwise, the statement must be rejected as the soul gets a great deal from *ikhlaas*, including an increase in faith and great reward in the Hereafter. Allah knows best.

² Quoted in al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, pp. 68-69.

³ Al-Ashqar, *Muqaasid*, p. 69.

تَبْرَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمَلِكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ
وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ

“Blessed is He in whose Hand is the dominion, and He is the One who Decrees all things, Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is the best in deed. He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving” (*al-Mulk* 1-2). Commenting on this verse, al-Fudhail ibn Iyaadh stated that “best in deeds,” means the most pure and most correct. He stated, “If a deed is sincere and pure but not correct, it is not accepted. If it is correct but not pure, it is not accepted. [It will not be accepted] until it is both pure and correct. It is pure if it is solely for the sake of Allah and it is correct if it is according to the sunnah.”¹ This is emphasized by Allah’s statement,

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ
أَحَدًا

“So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of His lord” (*al-Kahf* 110).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَىٰ صُورِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَىٰ قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ

“Verily, Allah does not look at your shapes or your wealth but He looks at your hearts and your actions.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

This was the religion of all of the prophets and what all of mankind has been ordered to fulfill. As Allah has stated,

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ

“And they [the People of the Scripture] were commanded not but that they worship Allah, worshipping Him alone, purely, and establish the prayer, and pay the zakat, and that is the Right Religion” (*al-Bayyinah* 5).

Hence, the outward deeds and the inner aspects must go together. The most important aspect and the driving factor is what is in the heart. This can be seen from this hadith, “Verily, all actions are but driven by intention.” Ibn al-Qayyim once wrote,

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 72,

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The one who studies the sources of the *shareeah* will know the relationship between the external actions of the limbs and the actions of the heart. The deeds are not [beneficial] without the actions of the heart. The actions of the heart are more of an obligation upon the person than the actions of the limbs. Isn't a believer distinguished from a hypocrite simply due to the actions in their hearts that are different from each other? Can anyone enter into Islam except by the actions of his heart before the actions of his limbs? The servitude and worship of the heart is greater, more and longer lasting than the servitude of the limbs. They are obligatory in every moment. This is why faith is always obligatory upon the heart. However, the [specific] submission of the limbs is obligatory only at certain times. The seat of faith is the heart and the seat of Islam [submission] is the external limbs.¹

Intention is the Key to Eternal Living in Paradise or Hell-Fire

Some people ask: Why is it that the unbelievers are punished in hell forever while they were not disobedient to Allah forever? Similarly, why will the believers be rewarded with heaven forever while they were obedient to Allah for only a short time in this life? The answer is that the unbelievers had the intention to disobey Allah forever while the believers had the intention to obey Allah forever. Thereby, they are rewarded according to their intentions. As al-Qaari pointed out, entrance into Paradise is due to faith, the levels in Paradise are due to the deeds performed and remaining therein forever is due to the intention that the person had to obey Allah as long as he could have lived. Similarly, entrance into Hell is due to disbelief, its levels are due to the evil deeds that the person performed and its eternity is due to the intention the unbeliever had to forever disobey Allah.²

The disbelievers may do some deeds that seem to be good because they bring positive results for others, such as humanitarian acts. However, that does not mean that such acts are good for the person himself. Ibn Rajab stated,

Ordering good is a type of charity. Bringing about reconciliation and peace between two is a good deed, even if it is not done for the sake of Allah, due to the benefit that it brings for others. The people receive goodness and good. However, as for the one who brought it about, if he did that for the sake of Allah and seeking His pleasure, then it is good for

¹ Shams al-Din ibn al-Qayyim, *Badaai al-Fawaaid*, vol. 3, p. 230.

² Ali al-Qaari, *Mirqat al-Mafateeh Sharh Mishkaat al-Masabeeh* (Multan, Pakistan: Maktaba Haqqaniya, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 43.

him and he shall be rewarded. If that was not his intent, it is actually not good for him nor shall he be rewarded for it.¹

The problem with the deeds of all the disbelievers— in general— is that none of them, no matter how utilitarian or humanitarian they seem, are for the sake of Allah. They perform deeds for the sake of the false, claimed gods, such as Jesus. Or they perform deeds to make their own egos feel good. Sometimes— many times— they do acts to impress others. Hence, their deeds are never really for the sake of Allah and, therefore, they are not deserving of reward from Allah in the Hereafter. They claim to be doing good while at the same time they are refusing to submit to Allah. Hence, there can truly be no good in them. They are as those described in the Quran,

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعِيَّهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزَنًا
﴿١٠٨﴾ ذَلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَرُسُلِي هُزُوًا

“Say (O Muhammad): Shall We tell you the greatest losers in respect of (their) deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought that they were acquiring good by their deeds? Those are they who deny the signs of their Lord and the meeting with Him [in the Hereafter]. So their works are in vain, and on the Day of Resurrection, We shall not give them any weight. That shall be their recompense, Hell, because they disbelieved and took My signs and My Messengers by way of jest and mockery” (*al-Kahf* 103-106).

However, Allah may reward them for their deeds in this world. Allah has stated, as was mentioned earlier,

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ
فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ
وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبِطُلَّ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“Whosoever desires the life of the world and its glitter, to them We shall pay in full (the wages of) their deeds they did therein, and they will have no diminution therein. They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but Fire; and vain are the deeds they did therein. And of no effect is that which they used to do” (*Hood* 15-16).

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 67.

Hadith #1: All Actions are but by Intentions...

“Thus he whose migration was for Allah and His Messenger, his migration was for Allah and His Messenger”

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) is here giving an example demonstrating the important principle he has just stated. It is as if he were saying, “And the remainder of the deeds are similar to migration.” In fact, in this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated one example, that of emigration. However, the Quran also gives a very clear example of two people performing the same deed but the results being very different. In their case, it was the deed of giving in charity or “for the sake of Allah.” Allah describes the two cases in a very beautiful fashion. He shows how useless, in the long-run, those deeds are that are not done solely for the sake of pleasing Allah. Allah says,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ
مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ
عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا
كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٦٥﴾ وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ
أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ
أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَكَاتَتْ أَكْطَاهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ وَاللَّهُ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“O believers! Do not render in vain your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men, and he does not believe in Allah, nor in the Last Day. His likeness is the likeness of a smooth rock on which is a little dust. On it falls heavy rain which leaves it bare. They are not able to do anything with what they have earned. And Allah does not guide the disbelieving people. And the likeness of those who spend their wealth seeking Allah’s pleasure, while they in their own selves are sure and certain that Allah will reward them, is the likeness of a garden on a height. Heavy rain falls on it and it doubles its yield of harvest. And if it does not receive heavy rain, light rain suffices it. And Allah is All-Seer of what you do” (al-Baqarah 264-265).

In this portion of the hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated, “Thus he whose migration was for Allah and His Messenger, his migration was for Allah and His Messenger” It should be noted that, in general, the *shart* (conditional portion) of a statement must differ from its *jaza* (result or

consequence). However, in this case, they are exactly the same. This makes the statement something of a tautology. The scholars have discussed the exact meaning and implication of this statement.

Some scholars have once again resorted to *taqdeer* and understand the sentence in different ways, including: “Whoever migrates with intention to please Allah and His Messenger, then his reward for his migration will be with Allah and His Messenger,” or, “Whoever migrates to Allah and His Messenger with intention and purpose, then the ruling of that migration is that it was for Allah and His Messenger.” But *taqdeer* is only to be resorted to in the case of necessity. In this case, it may not be a necessity.

Some scholars have stated that a change in meaning can either be through a change in wording, the normal case, or it can be through a change in “meaning” although the wording is exactly the same. The latter case is understood by the context. That is, even if the same words are used, the meaning implied is different and understood. Here one understands from the context concerning the intentions behind actions that such deeds will be rewarded by Allah.

Others understand the sentence to be similar to a known sentence in Arabic, “I am who I am and my poetry is my poetry.” In general, if the *khabr* (predicate) and *mubtada* (subject) or the *shart* (condition) and *jaza* (consequence) are exactly the same, this is done as a kind of exaggeration or emphasis, either for the purpose of exalting something or belittling something. In this case, it is clear that by restating “Allah and His Messenger,” the Prophet (peace be upon him) is emphasizing the importance and greatness of the purpose of the migration.

However, ibn Rajab gives another explanation, stating that Allah and His Messenger have been repeated because Allah and His Messenger are the final goal that anyone could seek in this life or the Hereafter. He further states that it is a singular goal that cannot be mixed with any other. Hence, he repeated the statement with the exact same wording. Ibn Rajab also described the true migration for the sake of Allah,

Whoever migrates to the land of Islam out of love for Allah and His messenger, desiring to learn the religion of Islam and to openly practice his Islam, as he was not able to do in the land of the disbelievers, is one who truly migrated to Allah and His Messenger. The honor and nobility that he receives for that intention of his migration to Allah and His messenger is sufficient. In that sense, the exact words have been restated in the sentence. This is because he achieved from his migration the final and furthestmost objective of this world and the Hereafter.¹

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 73.

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Furthermore, ibn Rajab stated,

The migration to Allah and His Messenger is [for] one purpose. For that reason, the exact same wording was repeated in the statement. But the migration for the purpose of this world has many goals related to it that cannot be enumerated. A person may migrate for a permissible purpose of this world or, on another occasion, for a forbidden purpose. The individual reasons that one may migrate for this world are innumerable. That is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) said [later in this hadith], “Then his migration is for what he migrated for,” that is, whatever it might be.¹

There is possibly another aspect to the Prophet’s statement. He repeated the words, “for Allah and His Messenger,” instead of simply saying, “for them.” As was stated above, this could have been done out of respect and to magnify their importance. Or it could have been done in order to avoid using one pronoun for both Allah and His Messenger. Once, a person said, “Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has verily been guided. And whoever disobeys them has strayed.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that he had spoken improperly and told him that he should have stated, “Whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger.” (Recorded by Muslim.) This indicates that any action or speech that may lead to any kind of associating partners with Allah is to be strictly avoided. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not like that he should be associated with Allah by using one pronoun to refer to both him and Allah.²

Finally, one understands from what the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated in this hadith, that the *hijrah* is then for Allah and His Messenger, that Allah never rejects the good deed of anyone who performs it sincerely for His sake.

The Meaning of the Word *Hijrah* (Migration)

Hijrah means “to leave or avoid something and to move from one thing to something else.” Its most apparent *shareeah* meaning is the leaving of the lands of the disbelievers to the land of Islam in order to implement or practice Islam. This is the apparent reference in this particular hadith. During the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him), there were two famous emigrations or *hijras*. The first was the *hijrah* from Makkah to Abyssinia. This took place around the fifth year of the Prophet’s mission.

¹ Ibid.

² There is a hadith in *Sunan Abu Dawood* which states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Whoever Allah and His Messenger... and whoever disobeys them...” However, according to al-Albaani, that hadith is weak. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Dhaeef Sunan Abi Dawood* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1991), p. 108.

The second *hijrah* marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar. It is the *hijrah* from Makkah to Madinah. This *hijrah*, according to many scholars, such as the early scholar al-Suddi and the recent Al-Shanqeeti, was a condition for the validity of one's Islam. That is, a person was not considered to be a true Muslim if he had the means to migrate from Makkah to Madinah but he did not migrate.¹ Ibn Attiyyah argues that the stronger argument is that the one who did not migrate was deserving of punishment in the Hell-fire for his disobedience, although he would not remain therein forever since he did not commit an act that took him completely out of the fold of Islam.²

However, this specific form of *hijrah* was no longer required after the Conquest of Makkah. Makkah had become part of the Islamic state and, hence, there was no longer any need or significance to migrating from it. This is the meaning of the oft-misunderstood hadith of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him),

لَا هِجْرَةَ بَعْدَ الْفَتْحِ وَلَكِنْ جِهَادٌ وَنِيَّةٌ

“There is no *hijrah* after the Conquest of Makkah but there remains *jihad* and intention.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

This is the most apparent *hijrah* that comes to mind when one reads this hadith concerning intention, although, again, there is no authentic narration mentioning this *hijrah* as the cause behind the Prophet's statement. However, the meaning and ruling of the hadith is general and applies to any kind of *hijrah*. The following hadith demonstrates that there will always be a form of *hijrah* as long as non-Islamic countries or regions exist. That is, as long as those regions exist, there will always be a reason for *jihad* and a cause for Muslims to move from those lands to the lands of Islam. Ahmad recorded that a man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and stated that the people were saying that there was no longer any *hijrah*. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him,

إِنَّ الْهِجْرَةَ لَا تَنْقَطِعُ مَا كَانَ الْجِهَادُ

“*Hijrah* will not be discontinued as long as there is *jihad*.”³ Another hadith states,

لَا تَنْقَطِعُ الْهِجْرَةُ حَتَّى تَنْقَطِعَ التَّوْبَةُ وَلَا تَنْقَطِعَ التَّوْبَةُ حَتَّى تَطْلُعَ الشَّمْسُ مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا

¹ Al-Shanqeeti, vol. 1, p. 144 and 150.

² See Al-Shanqeeti, vol. 1, pp. 150-151.

³ Recorded by Ahmad and al-Tahaawi in *Mushkil al-Athaar*. According to al-Albaani, it is an authentic hadith. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahadeeth al-Saheeha* (Amman, Jordan: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1983), vol. 4, p. 239.

Hadith #1: All Actions are but by Intentions...

“*Hijrah* will not be discontinued as long as repentance is not discontinued. And repentance will not be discontinued until the sun rises from its West.”¹

The purpose of *hijrah* is to move from one locale to the place where one can better or best practice his religion. Hence, the following types of *hijrah* are mentioned by different scholars:

(1) Making *hijrah* from the land of *kufr* (disbelief) to the land of Islam. This is the form of *hijrah* that is most well-known and most often discussed. It is an important issue for Muslims living in the West.

(2) Making *hijrah* from the land of *bidah* (heresies and innovations). Imam Malik once said, “It is not permissible for anyone to reside in a land in which they abuse the *salaf* (the pious forefathers of Islam).”² If the person does not have the ability to change what they are doing, he should leave. This is based on the Quranic principle:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۗ وَإِمَّا يُنسِينَكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

“And when you see those who engage in a false conversation about Our Verses, stay away from them until they turn to another topic. If Satan makes you forget [this teaching,] then after the remembrance do not sit with the wrongdoing” (*al-Anaam* 68).

(3) Making *hijrah* from a land that is dominated by *haram* (forbidden aspects) to a land that is less so dominated by them. It is obligatory upon a Muslim to seek what is permissible and pure in all aspects of his life.

There are other forms of *hijrah* that seem to be for a worldly reason but, in the long run, they should also be for the sake of worshipping Allah. That is, like all permissible acts, if they are done with the right intention, they will be rewarded by Allah. The forms of *hijrah* include the following:

(4) Making *hijrah* from a land in which one fears bodily harm. Allah has permitted this kind of action. This was done by Prophets Abraham and Moses. Again, if a person escapes bodily harm so that he will be able to worship Allah to his fullest potential, this will be an act of worship.

(5) Making *hijrah* from a land in which one fears bodily disease or has become ill. This was the case during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) when he allowed those people who became ill in Madinah to leave the city.

¹ Recorded by Abu Dawood. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh Sunan Abi Dawood* (Riyadh: Maktab al-Tarbiyah al-Arabi li-Daul al-Khaleej, 1989), vol. 2, p. 470.

² Quoted in Husain al-Uwaayisha, *al-Fasl al-Mubeen fi Masalah al-Hijrah wa Mufaariqah al-Mushrikeen* (Amman, Jordan: Daar Usaid, 1993), p. 40.

(6) Making *hijrah* due to fear of harm to one's property and wealth. Wealth and property are inviolable. It is considered permissible to leave one land for another out of fear that his property may be confiscated and so forth. Obviously, though, this does not mean fleeing to the lands of the disbelievers just for economic benefit, but it means fleeing to another portion of the Islamic lands. Otherwise one should bear it patiently.

A Different Concept of *Hijrah*

According to al-Mudaabaghi, the word *hijrah* in this hadith refers to any kind of *hijrah*, physical or spiritual. There is a type of *hijrah* that is obligatory upon all Muslims at all times. This kind of *hijrah*, obviously, must be or can only be performed for the sake of Allah. It is described in the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

المُهَاجِرُ مَنْ هَجَرَ مَا نَهَى اللَّهُ عَنْهُ

“The *Muhaajir* [one who makes *hijrah*] is the one who avoids what Allah has prohibited.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

“He whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take some woman in marriage, his migration was for that for which he migrated.”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) belittled the goal of the person who migrated for some worldly purpose by stating, “Then his migration is for it,” without explicitly stating what was being referred to.¹ Also, the migration for the sake of Allah and His Messenger is done with one purpose in mind. There are numerous other reasons that may lead one to migrate but there is no call to mention them; therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not mention them.

Meaning of the Word *Dunya*

The word *dunya* (this worldly life) may have the meaning of *al-adna* or “the closest”.² It is given this name because it is the closest life as it comes before the life of the Hereafter. Another possible reason why this worldly life has been given the name *dunya* is that it is close to perishing. Some even say that it *dunya* comes from *al-dina`a* (الدناءة) which means something base, low,

¹ Although that is common English parlance, it is only done in Arabic for a purpose, such as the purpose stated above: to belittle what is not explicitly mentioned.

² Hence, the people who are seeking this world only are, in reality, short sighted as they are seeking the closest and the easiest life to achieve. However, they fail to realize that the important life, like many things in this world itself, is the one that one has to work and strive for in order to achieve it.

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vile, contemptible or despicable.¹ However, the first two are the most common explanations. As for what it refers to, it seems that the strongest opinion is that it covers everything on this earth and its environment that has occurred, is occurring or shall occur before the Day of Judgment.

The past century has witnessed a kind of *hijrah* that has been very harmful to Muslims and it has been for the sake of *dunya*. Scores of Muslims moved from Muslim lands to the land of the disbelievers of the West. In general, the main or only purpose for this migration was economic betterment or, in the words of this hadith, *dunya*. Many times this has occurred at the expense of their religion as they moved to the West and lost virtually all semblance of Islam. Even if they preserved part of their Islam, in numerous cases, their children lost all of their Islam and became completely assimilated into the non-Muslim society.

Moving from one locale to another for economic betterment, given no change in the Islamic environment and atmosphere, is something permissible in Islamic Law. However, when *hijrah* or emigration is undertaken for the sake of *dunya* at the expense of one's Islam or if it puts one's Islam at risk, it then becomes forbidden. Indeed, this defeats the very purpose of the concept of *hijrah* wherein one moves from one locale to another to improve and better his practice of the religion. Unfortunately, though, that is the power and the pull of this *dunya*. People leave their lands, culture, family, friends and way of life behind just to get ahead in this world—and many times they do not even achieve that. When this occurs at the expense of one's religion, then what little one may gain of this *dunya* cannot be compared to what one has lost in both this life and the Hereafter.

If the *dunya* can have such an effect that it makes a person leave his family and homeland for its sake, one can imagine how many other deeds are performed simply for the sake of this *dunya*. The true believer should set his aspirations on the Hereafter. He should use this world as a tool for gaining Allah's pleasure and bounties in the Hereafter. When he works, he should work with a view towards the Hereafter. If, instead, he works for this life, he will be gaining something fleeting and, in the long run, meaningless. On the Day of Judgment, he will blame himself for not having worked more for the Hereafter instead of for this *dunya*.

Mention of Woman after Mention of *Dunya*

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) specifically mentioned making *hijrah* for the sake of marrying a woman after mentioning making *hijrah* for a portion of this *dunya*. Obviously, marrying a woman is part of this *dunya*. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was making a general statement and then emphasized an important specific aspect of that general

¹ See al-Mudaabaghi, p. 33.

statement. This is a sign that woman— or the opposite sex in general— can have a great effect on the acts of an individual. Even great and noble deeds, such as making *hijrah*, may be performed for the sake of a woman instead of for the sake of Allah.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) warned his Nation about this world and, in particular, about women. He once again combined these two aspects together when he said,

إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا حُلْوَةٌ خَضِرَةٌ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مُسْتَخْلِفُكُمْ فِيهَا فَيَنْظُرُ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ فَاتَّقُوا الدُّنْيَا
وَاتَّقُوا النِّسَاءَ فَإِنَّ أَوَّلَ فِتْنَةٍ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَانَتْ فِي النِّسَاءِ

“Verily, the world is sweet and alluring. Verily, Allah is going to make you successors in it. So look to see how you behave. Beware of this world and beware of women. Verily, the first trial that afflicted the Tribes of Israel was concerning women.” (Recorded by Muslim.) In particular, he stated about women,

مَا تَرَكْتُ بَعْدِي فِتْنَةٌ أَضُرُّ عَلَى الرَّجَالِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ

“I have not left anything after me that is a more harmful trial for men than women.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

The effect of the opposite sex on a person, even persons who are generally pious, can be readily seen today. In many cases, a man has made a decision to marry a particular sister. He, in fact, falls “in love” with that sister. Although the rest of their lives are ruled by Islam and their intention is to live by Islam, many times they get to the point that they must get married. They even get to the point that they do not even seem to care what the *shareeah* has to say about their marriage. If the woman’s guardian, for example, does not accept the marriage, even if he has proper grounds, they will find any means to circumvent the guardian and get married at all cost. This is an example of how the opposite sex can have a very strong effect on an individual. This is, Allah knows best, probably why the Prophet (peace be upon him) specifically mentioned women in this important hadith about the place of intention in Islam.

The enemies of Islam today know very well how influential women can be. For the past century, they have been trying their best to take the Muslim woman out of her home and display in her public, in all her physical beauty. If the Muslim woman can be taken away from her Islam, she will then oppose her father, husband and other men. Such will be a very difficult battle and many men will not be up to that task. Furthermore, she will use her influence over her children, who are the next generation of Muslims.

Hadith #1: All Actions are but by Intentions...

“This was related by the two Imams of the scholars of hadith, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismaeel ibn Ibraaheem ibn al-Mugheerah ibn Bardizbah al-Bukhari and Muslim ibn al-Hajjaaj ibn Muslim al-Qushairi al-Naisaboori in their collections of authentic hadith which are the most authentic works compiled.”

Imam al-Bukhari¹

Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismaeel ibn Ibraaheem al-Bukhari al-Ju’fi was born in 194 A.H. (810 C.E.) in the city of Bukhaara, part of modern-day Uzbekistan. His father was a well-respected scholar and was one of the students of Hammaad ibn Zaid and Imam Malik. Unfortunately, he died when his son Muhammad was still quite young.

Al-Bukhari was attracted to the study of hadith at a very young age. By the age of sixteen, he had memorized the works of Wakee and Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak. He was well-known for his ability to memorize. In fact, many have stated that he could look at a work just once and have it memorized. He used this great ability that Allah had granted him in the service of Islam and the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in particular.

At the age of sixteen, he left Bukhaara and made the pilgrimage to Makkah. He stayed in Makkah for some time and he wrote his first book there. Before he was eighteen years old, he wrote his, *al-Tareekh al-Kabeer*, to this day a standard work of biography of narrators of hadith.

Al-Bukhari had numerous teachers; he recorded hadith from 1,080 scholars. Those who learned from al-Bukhari included famous subsequent scholars such as al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasaai, Muslim ibn al-Hajjaaj, ibn Khuzaima and numerous others. He is best known for his *Sahih* but he also compiled a number of other books, including a book on manners and ethics entitled *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.²

Imam Muslim³

Muslim ibn al-Hajjaaj was born in the year 204 or, most likely 206 A.H. His city of birth, Naisaboor, was famous for being a city of scholars. It seems that his father was himself a scholarly figure.⁴ According to al-Dhahabi,

¹ Biographical data recorded here is from Taqi al-Deen al-Mudhari, *al-Imaam al-Bukhaari: Imaam al-Huffaadh wa al-Muhadditheen* (Damascus: Daar al-Qalam, 1988), *passim*.

² His *Sahih* has been translated into English: Muhammad Muhsin Khan, trans. *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Beirut: Dar al-Arabia, 1985). *Al-Adab al-Mufrad* has recently been translated into English: Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Imam Bukhari's Book of Muslim Morals and Manners* (Alexandria, VA: Al-Saadawi Publications, 1997).

³ The biographical information recorded here is from Mahmood Fakhoori, *al-Imaam Muslim ibn al-Hajjaaj* (Cairo: Daar al-Salaam, 1985), *passim*.

⁴ Fakhoori, p. 36.

Muslim began his study of hadith in the year 218 A.H., when he was 12 years old. It is also known that he was a man of means and was therefore free to pursue hadith.

Like all scholars of hadith, Muslim journeyed to further his studies. He traveled to many areas, including Iraq, the Hijaz, Greater Syria and Egypt. In Khorasasn, he studied under Qutaiba ibn Saeed, Yahya ibn Yahya al-Naisaboori and others. In Rayy, he studied with Muhammad ibn Mihran al-Jamaal among others. In Iraq (including Baghdad, Kufa and Basra), he heard hadith from Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Khalf ibn Hishaam al-Bazzaar, Umar ibn Hafs ibn Ghayaath and others. In Greater Syria, he met with Waleed ibn Muslim. Among the other scholars he met were Saeed ibn Mansoor, Ismaaeel ibn Abu Uwais, Isa ibn Hamaad and Abu Bakr and Uthmaan ibn Abu Shaiba. Among Muslim's students were Muhammad ibn Mukhlad, al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad ibn Salama, Abu Amr al-Mustamli and many more.

He was respected during his time. Some even considered him the best when it came to differentiating between authentic and weak hadith. It was said that there were four great scholars of hadith during his time: Abu Zara, Abdullah al-Daarimi, al-Bukhari and Muslim.

He had a very close and good relationship with Imam al-Bukhari. Apparently, he met al-Bukhari in the year 250 A.H. when al-Bukhari came to Naisaboor, although it cannot be denied that he might have met al-Bukhari earlier during his travels. He stayed with al-Bukhari during the latter's entire stay in Naisaboor. When al-Dhuhali had a dispute with al-Bukhari on a matter of creed and announced that anyone who wants to listen to al-Bukhari should leave his gathering, Muslim got up in front of the whole crowd and walked out on al-Dhuhali. Later he sent all of his books that he got from al-Dhuhali back to him.

Muslim continued to study and travel in search of hadith throughout his life. In fact, his last visit to Baghdad was only two years before he died. Muslim died on the 28th of Rajab in 261 in Naisaboor. Although he compiled a number of works, he is best known for his *Sahih*.¹

Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim

The complete title of al-Bukhari's book is *al-Jaami al-Saheeh al-Musnad al-Mukhtasar min Umoor Rasoolullahi wa Sunanihi wa Ayaamihi* (الجامع الصحيح المسند المختصر من أمور رسول الله وسننه وأيامه). The title itself states a lot about the book. *Al-Jaami* (الجامع) implies that all of the subjects of the religion, ranging from belief, acts of worship, business, biography of the Prophet and so on, are covered. *Al-Saheeh* means that no weak reports have been entered into the book as al-Bukhari himself said, "I did

¹ This work is available in English: Abdul Hameed Siddiqi, trans. *Sahih Muslim* (Beirut: Dar al-Arabia, n.d.).

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not put anything in *al-Jaami* except what is authentic.” *Al-Musnad* (المسند) refers to the fact that the authentic reports in the book are traced directly back to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). *Al-Mukhtasar* (المختصر) means that it is only an abridged collection and the epitome of *sahih* hadith.

The second one who made a collection of only *sahih* hadith was al-Bukhari’s student Muslim ibn al-Hajjaaj al-Qushayri al-Naisaboori. His work is widely known as *Sahih Muslim* and is usually held in high esteem along with the book of his teacher al-Bukhari. For his *Sahih*, Imam Muslim sifted through 200,000 hadith to end up with his collection which contains approximately 4,000 hadith.

Any hadith that is found in both the collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim carries great weight. Such hadith are called *mutafiqun alaih* (“agreed upon” متفق عليه) meaning both al-Bukhari and Muslim have agreed that it is *sahih*. In general, this also implies that the whole Muslim Nation accepts the hadith since the scholars of hadith are in agreement concerning the general authenticity of the hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. This hadith, “Verily, all actions are but driven by intention,” is an example of a hadith that is agreed upon by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

In general, the works *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* are distinguished from other books for the following reasons: (1) In general, they only contain hadith of the highest level of authenticity; (2) in general, all of the hadith with connected chains that are contained in these two collections are considered authentic; (3) they are the first two collections of only authentic hadith; (4) the *Ummah* (Muslim Nation) as a whole have accepted these two works as authentic and testify to their correctness; (5) the scholars who collected these works were recognized as two of the greatest scholars in the field of hadith.¹

Other Points Related to this Hadith

- Allah knows the intentions and what is in the hearts although a person may be able to conceal such from other humans. These are part of a human’s deeds and shall be presented on the Day of Judgment.
- Based on the first point, with respect to this world, actions are based on their outward appearances. Since no human knows what is in the hearts, people and actions must be taken at “face value”. Hence, if a person shows himself to be a Muslim, he must be treated as such and his judgment will be with Allah— unless he openly holds a belief or performs an act that negates his Islam. However, in the Hereafter, the evaluation criteria will be quite different and no one will be able to fool or deceive Allah.

¹ For more about the special status of these two very important books, see Khaleel Mullaakhaatir, *Makaanat al-Sahihain* (1402 A.H.), *passim*.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

- A Muslim should try his utmost to be fully conscious of every act that he performs. He should not become a creature of habit such that he does not think before he acts. He should clearly consider what and why he is doing everything that he is doing. In this way, his life will become a complete worship of Allah as before every action he makes he will be certain that it is correct and permissible and he will also be certain that his motive for doing the act is proper.
- There are two components of every deed: the deed itself and the motive or intention behind it. Both of them must be proper and correct. It is not sufficient for the motive to be pure and then the deed itself not be correct according to the *Shareeah*. On this point, Nomani wrote,

It should, however, not be imagined that when it is the motive that decides, even the evil deeds that are done with a good intention become virtuous and deserving of Divine reward, as for instance, if a person commits theft with the intention that he will give away to the poor and the needy the goods he will thus acquire...

The deeds that are wicked in themselves and have been condemned as such by God and His Apostle will remain abominable and worthy of Divine Chastisement in any case. Their evilness cannot be taken away by purity of the motive. What is more, to perform them with a noble intention and be hopeful of Divine reward because of it may well be the cause of additional misfortune and enhancement of punishment as it will amount to playing with the Faith [*sic*] of God.¹

- In his epic work *al-Muwaafaqaat fi Usool al-Shareeah*, al-Shaatibi discussed many aspects related to the concept of intention, purpose and goal. In one section, he divides all acts into one of four cases. The first two cases are clear and non-problematic. The first case is where the intent behind the act and the act itself were both consistent with the *shareeah*. There is no question that such an act is proper and correct. The second case is where the intent behind the act and the act itself contradict the *shareeah*. An example of this nature is where a person intentionally does not perform an obligatory prayer. Obviously, in this case, the person's act is wrong and he will be held accountable for his behavior. The third case is where the deed is in accordance with the *shareeah* but the intent behind the deed was not. This case must be divided into two further subcases. The first subcase is where the person was not aware that his act was in accord with the *shareeah*. An example of this nature is a person drinking a beverage believing that it was alcoholic, with the intent of

¹ Nomani, vol. 1, p. 46. The English of the above passage is not excellent. However, since it is a quote, it must be left as is.

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drinking an alcoholic beverage, and it turned out that the beverage was not alcoholic at all. In this case, the person is a sinner due to his intent to violate the *shareeah*. However, the evil that usually results from violating the *shareeah* did not occur because the person did not actually violate the *shareeah*, although that was his intention. Hence, there is a combination of attempting to go against the *shareeah* while actually performing an act which is in accord with the *shareeah*. Therefore, with respect to the laws of this world, the person did not commit any crime and there is no punishment for him. However, with respect to the Hereafter, Allah will hold him accountable for his intention and his attempt, although a failure, to violate the *shareeah*. Is his sin the same as the one who actually did perform a deed that violated the *shareeah*? On that point, al-Shaatibi stated, “This is a different question and there is no need to discuss that here.”

The second subcase is where the person is aware that his act is in accord with the *shareeah* but his intention is to go against the *shareeah*. For example, a person who performs the obligatory prayer in congregation simply to be seen of men and to be considered pious is performing a deed that he knows to be correct while his intention behind it is incorrect. Al-Shaatibi says that this case is worse than the previous case. In this case, the person is using the *shareeah* for his own ignoble purposes. This category includes the acts of hypocrisy, show and deeds done to circumvent or go around the laws of the *shareeah*. This person is definitely a sinner and his deeds, in Allah’s sight, will not be valid.

The fourth category is where a person does a deed that goes against the *shareeah* but his intention was in accord with the *shareeah*. This fourth category must also be subdivided into two subcategories. The first subcategory is where the person was knowledgeable that his deed was not in accord with the *shareeah*. This is the essence of innovations and heresies. This would be like performing a new form of worship that is not sanctioned by the *shareeah* although the supposed purpose of that act was to worship Allah, a praiseworthy goal. This type of action, al-Shaatibi states, is definitely and unconditionally condemned.

The second subcategory of this fourth category is much trickier. This is where the person does something that goes against the *shareeah* out of ignorance while his intent was to do what is correct according to the *shareeah*. An example of this subcategory would be a person drinking what he believed to be grape juice that, however, turned out to be alcohol. Two contradicting factors are present here. The first is the proper intention while the second is the fact that the act is not in accord with the *shareeah*—and this makes the entire act incorrect, in a sense. In order for an act to be correct, both the act itself and the intention must be proper. One cannot give more precedence to one of those factors over the other

without some form of evidence from the *shareeah*. Therefore, what is to be concluded about acts of this nature where conflicting aspects are present? Indeed, two hadith are directly related to this question: “Verily, all actions are but by intention,” and, “Whoever does an act that is not in accord with our matter will have it rejected.”¹ The scholars have differed on this question with some scholars each emphasizing one aspect of the issue. Those who emphasize the intention aspect state that the deed is proper and there is no harm. Those who stress the compatibility of the act with the *shareeah* state that the act is not valid whatsoever. The best approach seems to be to somehow take into consideration both aspects of the problem. For example, if a person mistakenly drank alcohol, then there would be no prescribed punishment applied to him since it was clear that was not his intention. The approach of the Malikis and most of the Companions before them was to consider the case of ignorance to be similar to the case of forgetfulness.

An example of this nature is a man and woman getting married without the permission of the woman’s guardian, out of ignorance, thinking that such permission was not necessary and they had the intention to fulfill the *shareeah* rules concerning marriage. In that case, the marriage is automatically dissolved and the woman gets her dower. However, neither of the partners are to be punished for the crime of fornication and their children are considered legitimate. They need only fulfill the missing portion of the contract. That is, they need only get remarried with the proper consent of the woman’s guardian.²

Summary of the Hadith

- Every conscious, “free-willed” act has an intention behind it that is driving it and bringing it about.
- A person will achieve whatever he intended. If he intended good, good will come about. If he intended evil, evil will come about— that is, the result will be evil for him.
- If a person does a proper deed solely for the sake of Allah, his purpose would have been met and the deed would be accepted by Allah.
- Even such noble deeds as emigrating, that should be done for the sake of Allah, may be performed with a less noble intention. In such cases, the person will only get what he intended.
- This world and the opposite sex in particular are two aspects that drive a person to perform certain deeds. They can have great influences over a

¹ Recorded by Muslim. It is Hadith #5 in this collection.

² See Ibraaheem al-Shaatibi, *Al-Muwaafaqaat fi Usool al-Shareeah* (Beirut: Daar al-Marafah, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 337-347.

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person, to the extent that one may even perform noble deeds not for the sake of Allah but for their sake.

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Hadith #2:
The Hadith of Angel Jibreel

عن عمر رضي الله عنه أيضاً قال بينما نحن جلوس عند رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ذات يوم إذ طلع علينا رجل شديد بياض الثياب شديد سواد الشعر لا يرى عليه أثر السفر ولا يعرفه منا أحد حتى جلس إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فاستند ركبته إلى ركبته ووضعه فيه على فخذه وقال يا محمد أخبرني عن الإسلام فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم الإسلام أن تشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وأن محمداً رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وتقيم الصلاة وتؤتي الزكاة وتصوم رمضان وتحتج البيت ويصدقك قال فأخبرني عن الإيمان قال أن تؤمن بالله وملائكته وكتبه ورسله واليوم الآخر وتؤمن بالقدر خيره وشره قال صدقت قال فأخبرني عن الإحسان قال أن تعبده الله كأنك تراه فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك قال فأخبرني عن الساعة قال ما المستؤول عنها بأعلم من السائل قال فأخبرني عن آماراتها قال أن تلد الأمة ربها وأن ترى الحفاة العرة أعاة المشاء يتطاولون في البیان قال

ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ فَلَبِثْتُ مَلِيًّا ثُمَّ قَالَ يَا عُمَرُ أَتَدْرِي مَنْ السَّائِلُ
قُلْتُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَغْلَمُ قَالَ فَإِنَّهُ جَبْرِيلُ أَتَاكُمْ يُعَلِّمُكُمْ
دِينَكُمْ

رواه مسلم

On the authority of Umar also who said: One day while we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), there came before us a man with extremely white clothing and extremely black hair. There were no signs of travel on him and none of us knew him. He [came and] sat next to the Prophet (peace be upon him). He supported his knees up against the knees of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and put his hands on his thighs. He said, “O Muhammad, tell me about Islam.” The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, “Islam is to testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to establish the prayers, to pay the zakat, to fast [the month of] Ramadhaan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you have the means to do so.” He said, “You have spoken truthfully [or correctly].” We were amazed that he asks the question and then he says that he had spoken truthfully. He said, “Tell me about *Imaan* (faith).” He [the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)] responded, “It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day and to believe in the divine decree, [both] the good and the evil thereof.” He said, “You have spoken truthfully.” He said, “Tell me about *al-Ihsaan* (goodness).” He [the Prophet] answered, “It is that you worship Allah as if you see Him. And even though you do not see Him, [you know] He sees you.” He said, “Tell me about [the time of] the Hour.” He [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] answered, “The one being asked does not know more than the one asking.” He said, “Tell me about its signs.” He answered, “The slave-girl shall give birth to her master,¹ and you will see the

¹ The text may be understood as meaning “female master” but most commentators, based on other narrations of the hadith, understand it to be a generic reference to “master”.

barefooted, scantily-clothed, destitute shepherds competing in constructing lofty buildings.” Then he went away. I stayed for a long time. Then he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] said, “O Umar, do you know who the questioner was?” I said, “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said, “It was [the Angel] Gabriel who came to teach you your religion.”

Recorded by Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary ¹

أيضاً	- “also”
بينما	- “while”
نحن	- “we”
ذات يوم	- “one day”
رجل	- “a man”
شديد	- “very, extremely, exceedingly”
بياض	- “white”
الثياب	- “clothing,” the definite article ال precedes the word to note that it is referring to that person’s clothing.
سواد	- “black”
الشعر	- “hair”, the definite article ال precedes the word to note that it is referring to that person’s hair.
أثر	- “effects, remains, signs”
السفر	- “travel”
جلس	- “he sat”
ركبتيه	- “his two knees”, the ة at the end implies “his” and the ي next to the end is due to the dual form.
وضع	- “placed, put”
كفيه	- “his two palms”
فخذييه	- “his two thighs”
أخبرني	- “inform me,” “tell me”
عن	- “about,” this is the same word used above for “on the authority of” but here it has a completely different meaning.
الإسلام	- Islam
تشهد	- “to bear witness”
لا	- negation, “no, not, none”
إله	- “God, object of worship”
إلا	- “except”
تقيم	- “establish, perform properly...”
الصلاة	- “the prayer”
الزكاة	- “the zakat”
تصوم	- “to fast”
رمضان	- “Ramadhaan”

¹ If a word is defined in an earlier hadith, it will not be repeated in a later hadith.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

- تحج - “perform the pilgrimage”
 البيت - “the House,” meaning the Kaaba in Makkah.
 إن - “if”
 الإيمان - “faith (*Imaan*)”
 ملائكته - “His angels”, the ة at the end means “His”, the singular for angels is ملك
 كتبه - “His books,” the singular for books is كتاب.
 رسله - “His messengers,” the singular for messengers is رسول.
 اليوم الآخر - “The Last Day” (see the discussion below); اليوم is “the day,” and الآخر is “the last”.
 القدر - “divine destiny” (see the discussion below).
 خيره - “its good”
 شره - “its evil”
 الإحسان - *al-Ihsaan* (see the discussion below).
 تعبد - “you worship”
 كأنك - “as if you”
 تراه - “see Him”
 لم - a word for negation, similar to “not”
 يراك - “He sees you”
 الساعة - “the Hour”, here it is in reference to the Day of Judgment although the word is general meaning “hour” or a portion of time.
 المسؤول - “the one being questioned”
 السائل - “the questioner”
 أماراتها - “its signs,” literally, “her signs,” the ها is a feminine reference to it, her or the plural of things.
 الأمة - “slave-girl”
 ربها - “her female owner or master” (it could also mean master in a generic sense).
 الحفاة - “barefoot”
 العراة - literally means “naked,” but here it most likely means “scantily clothed”
 رعاء الشاء - “shepherds”
 البنيان - “the buildings”
 مليا - “a lengthy period of time”
 أتدري - “do you know....?”
 أتاكم - “he came to you”; the كم part is plural, similar to “you all”
 دينكم - “your religion”

Takhreej

This hadith from Umar ibn al-Khattaab was recorded by Muslim¹, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasaai, ibn Maajah, Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Baihaqi, ibn

¹ By studying the chains and texts of this hadith and how Imam Muslim presented them in his *Sahih*, one would appreciate the exactness and detail that Imam Muslim has demonstrated. Many such important points have been highlighted by al-Nawawi in his commentary to *Sahih Muslim*. See al-Nawawi, *Sharh*, vol. 1, pp. 151-152.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

Hibbaan, ibn Khuzaima, al-Bazaar, Abu Yala, al-Daraqotni and a number of others.¹

The scholars of hadith differentiate hadith by their texts as well as by the Companions who narrated the hadith. This particular hadith has also been narrated through acceptable chains from the Companions Abu Huraira, ibn Umar, ibn Masood and al-Haarith al-Ashari. The narration from Abu Huraira has been recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, ibn Maajah, ibn Abu Shaiba, ibn Hibbaan and others.²

Different Narrations of the Hadith

This narration, whether talking about the narration from ibn Umar only or when comparing it with the narrations from Abu Huraira or others, has been narrated with a number of different wordings or texts. As is the case with so many hadith, it is important to study the different transmissions as many of them offer insight and important points that are not mentioned in other narrations. Indeed, it is possible to misunderstand a particular hadith unless the different narrations are combined together. This often supplies missing but important information.

With respect to this particular hadith, for example, here is the text of this same hadith from Abu Huraira as recorded in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*,³

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَارِزًا يَوْمًا لِلنَّاسِ فَأَتَاهُ جِبْرِيلُ فَقَالَ مَا الْإِيمَانُ قَالَ الْإِيمَانُ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَبِلِقَائِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْبَعْثِ قَالَ مَا الْإِسْلَامُ قَالَ الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَتُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ وَتُؤَدِّيَ الزَّكَاةَ الْمَفْرُوضَةَ وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ قَالَ مَا الْإِحْسَانُ قَالَ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ قَالَ مَتَى السَّاعَةُ قَالَ مَا الْمَسْئُولُ عَنْهَا بِأَعْلَمَ مِنَ السَّائِلِ وَسَأَخْبِرُكَ عَنْ أَشْرَاطِهَا إِذَا وَلَدَتِ الْأُمَّةُ رَبَّهَا وَإِذَا تَطَاوَلَ رِعَاةُ الْإِبِلِ الْبُهْمُ فِي الْبُنْيَانِ فِي خَمْسٍ لَا

¹ Ibn Hajr points out that the reason that al-Bukhari did not record the narration from Umar ibn al-Khattaab is that there was some difference of opinion concerning the acceptability of some of its narrators. (See ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 159.) Hence, as was his custom, al-Bukhari, even if he accepted those narrators, did not record this hadith in order to avoid any question about the hadith of his *Sahih*. However, Muslim's approach was to record such narrations in order to demonstrate that they are authentic and that the criticisms of them are not valid.

² Cf., ibn Muhammad, pp. 52-55.

³ The reader may clearly note the difference between this narration and the above narration from Umar ibn al-Khattaab.

يَعْلَمُهُنَّ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ تَلَا النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ (إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ) الْآيَةَ ثُمَّ
أَدْبَرَ فَقَالَ رُدُّوهُ فَلَمْ يَرَوْا شَيْئًا فَقَالَ هَذَا جِبْرِيلُ جَاءَ يُعَلِّمُ النَّاسَ دِينَهُمْ

Narrated Abu Huraira: One day while the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sitting in the company of some people, [the Angel] Gabriel came and asked, "What is faith?" Allah's Apostle replied "Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, [the] meeting with Him, His Messengers, and to believe in Resurrection." Then he further asked, "What is Islam?" The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) replied, "To worship Allah alone and none else, to offer prayers perfectly, to pay the compulsory charity (Zakat) and to observe fasts during the month of Ramadhaan." Then he further asked, "What is *ihsaan* (excellence in worship)?" The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) replied, "To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion, then you must consider that He is seeing you." Then he further asked, "When will the Hour be established?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "The one responding has no better knowledge than the questioner. But I will inform you about its portents: [1] When a slave (lady) gives birth to her master. [2] When the shepherds of black camels start boasting and competing with others in the construction of taller buildings. And the Hour is one of five things which nobody knows except Allah." The Prophet (peace be upon him) then recited, "Verily, with Allah (alone) is the knowledge of the Hour" (*Luqmaan* 34). Then that man [Gabriel] left and the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked his companions to call him back, but they could not see him. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "That was Gabriel, who came to teach the people their religion."¹

The scholars have pinpointed many major causes for different narrations or wordings of what is apparently one hadith or one incident.² The following are some of the major causes:

(1) The incident narrated may only seem like one event or statement while, in reality, each narrator or narration is describing a different event or statement of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

(2) Sometimes the hadith is narrated according to its meaning only and the exact wording has not been preserved. Other narrators may narrate the same hadith while preserving the exact wording.¹

¹ For the most part, this translation was taken from Khan, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 43.

² Cf., Sharf al-Qadhaah, *Asbaab al-Taaddud al-Rawaayaat fi al-Hadeeth al-Nabawi al-Shareef* (Amman, Jordan: Daar al-Furqaan, 1985), *passim*.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

(3) Narrators have different retentive strengths. Particularly if a hadith or anecdote is long, it is natural for a narrator to recall or to narrate more of an incident than others. Hence, one's version of the hadith may be longer than that of another narrator.

(4) Narrators sometimes intentionally abridge the text of the hadith. This is considered permissible as long as the meaning is not distorted. Hence, one narrator may narrate a complete statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) while another may only narrate what he feels is relevant at the time he is speaking.

(5) Sometimes a narrator is present for only a portion of a statement or discussion while another person may have heard the entire statement or discussion. Hence, when the two narrate the same incident, the narrations may be quite different, especially in length.

(6) The Prophet (peace be upon him) would sometimes put questions to the Companions and their responses in one setting would differ. When a narrator relates that particular event, he may relate the response that he heard while others may relate the response that they heard.

(7) Narrators do commit mistakes, even very proficient narrators. This is an obvious reason for why one narration may differ from another. The scholars of hadith spent a great deal of time and effort weeding out such mistakes.

(8) Finally, there is the problem of intentional fabrication and distortion. This obviously did not occur from the honest and trustworthy narrators. In any case, though, its existence did lead to differing narrations of the same hadith.

Looking at the different narrations of this hadith of Gabriel, it seems that there are a number of the above factors at work here. In fact, al-Qadhaah used this particular hadith as an example of cause Number 3 above, where narrators have different retentive memories. He wrote,

These numerous different narrations are not the result of the incident occurring more than once. This incident did not take place more than once. It is not a matter of narrating according to the meaning of the Prophet's words either. In these narrations, there are additions not just in wording but in meaning also. The most correct explanation for that, Allah knows best, is that some of the narrators memorized what the others did not and each of them narrated what he had remembered. This is particularly understandable given that the hadith is quite lengthy. The ruling concerning these additional

¹ The scholars of hadith have differed over whether one may narrate a hadith according to its meaning only. Perhaps the most balanced opinion is if the narrator is a scholar of the Arabic language and will not distort the meaning of the hadith in any way, he may narrate the hadith according to its meaning if he does not have access to the exact wording of the hadith.

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wordings is that if they are from trustworthy narrators and do not conflict with stronger authorities, they are to be accepted.¹

Ibn Hibbaan records a narration of this hadith which includes “performing the lesser pilgrimage (*umrah*), complete washing from sexual defilement and completing the ablution” among the other acts mentioned as part of Islam. Ibn Hibbaan points out that Sulaimaan al-Taimi is the only narrator who narrated this hadith with these words.² Perhaps he was the only one to recall them or perhaps he added them on his own to emphasize that they are also part of Islam. It does seem strange that none of the other narrators mentioned those deeds at all. Allah knows best.

However, this factor by itself does not give the entire picture of what has happened with respect to this hadith. It also seems that the second aspect, or narration according to meaning, has also occurred here. This explains why some narrators mentioned the question regarding faith (*Imaan*) first while others mentioned the question about Islam first. Similarly, towards the end of the hadith, some state that the slave-girl gives birth to *rabbataha* (رَبَّتْهَا) while others mention *ba'laha* (بَعَلَهَا). However, the meaning of the two words are the same.

The fifth factor mentioned above also seems to be present in these narrations. This is especially true with respect to the last part of the hadith wherein Umar and Abu Huraira differ as to when the Prophet (peace be upon him) identified the questioner as being the angel Gabriel. Many scholars pointed out that Umar must have left in search of the person and then, upon not finding him, returned to his home which was some distance from the Prophet’s mosque. Al-Qadhaah adds the further speculation that on the following day it was Umar’s neighbors turn to be with the Prophet (peace be upon him), as they used to alternate being with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and then they would tell each other what happened on that day. Hence, it was not until the third day, as is explicitly stated in some narrations, that Umar was told by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) who the questioner was. However, the others who stayed around the Prophet (peace be upon him), such as Abu Huraira, were told shortly afterwards that he was the Angel Gabriel who had put forth those questions.³

Finally, the seventh cause mentioned above, mistakes in narration, also seems to be present here with respect to some of the narrations. In particular, a narration in *Sunan al-Nasaai* states that the questioner was in the appearance of Dahya al-Kalbi. However, it is confirmed in the narrations that none of the Companions recognized the questioner. It is also confirmed in other hadith that the Angel Gabriel would come to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the appearance of Dahya al-Kalbi. Obviously, one of the narrators simply made a

¹ Al-Qadhaah, p. 14.

² Ibn Hibbaan, vol. 1, p. 399.

³ Al-Qadhaah, pp. 20-21.

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mistake by stating that in this incident the Angel Gabriel appeared like Dahya al-Kalbi. (It should be noted that al-Sindi states that there is no reason to assert that the narrator made a mistake. He says that perhaps he looked similar to Dahya but there were clear signs to the people that he was not him and, therefore, he was not known to the people at all.¹)

General Comments On This Hadith

This is one of the most comprehensive hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It touches upon almost every deed of Islam. Qaadhi Iyaadh has pointed out that this hadith covers or points to all of the aspects of inward and external acts of worship of Allah. It touches upon the deeds that are related to the external organs as well as that of the heart. Indeed, he stated, “[It covers the religion] to such an extent that all the religious sciences are found in it and branch out from it.”²

This hadith is known as the hadith of Gabriel; it is also called *Umm al-Sunnah* (or “the foundation of the Sunnah”) in the same way that *Soorah al-Faatiha* is called *Umm al-Kitaab* (or “the Foundation of the Book”). In the same way that *Soorah al-Faatiha* encompasses the meaning of the Quran as a whole, this hadith encompasses the meaning of the sunnah as a whole.

Some scholars point out the relationship between this hadith and the previous hadith, “Verily, all actions are but driven by intention.” The previous hadith has a position like the statement, “In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful,” while this hadith has a position like *Soorah al-Faatiha*. It is said that it is for this reason that scholars such as al-Baghawi began some of his works with the hadith about intention first and then this hadith in the same way that the Quran begins with the saying *Bismillaah al-Rahmaan al-Raheem* followed by *Surah al-Faatiha*.³

According to ibn Hajr, this incident took place close to the Prophet’s death. Some say that it was just before the Farewell Pilgrimage. Hence, it was as if the Prophet (peace be upon him), through the questioning of the angel Gabriel, was summarizing his mission and message. He summarized the essential concepts of *imaan*, islam and *ihsaan*. Then, at the end, he stated that the person was the Angel Gabriel who had come to teach them their religion.⁴

¹ See Muhammad al-Sindi, *Haashiyat al-Sindi ala Sunan al-Nasaai* (Beirut: Daar Ihya al-Turaath al-Arabi, n.d.), vol. 8, p. 103.

² Al-Qaadhi Iyaadh al-Yahsoobi, *Kitaab al-Imaan min Ikmaal al-Muallim (sic) bi-Fawaaid Saheeh Muslim* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1417 A.H.), vol. 1, p. 101.

³ Al-Baghawi did that in the beginning of his *Sharh al-Sunnah* as well as his *Mishkat al-Sunnah* (which was later added on to and became *Mishkat al-Masaabeeh*).

⁴ Cf., al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 49.

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The Circumstances Behind the Hadith

In one of the narrations in *Sahih Muslim*, this hadith of Gabriel begins in the following manner:

Abu Huraira narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Ask me [about matters related to the religion]." However, the people abstained from doing so because they were overawed out of profound respect for him. In the meanwhile a man came there and sat near his knees and said, "Messenger of Allah, what is Islam?"...¹

According to al-Ubayy, the reason the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Ask me," is because they were asking many questions and the Prophet (peace be upon him) realized that some were asking obstinately. Therefore, he became angry and said, "Ask me, ask me, for, by Allah, you will not ask me about anything except that I shall tell you about it as long as I am standing in this place."² After hearing and seeing this, the people became fearful and refrained from asking any questions. When the people refrained from asking questions, Allah sent the angel Gabriel to put these important questions to the Prophet (peace be upon him).³

Al-Sanoosi adds that such questions do not go against the prohibition of asking questions. Actually, one must ask these types of questions because the answers to them are needed. Hence, this is an application of the Quranic verse,

فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

"So ask of those who know the Scripture, if you know not" (*al-Nahl* 43).⁴

In other words, there is a type of questioning that should be avoided and a type of questioning that is commanded. Questions of a useless nature or of a purely theoretical nature with no benefit to them are to be avoided. Questions for which answers are truly needed must be asked. Hence, Allah sent the angel Gabriel to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to ask him these questions and to demonstrate that important questions like these are to be asked of the people of knowledge.

About The Narrator: Umar ibn al-Khattaab

The narrator of this hadith is the same as the narrator of Hadith #1. Hence, his life was discussed earlier.

¹ See Abdul Hameed Siddiqi, trans., *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1, p. 4.

² Actually, al-Ubayy is referring to another hadith in *Sahih Muslim*.

³ Abu Abdullah al-Ubayy, *Sharh Saheeh Muslim* (Riyadh: Maktaba Tabariyyah, n.d), vol. 1, pp. 77-78.

⁴ Muhammad al-Sanoosi, *Sharh al-Sanusi*, on the margin of al-Ubayy, vol. 1, p. 77.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

“One day while we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)... put his hands on his thighs. He said, ‘O Muhammad...’”

The different narrations of the hadith, referred to earlier in the *takhreej* section, describe the appearance of the angel Gabriel who came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the appearance of a bedouin Arab. Bedouins were known for their coarse and rough nature. The Angel spoke from the back of the mosque, “Peace be upon you, o Muhammad, may I come forward?” The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him to come forward and he continued asking until he came directly to the Prophet (peace be upon him), walking over the people as he came to the front of the mosque. He then sat directly in front of the Prophet (peace be upon him), putting his hands on the Prophet’s thighs. Then he began to ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) his questions. His calling the Prophet (peace be upon him) by his first name only, his walking over the necks of the people and his sitting directly in front of the Prophet (peace be upon him) all added to his appearance of being an apparently ignorant or ill-mannered bedouin Arab.

At the end of the hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained that the bedouin-looking person was the Angel Gabriel who had come to teach them their religion. According to al-Haitami and others, his teaching was both in the form of his questions and also in his behavior. Hence, some conclusions can be made from his appearance and behavior.¹

It is not clear to this author whether the commentators noticed that they seem to be making two contradictory suggestions here. First they are stating that the angel came in a very rude fashion and then they are suggesting that his example is one that can be followed. It seems that the key is to distinguish between what the angel did in order to get attention, to make sure that everyone would pay listen to him, from what he did as an example for others to follow.

“extremely white clothing and extremely black hair.”

In other narrations, it also states that his clothing was so clean that there were no traces of dirt upon them. Scholars understand from Gabriel’s appearance that it is recommended to have a good appearance and to be clean.² This is especially true when one is going to the mosque and when one is attempting to attain knowledge. White clothing is a preferred clothing, especially for the people of knowledge. According to al-Haitami, Umar recommended it for the reciters of the Quran.³ Cleanliness is also an important characteristic of the true Muslim and, like all characteristics of true Muslims, must be even more-so emphasized for the scholars and the students of knowledge. They should set the examples for others.

¹ Al-Haitami, p. 59.

² Al-Haitami, p. 59.

³ Al-Haitami, p. 59.

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There may be another aspect of note here. Islam places emphasis on both the outward and inward aspects of a human being. Neither aspect is neglected. One can understand from many texts that there is a strong relationship between the two. If one wants to attain knowledge, one must approach that knowledge in the proper manner by first having the correct intention and also by having the proper respect for the knowledge that he seeks to attain. Having proper respect for the knowledge includes being willing to sacrifice one's time and wealth for it as well as outwardly showing respect for it by sitting and appearing in a proper manner while attaining knowledge or passing on knowledge.

“There were no signs of travel on him and none of us knew him.”

He was not from the people of Madinah and yet there were no signs that he had come from travel. Hence, his appearance was something special and immediately attracted the people's attention to him. Perhaps, Allah knows best, this was so the people would watch and listen to what he did very carefully. In this way, they would pay close attention to him, grasp his words and the Prophet's response and then pass it on to others who came afterwards.

Umar said that none of them knew the man. This was not simply conjecture on Umar's part. In other narrations, it explicitly states that the people looked at each other and had no idea who this man was.¹

“He [came and] sat next to the Prophet (peace be upon him). He supported his knees up against the knees of the Prophet (peace be upon him)”

This should be the attitude of those who are truly seeking knowledge. They should try to get close to the teacher so that they can understand and hear everything he says correctly. Unfortunately, one does not always find such an attitude among Muslims today. They have more of a desire to sit in a comfortable way, with their backs against a wall, for example, rather than getting close to the teacher so that they can absorb as much as possible.

“and put his hands on his thighs”

Al-Nawawi declares that the Angel Gabriel put his own hands on his own thighs. However, in the narrations from ibn Abbas and Abu Amr al-Ashari, it explicitly states that the Angel put his hands on the thighs of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This was also the conclusion of al-Baghawi, al-Taimi and al-Teebi. Al-Turabashti also argues that this is the correct interpretation as this is the way a student should sit in front of his teacher. Perhaps it was done so he could best listen to the Prophet (peace be upon him)

¹ Ibn Hajar, *Fath* (Daar al-Fikr), vol. 1, p. 160.

and absorb everything the Prophet (peace be upon him) had to say in response to the important questions he was about to pose. It shows that the questioner should be humble and polite in front of the one he is questioning.¹

On the other hand, Ibn Hajr points out that, once again, this abrupt manner of coming all the way to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and putting his hands on the Prophet's thighs may have been just another means by which he is showing himself to be a rough, ill-mannered bedouin Arab.² Hence, it could have been simply another act to attract the people's complete attention.

He said, "O Muhammad..."

Allah has said in the Quran,

لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا

"Make not the calling of the Messenger among you as your calling of each other" (*al-Noor* 63). In this hadith, the Angel addressed the Prophet (peace be upon him) by saying, "O Muhammad." This has caused some concern. Such a way of addressing the Prophet (peace be upon him) is not considered proper and is censored in the above verse of the Quran. How is it that the angel addressed him in that manner? Three answers have been given to this question: (1) The prohibition of such address applies to humans only and not to the angels; (2) this event occurred before the prohibition of such address (although this explanation seems unlikely since the event took place so late in the Prophet's life); and (3) this was done to further the appearance that he was a bedouin Arab.³

"tell me about Islam"

In this narration of the hadith, the Angel first asks about Islam. In other narrations, he first asks about *Imaan*. There are some who argue that asking about *Imaan* should be first as that is more consistent with the Quranic presentation of such topics. Note the following verse in which the topics of faith are stated first and then the outward practices are described:

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُولُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ
 ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى
 حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَبْنَى السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي

¹ See ibn Hajr, *Fath* (Daar al-Fikr), vol. 1, p. 160.

² Ibid.

³ Al-Haitami, p. 61.

الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا
وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا
وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East or West [in prayer]. But righteousness is [the quality of] the one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book and the Prophets. [Who] gives his wealth, in spite of love for it, to the kinsfolk, to the orphans, and to the poor who beg, and to the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free. [And who] offers prayer perfectly and gives the Zakat. And who fulfill their covenant when they make it, and who are patient in extreme poverty and ailment and at the time of fighting. Such are the people of the truth and they are the pious” (*al-Baqara* 177). A similar approach is taken in the beginning verses of *Surah al-Anfaal*. Allah knows best.

In his reply, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not give the linguistic meaning of the word Islam, in the same way that he did not give the linguistic meaning of the word *Imaan* when asked about that. Perhaps, the concepts were something very clear and the Prophet (peace be upon him) realized that the person was asking about what makes up Islam and *Imaan* and not the definition of those two terms.

“The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, ‘Islam is to... pilgrimage to the House if you have the means to do so.’”

A discussion of the meaning of the five pillars of Islam and related aspects shall be delayed until the discussion of the following hadith which is entirely concerning these five pillars.

However, it is important at this time to briefly define the word “Islam” since this term shall be used often while discussing the concept of *Imaan*. Lexically speaking, the word *islam* implies submission. In its particular sense related to the religion of Islam, Nomani wrote,

Literally, Islam denotes self-surrender or to give oneself up to someone and accept his overlordship in the fullest sense of the term. The religion sent down by God and brought into the world by His Apostles has been called Islam for the simple reason that, in it, the bondsman yields completely to the power and control of the Lord and makes the rendering of whole-

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hearted obedience to Him the cardinal principle of his life.
This is the sum and substance of the Islamic creed...¹

“He said, ‘You have spoken truthfully [or correctly].’ We were amazed that he asks the question and then he says that he had spoken truthfully.”

The behavior of the angel was something very strange for the people. First, he had asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) some questions. In general, when a person asks a question, it implies that he does not know the answer. Therefore, it is strange that he should comment that the answer was correct. Second, more importantly, this was information that was known only from the Prophet’s teachings. This man who had come to ask the questions was not known to any of the people and, so, he was not known to have been someone who learned from the Prophet (peace be upon him). This made it all the more surprising that he had the boldness to state that the Prophet’s replies were correct.

“He said, ‘Tell me about *Imaan* (faith).’”

In this narration, after asking about Islam, the Angel asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about *Imaan* or faith. Once again, the Prophet (peace be upon him) understood that he was not asking about the nature of faith but he was, instead, asking about what is to be believed in. However, before discussing the aspects that the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned, it is important that one have the correct understanding of the concept of *Imaan* derived from the Quran and sunnah. Therefore, the following pages will be a discussion of the concept of faith.

The Concept of *Imaan*

What is *Imaan* (faith)? Who is a believer? What is disbelief? Who is a disbeliever? These questions appeared very early in the history of Islam. Unfortunately, they also led to differences of opinion as well as division among the Muslims. In the first century of Islam, the Khawarij had developed their own theory of faith and began to call many of the Muslims of that time disbelievers. In response to them came groups such as the Murjia, Jahamiyah and others whose definitions of Islam embraced everyone regardless of their deeds. Another group, the Mutazila, developed their own theory which was termed the “position between the two positions”. Through all of this, though, by the grace of Allah, the position of the Quran and sunnah on these questions was clear and propagated by the true followers of Islam.

¹ Nomani, vol. 1, p. 54.

In the opening pages to his work, *Haqeeqat al-Imaan ind ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*, Muhammad Abdul Hadi al-Misri makes a very important point.¹ This important point is not only valid for the question of faith and disbelief but is valid for practically all aspects of the faith. If Muslims would keep this principle in mind, many of the differences among them would be removed and they would be guided to the true teachings of the Quran and sunnah. The point he made is this: When it comes to any concept from the Quran and sunnah, historically speaking, there have been two approaches to determine its correct meaning. The first approach is to discover the meaning of that concept from the Prophet (peace be upon him) as he passed on such knowledge to his Companions and them to their followers. The second approach is to go directly to the word itself and, based on presupposed premises, discover its meaning from a linguistic and logical point of view without first studying how Allah and the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained those terms. The first approach is the approach of the *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah* while the second approach is that of the heretical groups. In fact, these two approaches are what really distinguishes the correct way of Islam from the distorted, later-invented views of the religion.

On this point, ibn Taimiya wrote,

One must understand that if any term is found in the Quran or hadith, and its explanation is known and its purport made clear by the Prophet (peace be upon him), there is then no need to use as evidence the statements of the linguists or others.... The words *salaat*, *zakat*, *siyaam* (fasting), *hajj* found in the words of Allah and His messenger have had their meanings clarified by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). The same is true for the word *khamr* (intoxicant) and others. From him, one knows their meanings. If anyone wants to explain such terms in any way other than how the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained that term, such an explanation will not be accepted... The terms *Imaan*, Islam, *nifaaq* (hypocrisy) and *kufr* are more important than all of those terms [just mentioned]. The Prophet (peace be upon him) explained the meanings of those terms in such a way that it is not necessary to look for their linguistic origins or how they were used by the [pre-Islamic] Arabs and so forth. Therefore, it is a must that, while trying to determine the meanings of such terms, one refers to how Allah and His Messenger explained those terms. Their explanation is clear and sufficient... The heretics have been misled on this matter. They turn away from this method [just described]. Instead, they begin to explain the religion of Islam based on some premises that they believe to be sound, either concerning

¹ Muhammad Abdul Haadi al-Misri, *Haqeeqat al-Imaan ind Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah* (Daar al-Furqaan, 1991), p. 9.

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linguistic meaning or rational thought. They do not ponder or consider the explanation of Allah and His Messenger. Every premise that goes against the clarification from Allah and His Messenger is certainly misguidance.¹

Al-Misri adds that the one who will truly follow the methodology of going to the Quran and sunnah is the one who firmly believes that the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained the entire religion in a clear manner to his Companions and that those Companions passed that clear knowledge on to their followers and so forth.² Everything that essentially needs to be known of the meaning of the Quran has been given by the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. This fact should be something fundamental and obvious to all Muslims. In theory it may be so. In practice, however, many people fail to apply this point and start looking elsewhere concerning matters that have already been made clear in the Quran and sunnah. The question of *Imaan* is a very clear illustration of this point.

Turning to the Quran and sunnah, one can attempt to answer some basic questions concerning *Imaan*. These basic questions are the following:

(1) What is true *Imaan* or who is a true believer (*mu`min*)?

(2) What is the locus of *imaan* and what are the essential components of *Imaan*?

(3) What is the relationship between *Imaan* and deeds?

(4) What are the articles of *Imaan*? In other persons, what is a person supposed to believe in? This is what the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained to the Angel Gabriel. These topics shall be discussed in some detail as they are mentioned in the hadith.

The Definition of *Imaan* According to the Quran and Sunnah

Opinions differ about the exact composition of *Imaan*.³ The different views can be summarized as follows (they are also presented in Figures 2.1a-d):

¹ Ahmad ibn Taimiya, *al-Imaan* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1988), pp. 271-273.

² al-Misri, p. 10.

³ Cf., Safr al-Hawaali, *Dhaahirah al-Irjaa fi al-Fikr al-Islaami* (Cairo: Maktab al-Tayyib, 1417 A.H.), vol. 2, pp. 405-421; ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, pp. 459-462.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

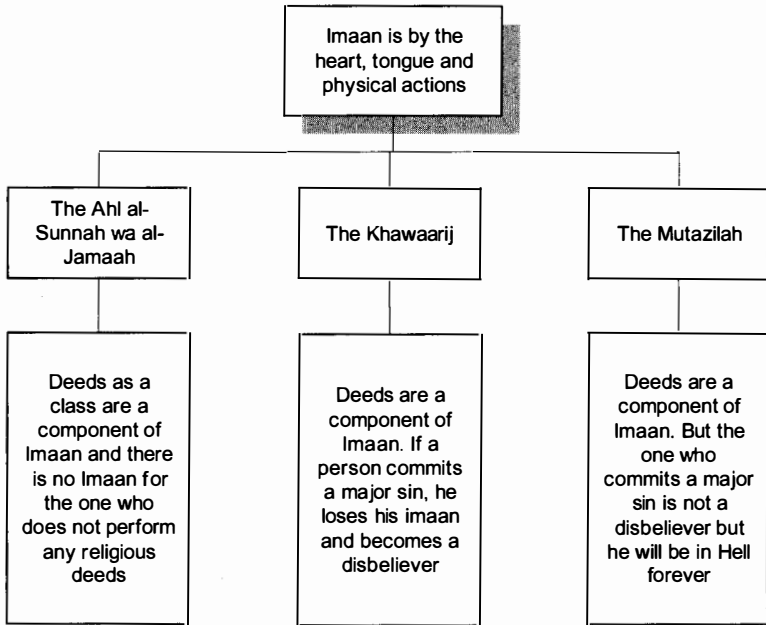


Fig. 2.1a. The Components of Imaan as Viewed by Different Sects

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

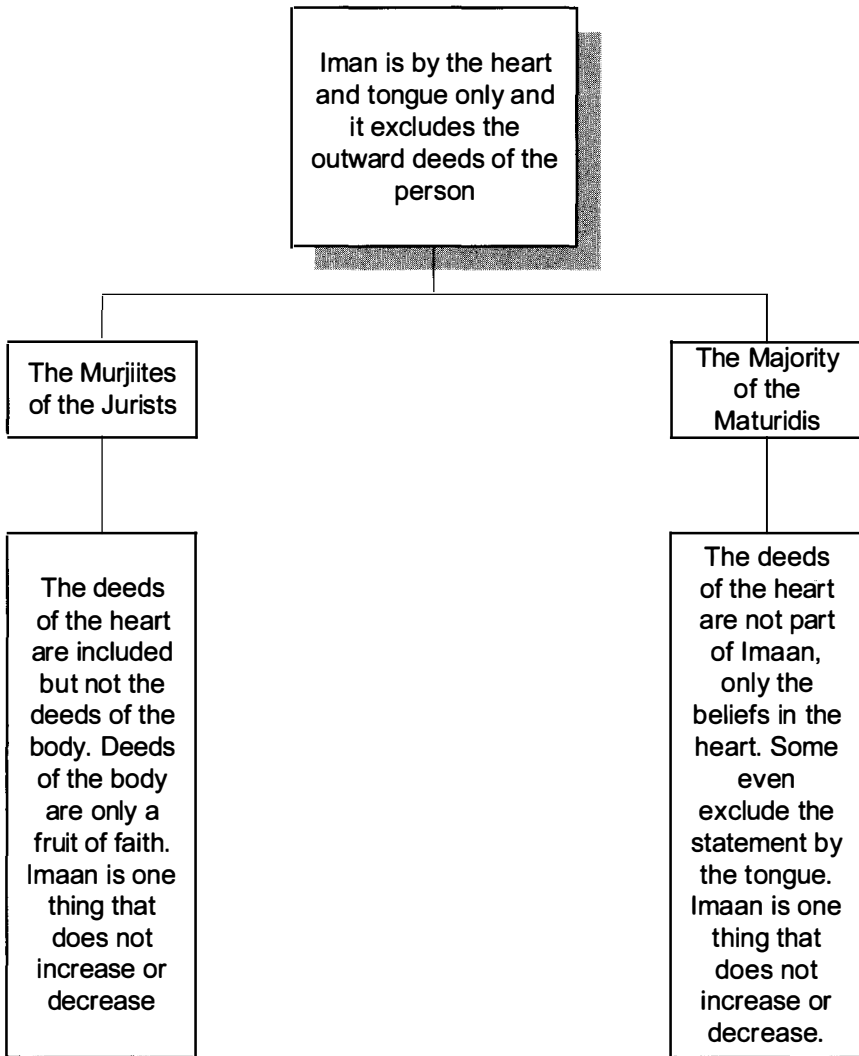


Figure 2.1b. The Components of Imaan as Viewed by Different Sects

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

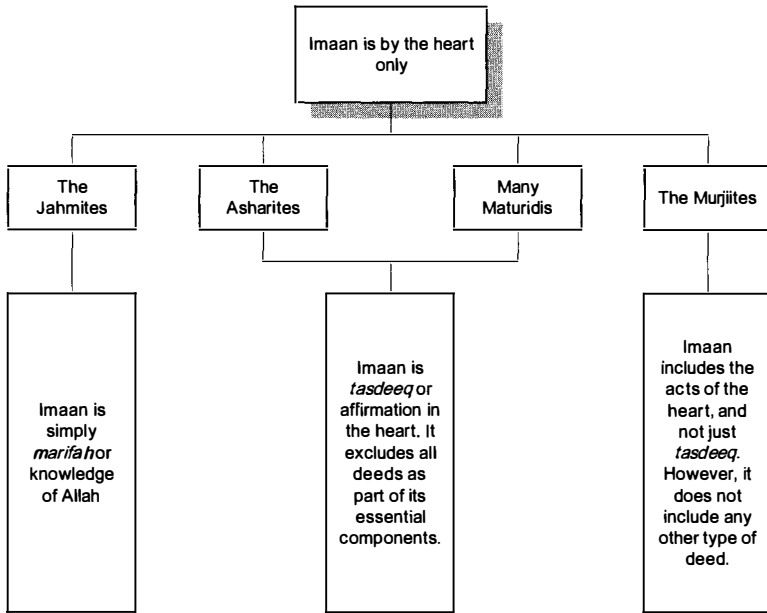


Figure 2.1c. v

The Components of Imaan as Viewed by Different Sects

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

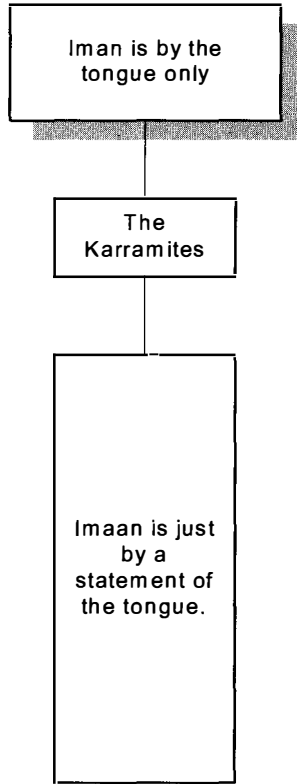


Figure 2.1d. The Components of Imaan as Viewed by Different Sects

The view of the *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*: According to this view, the locus of *imaan* is the heart, tongue and physical actions. *Imaan* increases and decreases. Deeds form a part of *imaan*. Some such deeds are essential, others are required and yet others are recommended. This does not preclude the possibility that true believers commit sins. Such sins, even major sins if they are less than *kufir* and *shirk*, do not take the person out of the fold of Islam. In the Hereafter, the sinner may be punished in the Hell-fire or be forgiven by Allah. However, all people who have even the slightest amount of *imaan* in their hearts will eventually be rescued from Hell and entered into Paradise. This is the belief that was passed on from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to his Companions and their followers. It is the only view that takes into consideration of the different relevant pieces of evidence from the Quran and sunnah.

Ibn Abu al-Izz wrote,

[The Prophet (peace be upon him)] has made it absolutely clear that a person is definitely not a *mu`min* (a believer) if it is

claimed that he believes in the Prophet (peace be on him) but he does not profess it with his tongue, even though he can, nor does he offer *salaat*, nor fasts, nor loves Allah and His Prophet (peace be on him), nor fears Him. If, he also hates the Prophet (peace be on him) and fights against him [then he obviously cannot be called a believer]. He has also made it clear that our happiness and position in the hereafter depends upon our statement of the testimony of faith and our sincerely believing in Allah's unity and acting accordingly. For instance, he said, "*Imaan* has more than seventy parts, the highest is the confession that there is no god except Allah, and the lowest is removing a harmful object from the road."¹ "Modesty is part of *Imaan*."² "The most perfect *mu'min* (believer) is the one who is best in character."³ "Simplicity in dress is part of *Imaan*."⁴

If *Imaan* has different parts and each part is called *Imaan*, it follows that *Salat* is *Imaan*, *Zakat* and *hajj* are *Imaan*, virtues such as modesty, trust, fear, and submission, even removing an obstacle from the way, are part of *Imaan*. Some of these parts are so basic, like the two *Shahaadah*, that if you lose them you lose *Imaan* completely; others are so marginal, such as removing an obstacle from the road, that if you lose them you do not lose *Imaan*. In between the two, we have numerous parts of varying importance, some next only to the *Shahaadah*, and others only a little more important than removing an obstacle from the way. As the parts of *Imaan* are *Imaan*, similarly the parts of *kufr* are *kufr*. To judge according to the rules revealed by Allah is part of *Imaan*, and to judge against them is *kufr*.⁵

The view of the Khawaarij: According to this view, the locus of *imaan* is the heart, tongue and physical actions. But in this view, if anyone falls short in his deeds (such as failing to perform an obligatory deed or actually

¹The wording of the hadith in hadith collections is a little different. The hadith in Muslim and al-Bukhari begins with, "*Imaan* has more than sixty parts (*bid wa sittun shu'bah*)."¹ Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah record, "*Imaan* is more than sixty or seventy chapters (*bid wa sittun aw sab'un bab*)."² The reporter of this hadith was not sure whether the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "more than sixty" or "more than seventy".

²This is the ending of the hadith mentioned in the previous note.

³Recorded by al-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawood, Ahmad, al-Daarimi and Ibn Hibbaan. It is an authentic hadith according to al-Albaani. See al-Albaani's footnotes to Ali ibn Abu al-Izz, *Sharh al-Aqeedah al-Tahawiya*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1984), p. 339. Hereinafter, this work will simply be referred to as "al-Albaani, footnotes to *Sharh*."

⁴Recorded by Ibn Maajah. The words in Abu Dawood are, "Do you hear? Do you hear? Verily, simplicity in dress (*al-badhadhah*) is part of *Imaan*." This is a *hasan* hadith. See al-Albaani, footnotes to *Sharh*, p. 340.

⁵Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, pp. 471-475.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

performing a major sin), he becomes a disbeliever, falls outside of the fold of Islam and will be in Hell forever. This view clearly contradicts the Quran and sunnah. For example, Allah has prescribed a punishment for the person who commits adultery. That punishment is not the same as the punishment for apostasy. This is because the one who commits such a sin does not, by that act in itself, remove himself from the fold of Islam.

The view of the Mutazilah: According to this view, the locus of *imaan* is the heart, tongue and physical actions. They supposedly took a position between the above two positions. They stated that a great sinner is neither a believer or a disbeliever; he falls somewhere in between the two. At the same time, though, they say that such a person will be in the Hell-fire forever. In order to come to this conclusion, they have to reject numerous authentic and conformed reports from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that believers who commit such sins will be rescued from the Hell-fire.

The view of the Murjiites of the jurists: According to this view, the locus of *imaan* is the heart and the tongue, and it excludes physical deeds. The deeds of the heart are included but not the physical acts that a person performs. Acts are only the fruit of faith and do not make up one of the essential components of faith. *Imaan* is, in essence, *tasdeeq* or affirmation in the heart. Therefore, it is as one level and cannot possibly increase or decrease. This view also contradicts the Quran and sunnah. The Quran and sunnah clearly demonstrate that *imaan* increases and decreases. Furthermore, numerous hadith also demonstrate that acts do form a part of *imaan*.

The view of the majority of the Maturidis: According to this view, the locus of *imaan* is the heart and the tongue, and it excludes physical deeds. They also say that *imaan* neither increases or decreases, since it is *tasdeeq* or affirmation in the heart. They differ from the Murjiites in that they say that the deeds of the heart are also not included as part of *imaan*, only the statements or beliefs in the heart. Some of them even exclude the statement of the tongue as part of *imaan*, arguing that it is only a sign of *imaan* and not a component of *imaan*.

The view of the Asharites and many Maturidis: According to this view, the locus of *imaan* is the heart only. *Imaan* is only *tasdeeq* or affirmation in the heart. *Imaan* does not increase or decrease. They exclude all deeds, deeds of the heart as well as of the body. A person is a perfect and complete believer even if he does not perform any corresponding deeds, as long as *tasdeeq* is in his heart. They even exclude statement of the tongue and argue that a person does not have to make the testimony of faith—so he will be considered a disbeliever in this world while he is a believer in his heart. This view also contradicts the Quran and sunnah in many aspects. *Imaan* being only *tasdeeq* would imply, for example, that Abu Taalib was a believer and should be in Paradise. However, this is not what the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated about him.

The view of many of the Murjiites: According to this view, the locus of *imaan* is the heart only. *Imaan* does not increase or decrease. Many of them do include the deeds of the heart and not just *tasdeeq*. At the same time, they exclude all other deeds, including statement of the tongue.

The view of the Jahmites: According to this view, the locus of *imaan* is the heart only. However, it is not *tasdeeq* (belief, affirmation) but it is simply *marifah* or having knowledge of Allah. Most scholars have declared the Jahmites to be outside of the fold of Islam due to such beliefs. Commenting on the Jahmites, ibn Abu al-Izz wrote,

Al-Jahm ibn Safwaan and Abu l-Husayn al-Saalihi, a leading Libertarian (Qadari), believe that *Imaan* is a kind of knowledge in the heart... [This] implies that the Pharaoh and his people were believers since they knew that Moses and Aaron, peace and blessings of Allah be on them, were true prophets even though they denied them. This is clear from what Moses said to the Pharaoh, "You know very well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-opening evidence" (*al-Israa* 102). The People of the Book knew that Muhammad (peace be on him) was the Prophet just as they knew their own sons, but they were not believers in him. In fact, they were his deniers and opponents. Abu Taalib too would be among his believers according to their view, for he is reported to have said [in lines of poetry], "I know that the religion of Muhammad, is the best of all the religions of mankind. Were I not to be scolded and abused, I would have confessed it openly."

Actually even Iblis, also, would be a perfect believer according to al-Jahm's view. He did not plead ignorance of Allah. He knew Him well as he said, "My Lord, give me then respite till the Day the dead are raised" (*al-Hijr* 36), "My Lord, because you have put me in the wrong..." (*al-Hijr* 39), and "Then, by Your Power, I will put them all in the wrong" (*Saad* 82). For al-Jahm, *kufir* is ignorance of Allah. No one, however, is more ignorant of Allah than him, for he reduces Allah to a Being as such and strips Him of all His attributes. There can be no greater ignorance than this. He is therefore a disbeliever (*kafir*) according to his own testimony.¹

The view of the Karramites: According to this view, the locus of *imaan* is the tongue only. In other words, a person who states the testimony of faith is considered a complete and true believer regardless of what is in his heart. Ibn Abu al-Izz said about them,

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, pp. 459-462.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

According to their view, the hypocrites are perfect believers. Nevertheless, they believe that the hypocrites will suffer the punishment which Allah has promised for them. Thus they contradict themselves.¹

With respect to the views of the Asharites, Maturidis and Murjiites, it is very important to realize that *Imaan* is not simply faith or belief in something, which is the opposite of disbelieving in something.² That is not the correct concept of *Imaan* whatsoever, as is clear from the verses of the Quran and sunnah. On this point, ibn Abu al-Izz wrote,

Imaan is not in contrast to *takdheeb* (to deny) but *tasdeeq* (to affirm, to believe) is. *Imaan*, however, is in contrast to *kufur*, which is not necessarily just *takdheeb*. If I say, "I know that you are truthful (*saadiq*), but I will not follow you, rather I will oppose you and hate you," I will be guilty of a greater *kufur*. Hence it is clear that *Imaan* is not simply *tasdeeq*, nor is *kufur* simply *takdheeb*. *Kufur* is sometimes *takdheeb* but sometimes more than that, where it includes opposition and hostility. On the other hand, *Imaan* is not only *tasdeeq*; it is more than that, wherein it includes assent (*muwaafaqah*), love (*muwalaat*) and submission (*inqiyaad*). *Tasdeeq* does not give the whole meaning of *Imaan*; and *islam* (submission) is only a part of *Imaan*.

If, however, *tasdeeq* is regarded as a synonym [of *Imaan*], then it should be taken in a wider sense which includes action also. For this wider meaning of the term one can refer to a hadith of the Prophet (peace be on him), "The eyes fornicate, and their fornication is to look; and the ears fornicate, and their fornication is to hear... and the private parts confirm (*yusaddiqu*) it or deny (*yukadhdhibu*) it."³ Hasan al-Basri, may Allah bless him, said, "*Imaan* is neither formal conformity nor vain expectation; it is what settles in the heart and is confirmed by action."⁴ If it is *tasdeeq*, it is a particular kind of *tasdeeq*...⁵

Ibn Uthaimen has also emphasized the fact that *imaan* is not simply composed of "belief" in the heart, in the sense that one affirms that there is no

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, p. 460.

² Ibn Taimiya states that it is very easy to affirm the existence of something and then to hate that thing. For example, people affirm the existence of disbelief and devils while they hate disbelief and devils. This affirmation obviously cannot be considered equivalent to *imaan*. See ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 7, p. 541.

³ Recorded by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

⁴ Recorded by Abdullah Ibn Abi Shaybah, *al-Musannaf* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1989), vol. 11, p. 22.

⁵ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, pp. 471-475.

one worthy of worship but Allah. Instead, along with that “belief” other components must be present for it to be the correct form of *imaan* that is acceptable to Allah. He wrote,

Imaan is the affirmation that requires acceptance and submission. If a person believes in something without acceptance and submission, that is not *imaan*. The evidence for that is that the polytheists [Arabs] believed in Allah’s existence and believed in Allah as the Creator, Sustainer, Giver of Life, the One who Brings forth Death and the Manager of the Universe’s Affairs. Furthermore, one of them even accepted the messengership of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) but he was not a believer. That person was Abu Taalib, the uncle of the Prophet (peace be upon him)..¹ But that [belief in the Prophet (peace be upon him)] will not avail him whatsoever because he did not accept and submit to what the Prophet (peace be upon him) brought.²

The Components of *Imaan*

As just noted, a thorough study of the Quran and sunnah shows that *Imaan* has certain components. Ibn al-Qayyim once wrote that *Imaan* is a compound of the following components: (1) having the knowledge of what the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught; (2) having complete and firm belief in what the Prophet (peace be upon him) brought; (3) verbally professing one’s belief in what he brought; (4) yielding or submitting to what he brought out of love and humility; (5) acting in accord with what the Prophet (peace be upon him) brought, both outwardly and inwardly, implementing it and calling to its path according to one’s ability.³

These components were summed up by the earliest scholars in their statement, “*Imaan* is statement and action.”⁴ Statement here includes both statement of the heart (affirmation) and statement of the tongue (verbal profession). Action includes both the actions of the heart (willingness to submit, love and so forth) and actions of the body (such as prayer and so forth).⁵

¹ Ibn Uthaimin then goes on to quote some lines of poetry from Abu Taalib in which he expressed his belief in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

² Muhammad ibn Uthaimin, *Sharh Hadeeth Jibreel Alaihi al-Salaam* (Daar al-Thuraya, 1415 A.H.), pp. 4-5.

³ Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Fawaaid*, p. 107. (As quoted in Al-Misri, p. 41.)

⁴ Abu Zura and Abu Haatim, two of al-Bukhari’s most important teachers, narrated that the scholars that they had met from Hijaz, Iraq, Greater Syria and Yemen all said, “*Imaan* is statement and action, it increases and decreases.” See Hibatullah al-Laalakai, *Sharh Usool Itiqaad Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah min al-Kitaab wa al-Sunnah wa Ijmaa al-Sahaabah wa al-Tabieen min Badihim* (Riyadh: Daar Taiba, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 176.

⁵ Cf., ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 7, p. 672; Safr al-Hawaali, *Dhaahirah*, vol. 1, pp. 221-236.

For the sake of clarity, over time, these two components were broken down into the three following essential components of *Imaan* that have also been stated by many scholars: (1) Belief in the heart; (2) Profession by the tongue; (3) Performance of deeds by the physical parts of the body.¹

Each one of these three components shall be discussed separately. The third component shall be dealt with in some detail in the next section entitled, “The Relationship Between *Imaan* and Deeds”.

(1) Belief in the Heart. The heart is the locus of *Imaan* or its foundation. Allah says in the Quran,

يَأْتِيهَا الرَّسُولُ لَا يَحْزَنُكَ الَّذِينَ يَسْرِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا
ءَامَنَّا بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِنِ قُلُوبُهُمْ

“O Messenger, let not those who hurry to fall into disbelief grieve you, those who say, ‘We believe,’ with their mouths but their hearts have no faith” (*al-Maaidah* 41). If what is present in the heart is not sound and proper, then nothing else will be sound and proper.²

The first component of *Imaan* being belief in the heart has two aspects. The first aspect is what the scholars call the “statement of the heart”. It is made up of recognition, knowledge and affirmation. For example, one recognizes that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, one has knowledge of that and one affirms that. Obviously, if one does not meet this necessary condition of faith, one cannot truthfully claim to have *Imaan*.

The second aspect is what the scholars call the “actions of the heart”. This aspect is made up of commitment, voluntary submission and acceptance (*al-iltizam*, *al-inqiyaad* and *al-tasleem*). There are also other necessary components in the heart. These include love for Allah, awe of Allah, trust in Allah, fear of Allah and hope in Allah. Al-Misri stated, “The Pious Forefathers and leaders of the Muslims agreed that these follow the first essential aspect and are necessary consequences thereof. A person is not a believer unless he possesses both of them.”³ This is so because, as was already alluded to, simple affirmation of belief in Allah and His Messenger without the minimum requirements of love, awe and submission does not make one a believer.

Actually, the first aspect should directly lead to the second aspect— unless one’s heart is diseased and refuses to follow the truth. This was pointed out by ibn Taimiya. He stated that if a heart has the knowledge and recognition

¹ Al-Hawaali convincingly argues that the statement, “*Imaan* is statement and action,” is the preferred statement. See al-Hawaali, *Fikr*, vol. 1, pp. 227-228. However, for ease of presentation, the later division into three components will be followed here.

² Cf., Wamaidh al-Umar, *Fiqh al-Imaan ala Minhaj al-Salaf al-Salih* (Amman, Jordan: Daar al-Nafaais, 1997), p. 19.

³ Al-Misri, p. 26.

of the truth then, if it is free from diseases such as envy, arrogance, following of doubts and misconceptions, following of desires and lusts, it will fill with love for the truth and will submit to the truth. This is because the hearts are endowed with a love for truth and seeking it. Therefore, there is nothing more beloved to a pure and sound heart than Allah.¹

In reality, the first aspect of recognizing and admitting the existence or truth of Allah is something that readily comes about. It is, in fact, ingrained in the nature of man. It is the second aspect of this first component, the actions of the heart, that needs to be stressed and implied properly. In fact, in general, when Allah sent messengers to mankind, their main message and dispute with their people was not the recognition or acceptance of Allah's existence but it was with respect to submitting to Allah and following His commands. The truth of the first proposition was clear and could not be denied. Allah has made it clear in many verses of the Quran that the main problem for disbelievers is not a recognition of the truth but a hatred for it. Allah has said,

فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ وَلَكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بَيَّاتِ اللَّهُ يَجْحَدُونَ

“It is not you [O Muhammad] that they deny, but it is the signs of Allah that the wrongdoers deny” (*al-Anaam* 33). In another verse, Allah says,

بَلْ جَاءَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَأَكْثَرُهُم لِلْحَقِّ كِرْهُونَ

“Nay, he brought them the Truth but most of them are averse to the Truth” (*al-Muminoon* 70).

Thus, the difficult aspect for the disbelievers is that of having love for the truth, seeking the truth and submitting to it. That is, they must free themselves from all the things that act as barriers to their required submission to the truth. This includes arrogance, pride, envy, ego, seeking after the fleeting pleasures of this world, love for power, control and dominance, nationalistic pride and customs, lust and so forth. In general, the truth of *tauheed* is clear to all of them; however, they do not want to submit and accept it—the diseases of the heart can become so strong in a person that he no longer recognizes the truth or he completely refuses to recognize it whatsoever. This is one of the major aspects that distinguishes a believer from a non-believer. It is not simply a matter of knowing that Allah exists or recognizing that fact.

It is this component of *Imaan*, “belief in the heart”, that is the most important. It is the foundation and driving force behind the other components of *Imaan*. When it comes to the components of faith, one is never excused from fulfilling this component while, under different circumstances, one may be excused for not fulfilling the other components. Hence, if a person really wants to be certain that he has true *Imaan* and he seeks to protect himself from losing that *Imaan*, he must concentrate on these components and follow the steps that

¹ Ibn Taimiya (*al-Imaan al-Ausit*), p. 79, as quoted in al-Misri, p. 28.

will strengthen them in himself. The essential components are the recognizing of the truth, desiring the truth and having love for the truth in one's heart. This is combined with hatred for falsehood and disbelief. Note what Allah stated while describing the true believers,

وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَبٌ إِلَيْكُمْ ۖ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيْنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ الْكُفْرَ
وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ

“But Allah has endeared the faith to you and has beautified it in your hearts and has made disbelief, wickedness and disobedience hateful to you. These! They are the rightly guided ones” (*al-Hujuraat* 7).

It must once again be noted that the word *tasdeeq* (“affirmation, belief”) when used in the definition of faith does not simply refer to the abstract or theoretical concept of believing in something rationally. Instead, it means the belief in something that drives one to accept it, submit to it and implement it. This is what is meant by *tasdeeq* being the foundation or essential definition of faith.¹

(2) Profession by the Tongue. The second necessary component of *Imaan* is profession of one's faith by the tongue.² Al-Misri stated, “It is inconceivable that the belief in the heart is completely realized— both statement and deeds of the heart— without the faith being realized with the profession of the tongue.”³

This profession of the tongue plays a two fold role. It is first a statement of a fact. One is testifying that he recognizes the truthfulness of that statement of faith. This would be analogous to a person giving testimony in a court of law. All he is really stating is that those are the facts that he believes to be true. Second, though, it is statement of commitment to that fact. It is an admission by the person that he intends to adhere to the requirements and guidance of what he has testified to.

In an important passage in *Kitaab al-Imaan*, ibn Taimiya has written,

The Arabs do not have any such thing in their language as affirmation or denial unless it be in meaning and wording or wording that points to meaning. One will not find in Arabic speech the statement, “Mr. X believed in Mr. Y,” or “denied him” if he knew only in his heart that so and so was true or false. [Such a statement would only be made if the person actually] spoke it. Whoever does not affirm his belief in someone else with his speech, if he has the ability to do so, is not called, according to the Arabs, a believer. Therefore, the

¹ See Haakimi, vol. 2, pp. 19-20.

² Obviously, this only applies to those who have the physical means to do so.

³ Al-Misri, p. 33.

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Pious Forefathers of this Nation, of the Companions and those who followed them in goodness, agree on this point. The one who believes in his heart but does not verbally state his belief is not treated in either this life or the Hereafter as a believer in any way. Allah has not declared such a person to be a believer in the Messenger simply because of the knowledge and belief in his heart. He is only considered a believer if he confirms it by his speech. Therefore, the outward speech is an essential aspect of the faith and, according to the early and later scholars, one will not be saved except with that speech. The Muslims have agreed that the one who does not make the profession of faith although he has the ability to do so is a disbeliever. He is a disbeliever both inwardly and outwardly according to the Pious Forefathers and Imams of this Nation.¹

However, the simple pronouncement of the words in and of themselves is not what is sought. Obviously, the hypocrites did such and they were by no means true believers. The pronouncement of the words must be accompanied by a sincere attempt to implement the following aspects: (1) the correct belief in the Lordship of Allah and its related aspects; (2) the abandonment of and freedom from any kind of association of partners with Allah; and (3) the following and implementation of the laws of Islam. If this is not what the person means by his profession of faith, then such a profession will not avail the person whatsoever.² Hence, before a person makes the testimony of faith, he must be taught and explained that this is what he is testifying to. The testimony does not have to be in the Arabic language or with specific terms but it must be very clear as to the exact meaning and purport of what the person is saying.³

The Relationship Between *Imaan* and Deeds

The third component mentioned above as an essential component of *Imaan* is “performance of deeds by the body”. Deeds form a primary part of the concept of *Imaan*.⁴ The concept or word *Imaan* incorporates in its meaning the deeds that are to be performed in accordance with *Imaan*.

¹ See ibn Taimiya, *al-Imaan*, p. 126. Also see al-Aini, vol. 1, p. 110 where he reiterates the same sentiment.

² Al-Misri, p. 35.

³ In a hadith, some people embraced Islam by saying, *Saba`na*, meaning they had entered the faith of those who were called *Sabi`iya*, which was a term of the people of Ignorance for the Muslims.

⁴ As noted above, there are a group of scholars that divorce faith from deeds and state that the latter is not an essential component for the former. Their views, although in many aspects simply a question of semantics, do not seem to be the strongest views and will not be covered in detail here.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

Some scholars get stuck on the linguistic meaning of *Imaan* as being *tasdeeq* (belief) and, therefore, they divorce actions from the essential aspects of *Imaan*.¹ However, such a view is not the view of the early scholars of Islam. In *Kitaab al-Umm*, al-Shafi'ee wrote, "There was a consensus of the Companions and the Followers after them and those we have met that *Imaan* is statement, action and intention. None of them are sufficient in themselves without the others."² The Maliki jurist Ibn Abdul Barr also said,

The scholars of fiqh and hadith have agreed that *Imaan* is statement and action. And there is no action without intention. Faith, in their view, increases by acts of obedience [to Allah] and decreases by acts of disobedience. Every act of obedience is a part of faith in their view... As for the remaining jurists of personal reasoning (*ahl al-ra'i*) [other than Abu Hanifah] and the scholars of the reports from the Hijaz, Iraq, Greater Syria and Egypt, including Malik ibn Anas, al-Laith ibn Saad, Sufyaan al-Thauri, al-Auzaa'ee, al-Shafi'ee, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ishaq ibn Rahawaih, Abu Ubaid al-Qaasim ibn Salaam, Dawood ibn Ali, al-Tabari and those who follow their path, they all say that *Imaan* is statement and action. [They say that it is] statement with the tongue, which is profession of the faith, belief in the heart and deeds of the body. All of that [must be] with purity towards Allah by a sincere intention. They also say that every act of obedience to Allah, whether obligatory or voluntary, is a part of *Imaan*.³

Sahl ibn Abdullah al-Tustari, one of the early ascetics, was once asked, "What is *Imaan*?" and he answered, "[It is] statement, action, intention and [following the way of the] sunnah. This is because if *Imaan* is only a statement without action then it is disbelief. If it is statement and action without [proper] intention, it is hypocrisy. If it is statement, action and intention without [following the way of the] sunnah, it is heresy."⁴ Similar statements have also been recorded from Ali ibn Abu Taalib, al-Hasan al-Basri, al-Auzaa'ee, Sufyaan al-Thauri and Saeed ibn Jubair.⁵

¹ Al-Hawaali (*Fikr*, vol. 2, pp. 445-475) describes the process— influenced by Greek logic— that led early heretical groups to the conclusion that *imaan* is *tasdeeq* and only *tasdeeq*.

² Quoted in ibn Taimiya, *al-Imaan*, p. 197.

³ See Muhammad al-Magharaawi, *Fath al-Barr fi al-Tarteeb al-Fiqhi li-Tamheed ibn Abdul Barr* (Riyadh: Majmooat al-Tahaf al-Nafais al-Dauliya, 1996), vol. 1, p. 432 and p. 436.

⁴ Quoted by ibn Taimiya, *al-Imaan*, p. 43. Sahl ibn Abdullah al-Tustari was one of the early ascetics in Islam. It is their path that the later Sufis claim to follow. However, as can be seen from this quote, many of the later Sufis clearly have left the path of the early ascetics due to the lack of adherence to the *Shariah* and their following of practices and beliefs that have no foundation in the sunnah. Sahl ibn Abdullah has clearly stated that such acts, even if they are accompanied with "good intentions" are nothing but heresies and do not form part of *Imaan*.

⁵ See Jamaal Baadi, *Al-Athaar al-Waarada an Aimmat al-Sunnah fi Abwaab al-Itiqaad* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1416 A.H.), vol. 2, p. 462, fn. 3.

The heart is the driving force behind all actions. Therefore, if the heart is filled with *Imaan*— with the love of Allah, fear of Allah, hope in Allah— it will drive the body to perform acts of obedience and keep away from forbidden, and even doubtful or questionable, acts. Hence, in reality, there is no such thing as true or strong *Imaan* being in the heart and that not being reflected in the deeds. Such is simply not possible. Ibn Taimiya's view on this point is clearly expressed in his words,

It is inconceivable that there be a man who is a believer with confirmed belief in his heart that Allah has obligated him to pray, give zakat, fast and perform the pilgrimage and he lives his whole life without making one prostration to Allah or never fasting any month of Ramadhaan, never paying zakat for the sake of Allah and never making the pilgrimage to His house. This is impossible. This would only happen if the person has hypocrisy and opposition to Islam¹ in his heart. It would not happen with a true faith. For this reason, Allah describes those who refused to prostrate as unbelievers...²

In the same discussion, ibn Taimiya makes another very important point: This *imaan* must be reflected in the ritual acts, such as the prayer and fasting, because Allah has made such acts obligatory. It is not sufficient that the person is honest in his speech, fulfills his trust and so forth. These are not sufficient as long as the person does not have the *imaan* that leads him to the ritual acts. Ibn Taimiya comes to this conclusion because even the polytheists, Jews and Christians believe in and perform those acts. Therefore, a person cannot be considered a believer in Allah and His Messenger if he is not performing any of the rites that were specifically made obligatory in the message of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).³

The relation between true faith and acts may be one reason why Allah so often describes the believers by the acts they perform. If the true *Imaan* really exists in the heart, the corresponding good deeds must follow. It is simply inconceivable that the inner aspects are at a level of great faith and the external deeds do not demonstrate that *Imaan* whatsoever.

This is why a believer must always be a “submitter” or Muslim. The belief in his heart drives him to submit externally. On this point, al-Khattaabi wrote,

A Muslim could be a *mumin*⁴ some of the time. He also may not be a *mumin* during some times. However, a *mumin* is a

¹ The word ibn Taimiya used as *zandiqaah*, which implies that a person outwardly shows that he is a Muslim while inwardly he hates and opposes Islam.

² Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 7, p. 611.

³ Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 7, p. 621.

⁴ A Muslim is one who submits outwardly to Allah while a *mumin* is a believer who has real faith in his heart.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

Muslim at all times. This is because the root of Islam is submission and enactment. The root of *Imaan* is belief and affirmation. A person could be outwardly submitting while he is not submitting internally. But he could not be believing on the inside while not submitting externally. Therefore, every *mumin* is a Muslim and not every Muslim is a *mumin*.¹

Similarly, ibn Taimiya wrote,

If the belief is truly in the heart, the deeds will not delay in following it whatsoever. The complete recognition of Allah and proper love cannot be in the heart if it does not have an overriding effect on the outward deeds. For this reason, Allah has denied faith for those who do not fulfill its necessary consequences. The absence of the necessary consequences is a denial of the necessitating factor. For example, Allah says, “And had they believed in Allah and in the Prophet and in what has been revealed to him, never would they have taken them [the disbelievers] as patrons” (*al-Maaidah* 81). And, “You will not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day making friendship with those who oppose Allah and His Messenger” (*al-Mujaadilah* 22). The external and internal must go together. The external acts cannot be sound and upright unless the internal aspects are sound and upright. If the internal aspects are upright, then the external deeds must also be upright.²

However, the question here is somewhat tricky. There is no question that deeds form part of *Imaan* in the sense that true *Imaan* leads to actions and there is a direct relationship between the dynamic growth or stagnation of *Imaan* and deeds. However, according to the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*, as can be clearly proven from the Quran and sunnah, a person does not leave the realm of Islam simply due to a sin that he commits. Therefore, what exactly is the relationship between these different components? Ibn Abu al-Izz has offered one answer to this perplexing question:

It has also been pointed that *qawl* (“statement”) is of two kinds: *qawl* of the heart which is faith (*i'tiqaad*), and *qawl* of the tongue which is uttering the testimony of Islam. Similarly *'amal* (action) is of two kinds: actions of the heart, which are intention and sincerity, and actions of the body. When all four of these disappear, *Imaan* disappears completely. When faith (*tasdeeq*) of the heart disappears, the other three do not avail the person; *tasdeeq* is the condition of their authenticity and significance. If there is *tasdeeq* in the heart but the others are

¹ Quoted in al-Husain al-Baghawi, *Sharh al-Sunnah* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1983) p. 11.

² Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 18, p. 272. Also see Abdul Razaq Maash, *Al-Jahl bi-Masail al-Itiqaad wa Hukmuhu* (Riyadh: Dar al-Watn, 1996), pp. 63-75.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

no longer there, this is the case where the dispute arises [whether such a person is still a believer or not].

There is no doubt that the non-submission of the body implies lack of submission on the part of the heart. For if the heart submits, the body also surrenders and obeys; but if, on the other hand, the heart does not submit there will be no assent (*tasdeeq*) that would manifest in obedience. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "There is a lump of flesh in the body. When it is sound, the whole body is sound; but when it goes wrong, the whole body goes wrong as a result. Lo! it is the heart."¹ This means that one whose heart is good, his body [and actions] shall definitely be good. The opposite is not true.² However, the point is that when a part of *Imaan* is lost, the whole *Imaan* is lost only in the sense that it does not remain intact, but not in the sense that it disappears completely. It is only impaired [not completely gone].

Faith is like intelligence in that it differs from person to person. Although everyone has a core of intelligence which qualifies him as a rational being and distinguishes him from a lunatic, some people are definitely more intelligent than others. It is also obvious that the faith which produces actions of the heart and the body is more complete than the faith which does not produce them. Similarly, the knowledge upon which one acts is more complete than the knowledge upon which one does not act. That which cannot produce anything is plainly weaker than that which can produce something. The Prophet said, "One who is told about something is not equal to one who sees it."³ When Moses was told that his people were worshipping a heifer he did not cast the stone tablets down. He threw them only when he actually saw them worshipping the calf. The reason was not that he doubted the information Allah gave him. The reason was that the importance of a thing informed, no matter how reliable is the informer, is often not realized to the extent it is when it is seen. Ibrahim, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said, "My Lord! Show me how you give life to the dead? (Allah) said: Do you not believe? He said: Yea, but to satisfy my own heart" (*al-Baqara* 260).

¹Part of a hadith in al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² Hypocrites may do outward acts of piety but, in general, they will also display signs of their false piety.

³ Recorded by Ibn Hibbaan and al-Tabaraani. With a different wording the hadith has been reported in Ahmad, Ibn Hibbaan and al-Haakim. It is an authentic hadith according to al-Albaani, footnotes to *Sharh*, p. 335.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

In fact, faith in the faith formula (*kalimah*), “there is no god except Allah”, varies in its radiance from heart to heart. There are, in fact, innumerable degrees of faith’s radiance which are known only to Allah. In some hearts it is as bright as the sun, in others it is like stars, in some like a big lamp, in some like a glowing candle, and in some like a flickering light. That is why, on the Day of Judgment, the light of the believers will shine according to the strength of their faith in Allah’s unity, and the nobility of their practices. As the light of the *kalimah* increases, doubts and disbelief burn away till one reaches a stage where all uncertainties and vacillations are completely destroyed. This is the stage of the true believer in *tawheed* where the heights of his faith are fully secured against the assault of all miscreants. He who knows this would know the meaning of the Prophet’s words, “Allah has barred him from the Fire who says, ‘There is no god except Allah’, and by it seeks no one’s pleasure but Allah’s,”¹ or “No one will enter the Fire who says, ‘There is no god except Allah.’”²

There is no doubt that the one who has firm sincerity in his heart, that cannot be overridden by desires or doubts, will not commit sins. If one is not afflicted by desires and doubts, or one of them, one would not commit sins. However, at the time of committing a sin, his heart is occupied with the sin and it loses its sincerity and remembrance of a threatened punishment. Therefore, he sins.³

Imaan Increases and Decreases

Although historically speaking there has been some dispute over this question, it is very clear from the Quran that a person’s *Imaan* increases and decreases.⁴ For example, Allah says,

¹Part of a long hadith recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

²Muslim has the hadith on the authority of ‘Ubaadah that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, “One who witnesses that there is no god other than Allah, and that Muhammad is His messenger, Allah will not let him enter the Fire.” Muslim and al-Bukhari have the hadith on the authority of Anas that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, “Allah will not allow the person to enter into the Fire who has testified that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger.” However, these hadith should not be taken alone, without taking into consideration what other texts state; various verses of the Quran and a number of the Prophet’s hadith state that the sinners among the faithful will be punished for a time in the Fire and then released. They should be qualified and interpreted to mean that those who witness to God’s unity and Muhammad’s prophecy and act righteously will not enter the Fire.

³Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, pp. 460-462.

⁴ Those scholars who equated *imaan* with *tasdeeq* (affirmation, belief) argued that there is no such thing as affirmation going up or down. Their argument has two flaws to it. First, *imaan* is not equivalent to *tasdeeq*. Second, *tasdeeq* itself can vary, as shall be noted shortly in a reference from Ibn Taimiya. It is usually said that Abu Hanifah believed that *imaan* does not increase or

وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ

“And when His verses are recited to them they [the verses] increase their faith” (*al-Anfaal* 2).

وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى

“And Allah increases in guidance those who seek guidance (*Maryam* 76).

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ إِلَّا مَلَائِكَةً وَمَا جَعَلْنَا عِدَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيَسْتَيَقِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَيَزِدَّادَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِيمَانًا

“We have set none but angels as guardians over the fire. We have fixed their number [at nineteen] only as a trial for the disbelievers and in order that the people who were given the book [before] would be certain [that this is the truth], and so that the believers may increase in faith” (*al-Mudaththir* 31).

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ

“It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the Believers, in order that faith be added to their faith” (*al-Fath* 4).

الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدَ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَآخَشَوْهُمْ فزَادَهُمُ

إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

“Those to whom people said: ‘A great army is gathering against you, hence you should fear it, but such only increased their faith and they said: ‘For us Allah is sufficient’; He is Perfect in Disposing affairs” (*ali-Imraan* 173).

Commenting on these verses, ibn Abu al-Izz wrote,

Obviously, one cannot say that the increase mentioned in the last verse and the other verses means increase in the objects of faith [or aspects that one must believe in]. Is there anything in the statement, “A great army is gathering against you,” which pertains to some additional aspect that one must believe in? Did the tranquillity that Allah sent down in the hearts add to the objects of faith? Allah sent down to their hearts calmness upon their return from Hudaibiyah in order to increase their tranquillity and conviction. This is supported by the verses,

decrease. W. al-Umari does not consider this correct and thinks it inconceivable that someone of Abu Hanifah’s knowledge and standing would come to such a clearly wrong position. He believes that Abu Hanifah was refuting the view of the Mutazilah, that the sinner will be in the Hell-fire forever and is not a believer, and his refutation of their view was not transmitted properly in the right context from him and this is what led people to think that Abu Hanifah did not believe that *imaan* increases and decreases. Cf., W. al-Umari, pp. 109-110.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

“They (the hypocrites) were that day nearer to not having faith than to faith” (*ali-Imraan* 167) and the verse, “Whenever there comes down a *surah* some of them say: ‘Which of you has had his faith increased by it? Yes, those who believe— their faith is increased and they do rejoice. But as for those in whose hearts is disease, it only adds wickedness to their wickedness, and they die while they are disbelievers” (*al-Tauba* 124-125). [The former emphasizes the weakening of the faith and the latter its enhancement.]¹

There is no question that there are differences in the outward deeds of mankind. This is a reflection and an aspect of the increase and decrease in *Imaan*. One must not believe, though, that such is the only fluctuation of *Imaan*. Actually, all of the aspects of faith are exposed to this possibility, including— or especially— the deeds of the heart. Even the level of “belief” in the heart or certainty can change in one person and certainly is different from one person to the next. Indeed, one’s love for Allah, fear of Allah, trust in Allah and other aspects of the heart are probably the most prone to change and fluctuation.

Perhaps every individual has experienced this fact described in the verses above. At times, a person is very aware of Allah and of his fear and love for Him. This strong feeling in the person’s heart brings tranquillity and warmth to the person and it also keeps him from committing sins. Not only that, it drives him to sacrifice and work harder for the sake of Allah. He becomes very anxious to get up late at night for prayer, for example, or give freely for the sake of Allah. However, at other times, perhaps when the affairs of this world are engulfing him, his remembrance and attachment to Allah is not that great. He does not feel that great feeling of *Imaan* in his heart. His behavior and actions are not of the same quality as they are at other times. When he encounters this stage, when he thinks about getting up at night for prayer or giving charity for the sake of Allah, his soul becomes too tired or not willing to sacrifice. This is nothing but the fluctuations of *Imaan* in the person’s heart.

There may be times when a person is at a very high level of *Imaan* and remembrance of Allah. When he mixes with worldly events, his family and friends, he may not be at that same level. This type of occurrence even happened to Abu Bakr, who was known as *al-Sideeq*. A hadith in *Sahih Muslim* states that Abu Bakr asked Handhalah, another Companion, how he was doing. He answered that he was committing hypocrisy. He explained that by saying that when they are with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and reminded of Heaven and Hell, they are as if they are seeing Heaven and Hell. Then when they retreat to their families, they forget much of what they felt earlier. Abu Bakr stated that he also experienced the same. This is something natural. The

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, p. 479.

person should learn to appreciate those times when he was at his highest level of faith and seek to maintain them for as long as possible.

Even the level of affirmation and knowledge in the heart varies from person to person and time to time in one person. Ibn Taimiya states that the affirmation in the heart of the person who simply knows the general aspects of the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) will not be the same as that of the person who knows the details of the Prophet's life and teachings. Similarly, the one who knows more about Allah's names and attributes, the life of the Hereafter and so forth will be at a different level of affirmation and knowledge than the one who is ignorant of such matters.¹

Ibn Taimiya also argues that the faith of a person who knows the proofs for his beliefs and recognizes the falsehood of other beliefs will be stronger and greater than the one who is unaware of these aspects.²

Ibn Taimiya concludes that there is nothing more variable in the heart of man than faith. He says that people should be able to recognize this fact when they consider one of the components of *imaan*, which is love. People recognize their own different levels of love. Love sometimes simply implies a desire to be with or close to one's beloved. However, it can reach the level where one cannot live without being in the presence of one's beloved.³ Similarly *imaan*, of which love for Allah is one component, can be extremely variable.

This question of *imaan* increasing or decreasing is not simply a theoretical question over which the scholars of the past differed. If a person feels that he has *imaan* and *imaan* is a fixed attribute, he will not strive for increasing his *imaan* and he will not fear or notice a decrease in his *imaan*. This approach in itself can be very dangerous to his *imaan* as the person may not recognize the signs that his *imaan* is decreasing. *Imaan* can decrease to the level that one is deserving of punishment. Indeed, it can decrease to a level that it actually leaves the person completely and he falls outside of the fold of Islam.

On the other end, as Wamaidh al-Umari noted, there is no limit to the greatness and completion Allah's attributes. Therefore, no one can ever reach the limit beyond which there will be no further *imaan* for which he can yearn or work. Instead, one can always grow in one's *imaan* as one learns more and more about Allah.⁴

Complete *Imaan* and Lacking *Imaan*

Allah says in the Quran,

¹ Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 7, p. 564.

² Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 7, pp. 565-566.

³ Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 7, pp. 566-567.

⁴ W. al-Umari, p. 20.

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ ءَامَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ
 الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ
 شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“The bedouins say, ‘We believe.’ Say [to them], ‘You believe not but say, “We have submitted [in Islam],” for faith has not yet entered your hearts.’ But if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not decrease anything in reward for your deeds. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (*al-Hujuraat* 14). In this verse, Allah is distinguishing between *Imaan* and Islam. However, it is clear that the bedouins were not hypocrites, void of any belief in their hearts whatsoever. If that were the case, the remainder of the verse would not make any sense because such people who are completely void of faith shall not be rewarded for their obedience to Allah and His Messenger. What is being described is a case where the true and complete *Imaan* is not yet present in their hearts. However, they are not outside of the fold of Islam although they are not deserving of being called true or complete believers.

Al-Bukhari and Muslim both record the following hadith (this being Muslim’s wording):

عَنْ سَعْدِ أَنَّهُ أُعْطِيَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَهْطًا وَأَنَا جَالِسٌ فِيهِمْ قَالَ فَتَرَكَ
 رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْهُمْ رَجُلًا لَمْ يُعْطِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْجَبُهُمْ إِلَيَّ فَقُمْتُ إِلَى
 رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَسَارَرْتُهُ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا لَكَ عَنْ فُلَانٍ وَاللَّهِ
 إِنِّي لَأَرَاهُ مُؤْمِنًا قَالَ أَوْ مُسْلِمًا فَسَكَتُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ غَلَبَنِي مَا أَعْلَمُ مِنْهُ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ
 مَا لَكَ عَنْ فُلَانٍ فَوَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَرَاهُ مُؤْمِنًا قَالَ أَوْ مُسْلِمًا فَسَكَتُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ غَلَبَنِي مَا أَعْلَمُ
 مِنْهُ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا لَكَ عَنْ فُلَانٍ فَوَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَرَاهُ مُؤْمِنًا قَالَ أَوْ مُسْلِمًا قَالَ إِنِّي
 لَأُعْطِي الرَّجُلَ وَغَيْرَهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْهُ خَشْيَةً أَنْ يُكَبَّ فِي النَّارِ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ

Saad reported: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) bestowed [some gifts] upon a group of people and I was sitting among them. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) left out a person and did not give him anything. I thought that he was the best of the group. So I stood up before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said, “O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), what about so and so. By Allah, I find him to be a believer.” The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) answered, “He may be [just] a Muslim.” I kept quiet

for a short while but then I could not restrain myself and again said to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), “O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), what about so and so? By Allah, I find him to be a believer.” He said, “He may be [just] a Muslim.” I remained quiet for a while and then what I knew about that man made me speak again, “O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), what about so and so? By Allah, I find him to be a believer.” The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) answered, “He may be [just] a Muslim. I often bestow something upon a person whereas someone else is dearer to me than he, because of the fear that he may fall headlong into the Fire.”

In this hadith one also finds the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) differentiating between a true or complete believer and a Muslim. What can be derived from the above is that for a person to be called an absolute, complete or true believer, he must fulfill the conditions and obligations of *Imaan*. If he is lacking in them, then he is not deserving of being called a believer.¹ But he has not left the fold of Islam. Instead, he has moved from the lofty level of being called a “believer” to the level of being a “muslim”.

This is a very important point to understand as, when misunderstood, this point leads to a great deal of confusion. In fact, it leads to more than just confusion— it leads to Muslims calling other Muslims disbelievers. A disbeliever is one who completely leaves the fold of Islam. A Muslim is one who is in the fold of Islam by performing the outward deeds of Islam. However, a Muslim may not perform all of the required aspects of faith, especially those deeds of the heart, to be called a believer in an absolute sense. A believer, in an absolute sense, on the other hand, is one who submits completely— that is, fulfills the requirements of Islam— but, in addition to that, fulfills all of the characteristics and requirements of a true believer. Hence, he is termed a believer. Therefore, every true believer must first be a true Muslim. However, not every Muslim is necessarily a true and complete believer in an absolute sense.

This point must be kept in mind when one reads hadith like the following:

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ

“None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) In other words, no one is a true and complete believer— meeting all the requirements and necessary components of *Imaan*— until he loves for his brother what he loves for

¹ Such a person may still be called “a believer” in the sense of distinguishing a person of Islam from a person of *kufr*. It was in this sense that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said about the slave-girl who was to be freed, “Free her for she is a believer,” after he had asked her, “Where is Allah?” and “Who am I?” Cf., W. al-Umari, p. 31.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

himself. This is one of the necessary components of being a true and complete believer.¹

Another hadith states,

لَا يَزْنِي الزَّانِي حِينَ يَزْنِي وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ وَلَا يَسْرِقُ السَّارِقُ حِينَ يَسْرِقُ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ وَلَا يَشْرَبُ الخَمْرَ حِينَ يَشْرَبُهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ

“A fornicator while committing illegal sexual intercourse is not a [true] believer. A thief while committing theft is not a [true] believer. A drinker while drinking alcohol is not a [true] believer.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) A similar hadith states,

إِذَا زَنَى الْعَبْدُ خَرَجَ مِنْهُ الْإِيمَانُ فَكَانَ فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ كَالظِّلَّةِ فَإِذَا خَرَجَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ الْعَمَلِ عَادَ إِلَيْهِ الْإِيمَانُ

“When a person commits illegal sexual intercourse, *Imaan* leaves him and remains above his head like an awning. When he discontinues this [illegal] behavior, *Imaan* comes back to him.” (Recorded by al-Tirmidhi.²) Ibn Taimiya was asked about the meaning of this hadith and whether it should be taken at face value. He wrote,

During the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), some people committed adultery, stole and drank alcohol. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not declare them to be disbelievers nor did he cut off the relations between them and the Muslims. Instead, he flogged this one and cut the hand of the other. At the same time, he also sought forgiveness for them...

Some say that such people's *Imaan* is still complete without any shortcoming... That statement goes against the Quran, sunnah and consensus of the earlier scholars and those who followed them... The opinion of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-*

¹ The different sects have gone to different extremes in interpreting hadith of that nature or hadith which describe people who perform specific acts as, "not being from among us." The correct interpretation is that given in the text above. The Murjiites, on one hand, understand these texts to mean the person is not similar to the others or he is not from the best of the people while his *imaan* is still complete and not lacking in any fashion. The Khawaarij and Mutazilah understand these texts to mean that the person leaves Islam completely or will be in the Hell-fire forever. Cf., ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 7, p. 525.

² Al-Haakim and Abu Dawood have something very similar. The hadith is graded *sahih* by al-Albani. See Muhammad Naasir al-Din al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami al-Sagheer* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1986), vol. 1, p. 162.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

Jamaah is that the term believer is not completely removed from them nor is it given to them unconditionally. We say [regarding a person who performs such deeds]: He is a believer who has a deficiency in his faith. Or, he is a believer with respect to his faith and a *faasiq* (evildoer) with respect to the great sin he performed. Or, one says that he is not a true believer or he does not fulfill his faith sincerely...

[Someone asked:] Did any Imam take this hadith at face value? This question is not clear. If one means by that statement that the apparent meaning of the hadith is that a fornicator is a disbeliever, then none of the Imams understood this hadith in that sense. However, that is not the apparent meaning of the hadith anyway. The Prophet's words, "*Imaan* leaves him and is above his head like an awning," indicates that *Imaan* did not depart from him completely. Certainly, an awning shades its companion and is directly connected to it...

The correct view is that the exact essence of *tasdeeq* (belief and assent) that distinguishes him from a disbeliever is not non-existent. However, if that level of *tasdeeq* had remained at its previous level, the person would believe and affirm that Allah has forbidden that great sin and has threatened a great punishment for it. [He also would know] that Allah sees the doer and witnesses him; also, Allah, in His Greatness, Esteem, Exaltedness and Pride despises that act. Therefore, when he commits that act, one of three aspects must be true: (1) His belief is confused and muddled, thinking that the threat of punishment is not exactly as it states... (2) He has become heedless or neglectful that the act is forbidden, of the greatness of his Lord and the harshness of His punishment. (3) Or his desires have completely overtaken him and overpowered the effects of *Imaan*... [His *Imaan*] has become like the rational thought of a person who is sleeping or drunk. [That is, it has no influence over him whatsoever.]...

It is known that the *Imaan* that is the real *Imaan* no longer resides in him as it had resided. It is not apparent and residing in his heart... [His case is similar to the soul while one is asleep. In some aspects, the person is dead while sleeping [while with respect to other aspects he is still alive.]

Similarly, the fornicator, thief and drinker have not lost the *Imaan* that can keep them from being forever in the Hell-fire. Therefore, intercession and forgiveness is still hoped for him.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

He still has the right to get married and inheritance [since he has not left the fold of Islam]...¹

There is one more level that goes beyond “believer” and this is *muhsin*, the one characterized by *ihsaan* (excellence in his worship of Allah). Every *muhsin* must meet all of the conditions of a Muslim and a believer. Hence, every *muhsin* is a Muslim and a believer. However, not every believer is a *muhsin*. Being a *muhsin* is a stage higher than that of being either a *mumin* or a *muslim*.

These different levels of *Imaan*, Islam and *Ihsaan* bring up some very important questions. These questions are related to the fact that disbelievers will be in the Hell-fire forever while believers may either be punished first in Hell and then rescued from Hell and entered into Paradise or they may go directly to Paradise without first being punished in Hell. Therefore, it is logical to ask the following:²

(1) What is the minimum level or foundation of *Imaan* that will prevent one from being among the disbelievers in the Hell-Fire forever?

(2) What is the level of *Imaan* that one must fulfill to be saved from ever being punished in the Hell-fire?

(3) What is the level of *Imaan* that will raise one to the highest ranks in Paradise?

These questions shall be dealt with separately.

(1) What is the minimum level of *Imaan* that will prevent one from being among the disbelievers in the Hell-Fire forever? The minimum which forms the basics or foundations of faith that is obligatory upon every Muslim at all times is where the person has met the minimum requirement of *tasdeeq* (belief, assent) and *inqiyaad* (submission, yielding). These are composed of:

(a) Belief in everything that one knows to be from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as well as the readiness to believe in all new information that one receives from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). That is, one accepts, admits and realizes the he must believe in everything that is authentically reported from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). This includes everything that the person knows at the present moment as well as anything that the person may learn in the future.³

(b) Adherence to everything that one knows to be from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as well as the readiness to adhere to all new information that one receives from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that one previously did not know. What this means is that every Muslim

¹ Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 7, pp. 670-676. In general, this interpretation is that of the vast majority of scholars. See al-Mubaarakfoori, vol. 7, pp. 375-377.

² See al-Misri, p. 55.

³ This would include believing in all of the aspects that shall be described shortly under the different articles of faith mentioned in this hadith of Gabriel.

have the willingness, desire and recognition that he is obligated to adhere to everything that he knows has come from the Prophet (peace be upon him) as well as have the willingness and desire to adhere to anything that he shall learn in the future. Although a Muslim may not actually adhere to everything of the Quran and sunnah, the essential aspect is that he believes and understands that it is obligatory upon him to adhere to everything found in the Quran and sunnah. This is the absolute minimum that is required of a person.

This touches upon a very important concept, especially for new converts to Islam. Belief in Islam is based on overwhelming proof and evidence for the authenticity of the Quran and the veracity of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Belief does not mean that each believer has established or verified every aspect of the Quran or sunnah. Indeed, there are many aspects that mankind may have no knowledge of. Similarly, there are many aspects that disbelievers may, in their ignorance, believe that the opposite is true, fairer or more beneficial.¹ The unquestionable truth of the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him) is sufficient for the person to realize that everything that comes from them is true. This is the correct *Imaan* that every new Muslim must understand. Hence, whenever he now reads something in the Quran or authentic hadith that he previously did not know, he is willing to accept it and apply it because he knows full well the truthfulness of the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him).

This is what ibn Taimiya refers to as *al-Imaan al-Mujmal* or the general and unspecified faith. If someone only fulfills these minimum requirements, he is not deserving of the honorable title of “believer” or “true believer”. However, if he fulfills these two aspects— and does not contradict them or negate them by any belief, statement or action— then he will have saved himself from *kufir* (disbelief) and from being in the Hell-fire forever. In other words, by simply fulfilling these conditions, he remains within the fold of Islam and that is the key to being rescued from the Hell-fire.

This minimum level can be thought of as the level of Islam, as Allah has referred to in reference to the bedouins. Although there is some submission and acceptance of the Quran and sunnah, the people of this level lack the characteristics of true believers whose faith is strong in their hearts. Therefore, they will be lacking with respect to deeds like *jihad* and sacrificing for the sake of Allah. Furthermore, they might be quite lax with respect to performing major sins and acts of that nature. They have not reached the level where Allah and His Messenger are more beloved to them than anything else. They do not love for their brother Muslim what they love for themselves. They do not fear Allah alone and they do not put their trust only in Allah. All of these are obligatory aspects of being a true believer. However, at the same time, these people are not hypocrites and they may not even be evildoers. They are not

¹ For example, a person may not see the wisdom, justice or propriety of the male and female shares of the inheritance being different.

deserving of the honorific title of “believers,” but they are, instead, “muslims” (people of some faith who are submitting to Allah).

Ibn Taimiya writes about those who convert to Islam or those who were born in Muslim families but who have not taken the time to thoroughly learn about Islam. These people, he says, obey Allah and His Messenger concerning the basics of Islam. Hence, they are within the fold of Islam. However, real faith takes time to enter into their hearts. It comes gradually, as the person’s knowledge, understanding and certainty increases.¹ This was probably the case with the bedouins described above in the verse from *Surah al-Hujuraat*. Allah has stated their case in a very beautiful manner that indicates that true *Imaan* will come to them but at the time of the revelation of those verses, it simply was not there.²

This is an important point. It should make the person realize, especially the new convert, that there are greater levels of *Imaan* waiting for him if he sincerely turns to Allah and seeks His guidance. This true *Imaan*, Allah willing, will come about as the Muslim understands the Quran better, as he associates more with pious and knowledgeable people, and as he obeys Allah more and as he implements the sunnah more in his life. Allah willing, his *Imaan* will continue to grow until he becomes a true and complete believer that Allah praises throughout the Quran. He then will taste the sweetness of *Imaan*. On the other hand, if he is content with little faith and little submission to Allah, he may block off all the means to increase his *Imaan* and come closer to Allah.

Hence, one should not be satisfied with being at the level of only “Islam”. This level implies that one is not doing a great deal to please Allah. He is not working for Allah’s love, mercy and forgiveness. Indeed, it may mean that he is exposing himself to Allah’s displeasure and punishment in the Hereafter. One second of Allah’s punishment in the Hell-fire will be much greater than any sort of punishment that anyone could possibly receive in this world, although humans complain a lot about their suffering in this world. On the Day of Judgment, everyone will quickly realize that Allah’s pleasure will mean more to him than everything that this world contains.

(2) What is the level of *Imaan* that one must fulfill to be saved from ever being punished in the Hell-fire? If a person goes beyond the minimum requirements of faith and fulfills all of the necessary as well as obligatory (minimum) aspects of the faith, then he has moved from the lower levels of *Imaan* to a higher level. This is the level in which he fulfills all of the obligatory aspects of *Imaan*. This is where he fulfills the description of the true believers as given in the Quran and sunnah.

¹ Ibn Taimiya, *al-Imaan*, p. 257.

² Salaah Al-Khaalidi, *Fi Dhilaal al-Imaan* (al-Zurqa, Jordan: Maktabah al-Manaar, 1987), p. 42.

If a person fulfills the obligations upon him with respect to faith and submission to Allah and avoids the forbidden acts, then he will never enter the Hell-fire; he deserves to be called a believer in an absolute sense. He is the one who fulfills the description of the true believers as found in the Quran. For example, he is the one who embodies the following characteristics:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ
 آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ
 وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

“The [true] believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a fear in their hearts and when His verses are recited to them, they increase their faith. And they put their trust in their Lord. Those who establish the prayer and spend out of what We have provided them” (*al-Anfaal* 2-3). In the following verses, Allah says about the people who have those characteristics:

أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

“Certainly, it is they are who are the true believers. For them are grades of dignity with their Lord, and Forgiveness and a generous provision” (*al-Anfaal* 4).

(3) What is the level of *Imaan* that will raise one to the highest ranks in Paradise? These are the people of complete *Imaan*. They not only possess the necessary as well as the obligatory components of *Imaan*, but they go on beyond that. They perform much more than the essential or required deeds. They also perform voluntary or supererogatory deeds. They perform them as a result of their greater extreme *Imaan*— in other words, their greater love of, fear of and hope in Allah. They, therefore, excel in their worship of Allah.¹

Ibn Taimiya stated, “The People of the Sunnah and Hadith state that all good deeds, obligatory as well as recommended, are part and parcel of *Imaan*. That is, they form part of the *Imaan* that is completed by performing the beloved recommended deeds, even though they are not from the obligatory aspects of *Imaan*. They differentiate between *Imaan* and the *Imaan* that is complete through recommended aspects... The word ‘complete’ [or ‘perfected’] may mean complete in the sense that the obligatory parts are fulfilled or complete in the sense that the extra or recommended parts are fulfilled.”²

The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated,

¹ Perhaps one could describe the first level as that of Islam, the second level as that of *Imaan* and the third level as that of *Ihsaan*.

² Ibn Taimiya, *al-Imaan*, p. 186.

الإِيمَانُ بَضْعٌ وَسَبْعُونَ أَوْ بَضْعٌ وَسِتُّونَ شُعْبَةً فَأَفْضَلُهَا قَوْلُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَدْنَاهَا إِمَاطَةُ
الْأَذَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ وَالْحَيَاءُ شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ

“*Imaan* is composed of seventy some-odd— or sixty some-odd¹— branches. The greatest aspect is the statement, ‘There is none worthy of worship except Allah,’ and the lowest aspect is removing something harmful from the road. And modesty is a branch of faith.”² Obviously, the one who is driven by his faith to remove something harmful from the road for the sake of Allah has gone beyond the minimum or obligatory aspects of faith. Because of his faith in Allah, he will stop and remove something harmful from the road. The only thing driving him to do that is his *Imaan*.

In sum, ibn Taimiya argues that *Imaan* is composed of:

(1) Essentials or foundation without which *Imaan* is missing in totality: If one fails to fulfill any one of these, he is outside of the fold of Islam and will remain in the Hell-fire forever.

(2) Obligatory aspects: If one fails to fulfill any one of them, he may be deserving of punishment in the Hereafter. However, the person who fails only in these aspects will not be in the Hell-fire forever. Instead, he will be rescued by the mercy of Allah and entered into Paradise. If one performs all of these obligatory aspects, one will be entered, by the grace and mercy of Allah, directly into Paradise without first suffering any punishment for what was lacking in his *Imaan*.

(3) Recommended or beloved acts: These are the acts that will distinguish the People of Paradise from one another. These are the acts that will determine the various degrees of reward and positions of Paradise that are described in the Quran and hadith.

Ibn Taimiya then quoted the following verse of the Quran as referring to these three categories of “Muslims-believers-those who excel”:

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ أَصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ
وَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ بإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ
الْكَبِيرُ

“Then We gave the Book for inheritance to such of Our slaves whom We chose [the followers of Muhammad]. Then of them are some who wrong themselves, and of them are some who follow a middle course, and of them are some who

¹ The doubt is from one of the narrators.

² Recorded by Muslim.

are, by Allah’s leave, foremost in good deeds. That [inheritance of the Quran]— that is indeed a great Grace” (*Faatir* 32).

Entering Paradise is Tied to Being a Believer

Ibn Taimiya also points out that the promise of Paradise is always tied to being a believer or having faith. There are no verses, for example, that promise Paradise for the “Muslims”. There are only promises given to the believers unconditionally or those who have faith and perform good deeds.¹ For example, Allah has said,

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسْكِنٍ طَيِّبَةٍ فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

“Allah has promised to the believers, men and women, gardens through which rivers flow to dwell therein forever, and beautiful mansions in Gardens of Paradise. But the greatest bliss is the Good Pleasure of Allah. That is the supreme success” (*al-Tauba* 72). An example of the second type includes,

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

“And give glad tidings to those who believe and do good deeds that for them will be Gardens through which rivers flow...” (*al-Baqara* 25).

After the Battle of Khaibar, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) were commenting about some of the valiant Muslims who had died fighting. They said, “So and so is a martyr, so and so is a martyr.” They came to one person and said that he was a martyr and the Prophet (peace be upon him) told them, “Certainly not, for I have seen him in the Hell-fire due to a cloak or garment that he had misappropriated from the booty.” Then the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said to Umar ibn al-Khattaab,

يَا ابْنَ الْخَطَّابِ اذْهَبْ فَنَادِ فِي النَّاسِ أَنَّهُ لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

“O ibn al-Khattaab, go and announce among the people that no one enters Paradise except the believers.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

¹ Ibn Taimiya, *al-Imaan*, p. 226.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

For every person, it is only when he has been purified of wrongs and he then fulfills the requirements of *imaan* that he will be entered into Paradise. Al-Umari wrote,

The important point here is this: When the effects and traces of evildoing are removed by repentance or erased by good deeds or hardships or by being entered into the Hell-fire— and we seek refuge in Allah from that— and nothing is left with the Muslim except what he has of *imaan*, and true *imaan* cannot be denied of him, then he will enter Paradise as a believer, even if his *imaan* is less than the *imaan* of others.¹

Imaan, Islam and *Ihsaan*

Some people are very much confused by the use of the words *Imaan* and Islam. Are *Imaan* and Islam actually synonymous, implying one and the same thing?² Does one actually imply the other or not? If the answer is yes, how is it that *Imaan* is often differentiated from Islam, as in the case of the hadith of Gabriel. The solution to this question is quite simple and boils down to the following points:

(1) If *Imaan* is mentioned by itself, not in conjunction with Islam, then the reference to *Imaan* includes all of the outward acts of submission that are considered exclusively part of Islam. That is, if the word *Imaan* is used by itself, its meaning encompasses or also indicates the acts of Islam.³

(2) If the word *Imaan* is used in conjunction with Islam, then, *Imaan* is only a reference to the acts and beliefs of the heart and not the outward acts that form the definition of Islam.⁴

(3) Similarly, if Islam is mentioned by itself, not in conjunction with *Imaan*, then it also includes *Imaan* as part of its meaning; that is, for example, a “Muslim” is one who has at least the minimum requirements of *Imaan*.

¹ W. al-Umari, p. 27. Note that there is another hadith about a man who killed himself due to his pain after fighting valiantly. In that hadith, some of the narrations are, “No one will enter Paradise except a believer,” while others are, “No one will enter Paradise except a Muslim.” The stronger narration is the one that states, “believer.”

² That Islam and *imaan* are one and the same was the view of many of the early scholars, including Imam al-Bukhari. However, as can be seen from the hadith that al-Bukhari himself records in his *Sahih*, when they are mentioned individually and not in context of each other, they refer to one and the same thing; if they are mentioned together in the same context, they refer to two separate concepts.

³ For example, Allah says, “Only those are believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted” (*al-Hujuraat* 15). Here, the believers not only have faith in their hearts but they, by necessity, also submit to the outward laws of Islam.

⁴ For example, Allah says, “The male Muslims and the female Muslims and the male believers and the female believers...” (*al-Ahzaab* 35).

(4) If Islam is used in conjunction with *Imaan*, then Islam is a reference to the outward acts of submission to Allah while *Imaan* is in reference to the acts of the heart and the beliefs of the person.¹

(5) Similarly, the word *Ihsaan* encompasses both Islam and *Imaan* when it is used alone. However, when used in conjunction with Islam and *Imaan*, as in this hadith of Gabriel, it has a special and distinct meaning from both Islam and *Imaan*.

Ibn Abu al-Izz has a very lengthy and detailed discussion proving the above points. Here is a greatly abridged translation of what he wrote:

It has been said that '*amal* (action) has been often mentioned in conjunction with *Imaan*— this implies that action is not included in the connotation of *Imaan*. The first thing that should be noted in this connection is that *Imaan* is mentioned [in the texts] in two ways. Sometimes it is mentioned alone, and neither any particular act nor *islam* is mentioned along with it; and sometimes it is mentioned in association with a religious act or *islam*. In the first case, *Imaan* necessarily includes action. For instance, "Believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in the heart" (*al-Anfaal* 2), or "Only those are believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted" (*al-Hujuraat* 15), "They only are true believers who believe in Allah and His Messenger" (*al-Noor* 62)...

In the second case where any righteous action is associated with *Imaan*, the implication is that *Imaan* is different from action even though their predicate is one. However, the difference is of varying degrees...²

It has been recorded in the *Sahih* that the Prophet (peace be on him) said to the delegation from the 'Abd al-Qays tribe visiting him, "I enjoin upon you to believe in none other than Allah. Do you know what does faith in Allah mean? It is to testify that there is no god besides Allah, the one and the only God, without a partner. It is to establish *salaat*, pay *zakat* and hand over (to us) a fifth of the booty."³ Obviously the Prophet (peace be on him) did not mean by that that these acts could be called *Imaan* in Allah without having faith in the heart. On several occasions he emphasized the necessity of faith in the heart. It is, therefore, certain that *Imaan* is these acts along

¹ Obviously (2) and (4) are essentially the same. For the sake of completeness or word order both have been explicitly mentioned.

² Ibn Taimiya has discussed the various forms of difference in *Majmoo al-Fatawa*, vol. 7, pp. 172-181.

³ Recorded by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

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with faith in the heart. What greater proof than the hadith of the Prophet (peace be on him) can there be to show that actions are included as part of faith? He defined *Imaan* in terms of actions and did not mention conviction (*tasdeeq*) of the heart, that is because it is well known that actions have no value if rejection is in the heart...

To conclude: When Islam and *Imaan* are mentioned together [in the same sentence] it is different from the case when one is mentioned without the other. Islam is to *Imaan* like the two testimonies—witnessing to Muhammad’s Prophecy in relation to witnessing to Allah’s unity—are to each other. In essence these two testimonies are two different things although the idea and the effects of the one are associated with the idea and the effects of the other, as if they were one thing. The same is the case with Islam and *Imaan*. No one can have *Imaan* without *Islam*, nor *Islam* without *Imaan*. One has to have *Islam* to some extent in order to prove his *Imaan*, just as one has to have *Imaan* in order to authenticate one’s *Islam*.¹

An Example: Belief in the Unseen

Before moving on to discuss what a Muslim is supposed to believe, an important conclusion from the above discussion must be explicitly stated: True and complete *Imaan* requires the person to act in accordance with what he has *Imaan* in. For example, the true *Imaan* in *al-ghaib* (the unseen) means that the person believes truly in his heart in the unseen and that this belief in his heart has some affect on his life and his actions.

Belief, therefore, is not simply a theoretical or intellectual aspect in the heart that does not affect the person—although historically some have argued that such is correct linguistically speaking. For example, someone may believe that smoking is harmful and wrong by accepting the facts showing smoking to be harmful as true but he continues to smoke and he does not let what he recognizes to be true guide his actions. In other words, he does not submit to the truth he sees nor does he implement what it implies. Hence, his recognition of the facts is not the same thing as “belief” or *imaan*. *Imaan* necessitates that one has the willingness to submit to or enact what one recognizes to be true.

In the case of *Imaan*, if that *Imaan* is strong and healthy at that moment, then it will put the feeling of hatred in the person’s heart for that act that he believes to be wrong or harmful. It will keep the person from wanting to commit that harmful act. It will, therefore, rule his life and it will guide him to what he should do. If it is weak and can be overcome by other forces in the heart, it may not have that effect.

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, pp. 483-487.

Therefore, true belief or *imaan* in *al-ghaib* means that one acts in accordance with that belief. When, for example, he says that he believes in the angels, it means that he knows that the angels are present and that they are actually recording his deeds. This should affect him in that he will not perform those deeds that he does not want those angels to see and record.

“He [the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)] said, ‘It is to believe in Allah’”

Belief in Allah is the cornerstone of Islamic faith. All of the other Islamic beliefs revolve around belief in Allah. It is a must that a Muslim’s beliefs about Allah be correct. If a person’s beliefs about Allah are not correct, then his whole faith may be ruined. For this reason Muslim scholars delineated and explained the correct beliefs concerning Allah in some detail.

The importance of the correct belief in Allah, termed *tauheed*¹, was demonstrated by ibn Abu al-Izz al-Hanafi. He stated that, “Most of the Quran, rather all of it, refers to *tauheed*.” He concluded this by showing that all of the Quran, in essence:

(1) Discusses Allah’s names, attributes and actions, and this is part of *tauheed* in knowledge and affirmation.

(2) Calls people to Allah’s worship alone, without ascribing any partners to Him and leaving everything that is worshipped other than Him, and this is *tauheed* of intention and action.

(3) Commands, forbids and requires obedience to Him, and this is all part of the rights or implications of *tauheed* and its completion.

(4) States how Allah honors those who believe in *tauheed* and how He treats them in this world and what He honors them with in the Hereafter; all of this is the reward for *tauheed*.

(5) Discusses those who have associated partners with Allah and whom He has punished in this life or would punish in the next, this is the just reward of those who abandon *tauheed*.

Ibn Abu al-Izz concludes,

Thus the entire Quran is about *tauheed*, its consequences and the reward for it. [It also discusses the negation and opposite of *tauheed* or] *shirk*,² those who commit it and the punishment they will suffer for it. [The opening verses of the first chapter of the Quran], “Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds” is *tauheed*; “the Most-Compassionate, the Most-Merciful” is *tauheed*; “Master of the Day of Judgment” is *tauheed*; “You only do we worship and in You only do we seek help” is *tauheed*; “Guide us to the Straight Path” is *tauheed* as it is a

¹ Sometimes spelled in English *tawheed*, *tauhid*, or *tawhid*.

² *Shirk* is the associating of partners with Allah.

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request to be guided to the path of the people of *tauheed*, those whom Allah has blessed, “Not those who have earned the wrath of Allah nor those who have gone astray” or, in other words, those who have forsaken *tauheed*.¹

The term *tauheed*, meaning “making something one,” or “asserting oneness”, is not a term from the Quran or sunnah. However, it became the main term used to cover the aspects of belief in Allah, dating back to the time of ibn Abbas. In order to clarify matters, the scholars divided the discussion of *tauheed* into different branches, each branch covering or explaining one aspect of the complete and correct belief in Allah. There is nothing sacred about these divisions or their terminology, although they have been accepted and passed on by scholars for centuries. However, what is of critical importance is the concept or belief that is being explained. Many of the deviant sects used the term *tauheed* or different types of *tauheed* but what they meant by it was not what is clear from the Quran and sunnah. Therefore, the most important point is that the understanding of the concept or the belief itself be correct according to the Quran and sunnah.

The Division of *Tauheed* Into Three Categories

A popular way of discussing *tauheed* is to divide it into three distinct categories.² These three categories are *tauheed al-ruboobiyah*, *tauheed al-uloohiyah*³ and *tauheed al-asmaa wa al-sifaat*. For quick reference, Figure 2.2 is a graphical representation of this way of viewing or considering *tauheed*. Each of these three essential components of *tauheed* shall be discussed separately.

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 1, p. 42-43. Virtually the same statements may also be found in ibn al-Qayyim, *Madaarij al-Salikeen*, vol. 3, p. 450.

² The dividing of *tauheed* into three categories may be found in a number of works in English. Perhaps, the best discussion is Bilal Philips, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed* (Riyadh: Tawheed Publications, 1990), pp. 1-42. In this work, an attempt will be made to emphasize some points that are not found or discussed in detail in the available English literature.

³ In particular, this category is sometimes given a slightly different name, such as *tauheed al-ibaada*.

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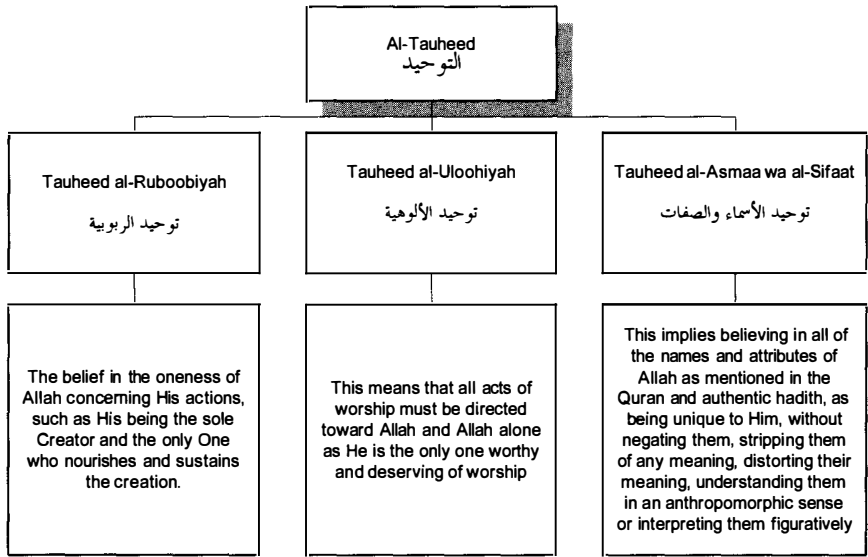


Figure 2.2 Graphical Representation of the Division of *Tauheed* into Three Categories

(1) *Tauheed al-Ruboobiyah*: In essence, this is belief in the uniqueness of Allah with respect to His actions. This is the belief in the Oneness of Allah with respect to His Lordship. He alone is the Lord (*al-Rabb*). He is One without Partner in His Dominion and His Actions. He is the Only Creator and true Owner of the creation. He is also the only One who nourishes, maintains¹ and Sustains this creation. All creation has been created by Him and Him alone.

According to ibn Uthaimin, all of mankind except the most arrogant and haughty accepts and recognizes this aspect of *tauheed*, namely, that there is no Lord and Creator but the One Lord and Creator.² This is so because this belief is ingrained in the nature of mankind. Mankind recognizes and realizes that this creation must have had a Creator. Mankind also realizes that this Creator must only be One. It is clear from numerous verses of the Quran that even the polytheistic Arabs knew and recognized that the true and only Creator was above and beyond the idols that they used to worship. For example, Allah says in the Quran,

¹ It is true that there can be other creators, owners and maintainers in this world. However, their abilities to create, own and maintain are limited and not absolute. Absoluteness in these realms belongs only to Allah. Cf., ibn Uthaimin, *Sharh Hadith*, pp. 11-14.

² Muhammad ibn Uthaimin, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan* (Fairfax, VA: Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America, 1410 A.H.), p. 19.

قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ
 أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ
 ﴿٨٦﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ فَأَنَّى
 تُسْحَرُونَ

“Say, ‘Whose is the earth and whosoever is therein, if you know?’ They will say, ‘It is Allah’s.’ Say, ‘Will you not then remember.’ Say, ‘Who is [the] Lord of the seven heavens, and [the] Lord of the Great Throne?’ They will say, ‘Allah.’ Say, ‘Will you not then fear Allah.’ Say, ‘In whose hand is the sovereignty of everything? And He protects [all], while against whom there is no protector.’ They will say, ‘[All that belongs to] Allah.’ Say, ‘How then you are deceived and turn away from the Truth?’” (*al-Muminoon* 84-89).

However, this belief concerning Allah also necessitates or implies the following aspects: Everything that occurs in this creation is by the Decree, Permission and Will of Allah. Sustenance and provisions are from Allah and Allah alone. Life and death are in the Hand of Allah alone. All blessings come from Allah. Guidance and misguidance are by the Will and Permission of Allah. Legislation or prescribing a way of life is the right of Allah alone. Allah alone has knowledge of the unseen. No one has any rights over Allah unless Allah Himself has laid down such upon Himself.

(2) **Tauheed al-Uloohiyah:** This is the oneness of Allah with respect to Him being the only one who is an *ilaah* (God, object of adoration and worship). This is the actualization of *tauheed* as found in the actions of the humans or servants of Allah. This is the meaning of the testimony of faith, “There is none worthy of worship except Allah.” This is the reason for which the messengers were sent and the books were revealed. This is the “trial” or test that mankind is facing in this world. Allah has said,

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I have not created jinn and mankind except that they should worship and serve Me” (*al-Dhaariyaat* 56). Allah also says,

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him” (*al-Israa* 23).

This branch of *tauheed* is the real goal or essence of the teachings of all of the messengers and prophets. The first type of *tauheed*, *tauheed al-ruboobiyah*, is necessary and essential. In reality, there has been very little dispute or controversy over that first type of *tauheed*. Many people would accept the basic concept that the Lord and Creator is One Lord and Creator only. However, this belief must lead to this second form of *tauheed* wherein one directs all of his acts of worship towards Allah and Allah alone. This is why so many Messengers are quoted in the Quran as telling their people,

يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ

“O my people, worship Allah as you have no other God besides Him” (*al-Araaf* 59, 65, 83, 85; *Hood* 50, 61, 84; *al-Muminoon* 23 and 32).

Many authors have given definitions for this type of *tauheed*. Al-Qaisi, for example, defined it in the following manner,

This is the knowledge, belief and recognition that Allah has the position of God over all of His creation. This category of *tauheed*— which is called *tauheed al-uloohiyah* or *tauheed al-'ibaada*— requires that one single out Allah alone for all acts of worship. It is the singling out of Allah and the specifying of Him as the object of all acts of worship, external and internal, statements and actions. It is the denial of the worship of anything other than Allah, whatever that other thing or being might be. It is the negation of any partner with Allah in any form whatsoever and refusal to turn any act of worship to anyone other than Him.

The concept of worship which must be devoted solely to Allah covers everything that is beloved and pleasing to Allah, whether it be acts or statements, both inward or outward, including purity of intention, love, fear, hope, awe, turning to [Him alone], putting one's trust [only in Allah], seeking aid and assistance, seeking a means of approach...¹

He goes on to mention many acts of worship, including the obvious ones, such as prayer, prostration, fasting, animal sacrifice, pilgrimage and so forth. All of these must be done solely for the sake of Allah. They must also be done in the manner that is prescribed by Allah and that is pleasing to Him. To perform any of these acts for anyone other than Allah negates and destroys one's fulfillment and implementation of *tauheed*.

Al-Saadi's definition sheds some further light on this concept. He wrote that *tauheed al-uloohiya*

¹ Marwan al-Qaisi, *Maalim al-Tauheed* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1990), pp. 61-62.

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Is to know and recognize with knowledge and certainty that Allah is the only God and the only one truly deserving of worship. [It is also to verify that] the attributes of Godhood and its meaning are not found in any of [Allah's] creatures. No one is then deserving of worship except Allah. If the person recognizes that and recognizes it correctly, he will reserve all of his external and internal acts of servitude and worship for Allah alone. He will fulfill the external acts of Islam, such as prayer,... jihad, ordering good and eradicating evil, being dutiful to parents, keeping the ties of kinship, fulfilling the rights of Allah and the rights of His creatures... He will not have any goal in life other than pleasing His Lord and attaining His rewards. In his affairs, he will be following the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). His beliefs will be whatever is proven in the Quran and sunnah. His deeds and actions will be what Allah and His Messenger legislated. His character and manners will be in imitation of His prophet, in his guidance, behavior and all of his affairs.¹

This aspect of *tauheed* comprises both the actions of the heart as well as the deeds of the physical body. There are two aspects in particular that must be combined in the worship of Allah. Al-Saadi stated,

The spirit and actuality of worship is by the realization of love and submission to Allah. Complete love and full submission to Allah is the reality of worship. If the act of worship is missing both or one of those components, it is not truly an act of worship. For the reality of worship is found in submission and yielding to Allah. And that will only occur if there is complete and full love [for Allah] which dominates all other expressions of love.²

Jaafar Shaikh Idris has aptly described the process that should come about through the correct belief in Allah and how that should lead to the acts of the heart which are essential aspects of *tauheed*. Idris wrote,

When faith enters a person's heart, it causes therein certain mental states, which result in certain apparent actions, both of which are the proof of true faith. Foremost among those mental states is the feeling of gratitude towards God, which could be said to be the essence of *ibada* (worshipping or serving God).

¹ Abdul Rahman Al-Saadi, *Al-Fataawa al-Saadiyah* (Riyadh: Manshooraat al-Muassasat al-Saeediyah, n.d), pp. 10-11. The definition al-Saadi gave highlights the fact that *tauheed al-uloohiyah* is composed of *tauheed al-ikhlaas* (where one acts solely and purely for Allah's pleasure), *tauheed al-sidq* (where one acts sincerely and honestly according to this belief) and *tauheed al-tareeq* (where the path that one follows is one, that established by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)). For more on these concepts, see Muhammad al-Hammad, *Tauheed al-Uloohiyah* (Daar ibn Khuzaima, 1414 A.H.), pp. 22-24.

² Quoted in al-Hammad, p. 26.

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This feeling of gratitude is so important that a nonbeliever is called *kafir* which means, "one who denies a truth" and also "one who is ungrateful". One can understand why this is so when one reads in the Quran that the main motive for denying the existence of God is that of unjustified pride. Such a proud person feels that it does not become him to be created or governed by a being whom he must thus acknowledge to be greater than himself and to whom he must be grateful. "Those who dispute concerning the signs of God without any authority come to them, in their hearts is only pride that they shall never attain" (*Ghafir* 56).

With the feeling of gratitude goes that of love: "There are some people who take to themselves [for worship] others apart from God loving them as they should love God; But those who believe love God more ardently than they love anything else" (*al-Baqara* 165).

A believer loves and is grateful to God for His bounties, but being aware of the fact that his good deeds, whether mental or physical, are far from being commensurate with Divine favors, he is always anxious lest because of his sins God should withhold from him some of these favors or punish him in the Hereafter. He therefore fears Him, surrenders himself to Him, and serves Him with great humility.¹

There is thus no real worship unless the heart is filled with the feeling of love and glorification for Allah. Along with this flows the other necessity components of having hope in Allah and fear of Allah in the heart. Fear of Allah comes about when one truly glorifies and exalts Allah.² Hope in Allah flows from a complete and true love of Allah. All of these components must be present and in a proper balance. If they are not present at all or if they are not properly balanced, one's worship becomes distorted and incorrect.³

Allah says about some of His true and pious servants,

¹ Jaafar Sheikh Idris, *The Pillars of Faith* (Riyadh: Presidency of Islamic Research, Ifta and Propagation, 1984), pp. 9-10.

² Sometimes a person or object is feared but that fear is not combined with complete love. Hence, that fear in itself does not constitute a false form of worship.

³ There are numerous statements from early scholars stressing the proper balance of the different components of *imaan* in the heart. For example, it is said about fear and hope, "They are like two wings of a bird. The believer flies towards Allah by his two wings of hope and fear. If they are balanced, he flies properly. If one of them is missing, he has a shortcoming. If they are both missing, the bird is on the edge of death." (Quoted in al-Hammad, p. 41.)

أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا وَكَانُوا لَنَا
خَشِعِينَ

“Verily, they used to hasten to do good deeds. They used to call upon Us with hope and fear. They also would humble themselves before us” (*al-Anbiyaa* 90). In reference to the pious and devoted servants Jesus, Uzair and the angels, Allah has said,

وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ

“They hope for His mercy and fear His torment” (*al-Israa* 57).¹

This category of *tauheed* is the key to a “real life”, a life that is sound and proper. Ibn Taimiya wrote,

You must know that a human’s² need for Allah— that he worship Him and not associate any partner with Him— is a need concerning which there is no comparison that one can make an analogy to. In some matters, it resembles the need of the body for food and drink. However, there are many differences between the two.

The reality of a human being is in his heart and soul. These cannot be prosperous except through [their relation] with Allah, concerning whom there is no other god. There is[, for example,] no tranquillity in this world except in His remembrance. Verily, man is heading toward his Lord and he shall meet Him. He must definitely meet Him. There is no true goodness for him except in meeting Him.³ If the human experiences any pleasure or happiness other than in Allah, that joy and happiness will not endure. It will move from one nature to another or from one person to another. The person will enjoy it at one time or only some of the time. In fact, sometimes the thing he enjoys and gets pleasure from does not bring him pleasure or enjoyment. Sometimes it even hurts him when it comes to him. And he is even more harmed by that. But his God is definitely always with him under every circumstance and at all times. Wherever he is, He is with him [by His knowledge and aid]...

If someone worships anything other than Allah— even if he loves it and attains some love in this world and some form of

¹ Cf., al-Hammad, pp. 34-41.

² The word ibn Taimiya used was *abd* (servant or slave); however, its inference is every human being.

³ This is because the soul, by its ingrained nature, yearns for its meeting with its Creator.

pleasure from that— [that false worship] will destroy the person in a way greater than the harmful displeasure that comes to a person who ate poison...

You must know that if anyone loves something other than for the sake of Allah, then that beloved thing will definitely be a cause of harm and punishment... If somebody loves something other than for the sake of Allah, that thing will harm him whether it is with him or he is without it...¹

In order for any deed to be accepted by Allah, it must be done in accordance with this aspect of *tauheed*. In other words, if a person is fulfilling and understanding this form of *tauheed* properly, this, by necessity, implies that he is accepting and applying the other forms of *tauheed*. Therefore, his deeds may then be accepted by Allah.² Allah says,

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ
أَحَدًا

“So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and not associate anyone [with Allah] in the worship of his Lord” (*al-Kahf* 110).

One of the acts that must be done solely towards Allah is prayer or supplication. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said,

الدُّعَاءُ هُوَ الْعِبَادَةُ

“Supplication is the [essence of] worship.”³ When a person prays or supplicates to another, he is showing his trust and reliance in that other. He is demonstrating his need for the one he is praying to. He is demonstrating his trust in that person or being’s ability to know, understand and fulfill his need. This kind of feeling in the heart that is reflected in supplication must be directed towards Allah only. That is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) called supplication the essence of worship. Hence, anyone who prays or supplicates to anyone other than Allah is associating partners with Allah or, in other words, committing *shirk*. This is the antithesis of *Imaan* and *tauheed*.

This type of *tauheed* is actually a necessary consequence or result of the correct belief in *tauheed al-ruboobiyah*. If one realizes that there is no *rabb*

¹ Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 1, pp. 24-29.

² Cf., al-Hammad, *Tauheed al-Uloohiyah*, p. 18.

³ Recorded by Abu Dawood, al-Nasaai, al-Tirmidhi and others. Graded *sahih* by al-Albaani. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami al-Sagheer*, vol. 1, p. 641. An excellent discussion of the relationship between supplications and *tauheed* may be found in Jailaan al-Uroosi, *Al-Duaa wa Manzalatuhu min al-Aqedah al-Islaamiyah* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Rushd, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 237-307.

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(Lord) except Allah, then one will realize that none is worthy or deserving of worship except Allah. If none other than Allah is worthy of worship, then why would anyone worship somebody or something other than Allah?

On this aspect of *tauheed*, ibn Abu al-Izz al-Hanafi wrote,

The Quran abounds with statements and parables concerning this type of *tawhid*. It first affirms the *tawhid al-ruboobiyah*, that there is no Creator other than Allah. This conviction necessitates that no one should be worshipped except Allah. It takes the first proposition [that Allah is lord] as evidence for the second proposition [that Allah is the only one worthy of worship]. The Arabs believed in the first proposition and disputed the second. Allah then made it clear to them: Since you know that there is no Creator except Allah, and that He is the One who can give a person what benefits him or keep away from him what harms him, and He has no partner in those acts, then how can you worship others besides Him and associate partners with Him in His Godhead? For example, Allah says in the Quran, “Say: Praise be to Allah and peace on His servants whom He has chosen [for His message]. Who is better: God or the false gods they associate with Him? Or who has created the heavens and the earth, and who sends you down rain from the sky with which He brings forth beautiful gardens? It is not in your power to cause the growth of the trees in them. Can there be another god besides Allah? Yet they are a people who assign equals [to Him]” (*al-Naml* 59-60). At the end of other similar verses, Allah states, “Can there be another god besides Allah?” (*al-Anbiyaa* 61, 63 and 64). This is a question with a clearly implied negative answer. They accepted the notion that no one but Allah does such things. Allah used that as a proof against them. It does not mean to ask if there is another god besides Allah, as some have claimed. Such a meaning is inconsistent with the context of the verses and the fact that the people actually used to take other gods alongside Allah. As Allah says, “Can you possibly bear witness that besides Allah there is another god? Say: I witness it not” (*al-Anaam* 19). And they used to say [about the Prophet], “Does he make all the gods one? That it is truly a strange thing” (*Saad* 5). But they would never say that there was another god [with Allah] that would “make the earth a fixed abode, place rivers in its fold, and place firm hills therein” (*al-Nahl* 61). They accepted the fact that only Allah did all of those things. Therefore Allah says, “O people, adore your Guardian-Lord who created you and those who went before you that you may learn to be righteous” (*al-Baqara* 21) and “Say: Think, if Allah took away your hearing and your sight and sealed up your hearts, who, a

god other than Allah, could restore them to you” (*al-Anaam* 46). And there are other similar verses.¹

(3) *Tauheed al-Asmaa wa al-Sifaat*: The third aspect of *tauheed*, in this way of viewing *tauheed*, is recognizing and affirming the Oneness of Allah with respect to His names and attributes. One must affirm that these attributes are perfect and complete in Allah alone. These attributes are unique to Allah. No one else can attain any of these attributes.

Throughout the history of Islam, this is another aspect of *tauheed* concerning which many sects deviated. Shuaib al-Arnaoot describes the different views that developed in the following passage,

There is no doubt that the topic of Allah’s attributes must be considered as one of the greatest and most important topics of the foundations of faith. The views of the Islamicists have differed on this issue. Some of them followed the approach of complete denial of the attributes. Others accepted Allah’s names in general but denied the attributes. Some of them accepted both the names and attributes but, at the same time, rejected or gave interpretations for some of them, turning away from their apparent meanings [of the texts found in the Quran and sunnah]. Some of them took the approach that it is obligatory to believe in all of the names and attributes that are mentioned in the Book of Allah and the authentic sunnah. They took them and passed them on according to their plain, apparent meaning. They deny any understanding of their modality (*kai fiyah*) and deny any kind of similarity [of those attributes to any other than Allah]. The people of this last opinion are those who are called the *salaf* [pious predecessors] and *ahl al-sunnah*.²

Al-Arnaoot wrote that passage in the introduction to Zain al-Din al-Maqdisi’s *Aqaweel al-Thiqaat fi Taweel al-Asma wa al-Sifaat wa al-Ayaat al-Muhkimaat wa al-Mushtabihaat*. This book quotes the earliest scholars to prove that the view of the attributes of Allah which is known as the *salafi* view is the correct view according to the Quran and sunnah. Unfortunately, there developed the idea that the view of the later scholars was the “wiser” or

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 1, pp. 37-38.

² Shuaib al-Arnaoot, introduction to Zain al-Din al-Maqdisi, *Aqaweel al-Thiqaat fi Taweel al-Asma wa al-Sifaat wa al-Ayaat al-Muhkimaat wa al-Mushtabihaat* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1985), p. 6. One of the earliest examples of a person asking about these attributes and seeking an explanation for them comes from the time of Malik. A man came to him and said, “O Abu Abdullah [Imam Malik], [about the verse,] ‘Allah rose over the Throne,’ how is this rising?” Malik’s reply was, “The modality of His act is not known. But His rising over the Throne is not unknown. Belief in it is obligatory. Asking about it is an innovation. And I suspect that you are a heretic.” This narration from Malik, with various wordings, can be found in numerous works. For a discussion of its chains and meanings, see Baadi, vol. 1, pp. 226-231.

“stronger” approach. Those “later scholars” did not believe in these attributes at what could be called “face value” and instead reinterpreted them and gave them new meanings. In his introduction to al-Maqdisi’s work, again, Arnaut states, referring to this belief,

I am certain that the one who reads this book [al-Maqdisi’s book] attentively and sincerely will have his heart and mind filled with the conviction of the correctness of the approach of the *salaf* concerning the attributes of Allah. It is the best, strongest and most guided approach. He [the reader] will reject, with pleasure and conviction, what has been written in the books of the later scholars that the approach of the *salaf* is safer but the approach of the later scholars is wiser and more intelligent. [The reader] will clearly state that the view [of the later scholars] is incorrect and goes against the guidance of the sunnah and the Book. The correct statement based on the Prophetic sunnah and Book of Allah is that the way of the *salaf* is more intelligent, wisest and safest.¹

The correct belief concerning this topic that has been passed on from the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions was aptly summarized by al-Saadi when he wrote,

As for belief in Allah, it includes: belief in whatever attributes Allah has described Himself with in His book and whatever attributes His Messenger (peace be upon him) has attributed to Him. [The belief in those attributes are] without any distortion or negation, and without stating how or what manner the attributes are. In fact, the belief is that there is nothing similar to Allah and, at the same time, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. Therefore, what He has attributed to Himself is not denied nor are such descriptions distorted from their proper meanings. In addition, the names of Allah are neither denied, nor is their manner described, nor are they depicted in a way that makes His attributes similar to the attributes of any of His creation. This is because there is no one and nothing similar or comparable to Him. He has no associate or partner. One cannot make an analogy between Him and His creation, glorified and most High be He.

With respect to belief in what Allah has been attributed with of attributes and names, there must be a combination of affirmation and negation. The *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah* do not allow any straying from what the Messengers preached, as that is the Straight Path. Included in this very important principle are all the statements from the Quran and the Sunnah

¹ Al-Arnaut, introduction to al-Maqdisi, p. 8.

detailing Allah's names, attributes, actions and what should be negated of Him. Included among this is the belief in Allah's settling Himself over the Throne¹, His descending to the lowest heaven, the believers seeing Him in the Hereafter— as the confirmed, continuous reports have stated. Also included under this principle is that Allah is close and responds to the supplications. What is mentioned in the Quran and sunnah concerning His closeness and “being with” the believers does not contradict what is stated concerning His transcendence and His being above the Creation. For, Glory be to Him, there is nothing at all similar to Him with respect to any of His characteristics.²

In one verse, Allah has pointed out that both nothing is similar to Him whatsoever and, at the same time, He has attributes, such as hearing and seeing. Allah has stated,

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

“There is nothing similar to Him and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing” (*al-Shoora* 11). Hence, there is a complete denial of anthropomorphism while affirming Allah's attributes of hearing and seeing.³

This aspect of *tauheed* is very important and should not be underestimated. Muhammad Qutb highlighted the importance of understanding this branch of *tauheed* when he wrote,

You will not be able to fulfill the true form of worship and servitude nor attain the proper direction [in your worship] if you do not know the one who you are worshipping and directing your worship toward—that is, if you do not know the attributes that He has. [You will not be able to fulfill the true worship] until your worship is based on recognition and

¹ As al-Baihaqi pointed out, this belief, which is clearly and plainly indicated in the Quran and sunnah refutes the Jahmite view that Allah is everywhere and in everything. See Abu Bakr al-Baihaqi, *al-Itiqaad ala Madhhab al-Salaf Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Arabi, 1984), p. 55.

² Quoted from Abdullah al-Jaarullah, *Bahjah al-Naadhireen fima Yuslih al-Dunya wa al-Deen* (1984), pp. 7-8.

³ Ibn Taimiya (as well as his student ibn al-Qayyim) was a staunch opponent of anthropomorphism. His writings clearly state that Allah's attributes are unique to Him and are not the same as the attributes of humans. However, some people have actually accused him of anthropomorphism. These accusations are based on blatantly false reports concerning ibn Taimiya, extreme ignorance or a biased hatred for this scholar who opposed many heresies. [For more on this point and a refutation of such accusations, see Salaah Ahmad, *Dawah Shaikh al-Islam ibn Taimiya wa Atharuhaa ala al-Harakaat al-Islamiyah al-Muasirah* (Kuwait: Daar ibn al-Atheer, 1996), vol. 2, pp. 375-388.] Ibn al-Qayyim, in a work known as *al-Nooniyyah*, demonstrates that the reason they are called anthropomorphists is because they believe in the Quran and sunnah and do not make up fanciful interpretations for Allah's attributes like the other groups do. [See Muhammad Haraas, *Sharh al-Qaseedah al-Nooniyyah* (Cairo: Maktabah ibn Taimiya, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 373-375.]

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

knowledge. And Allah has described Himself in His noble book with attributes that He wants us to know and attribute Him with [so that our worship of Him can be proper and as complete as we can make it].¹

Ahmad Salaam points out that the people before the coming of the Prophet (peace be upon him) accepted the idea of Allah alone being the only Creator of the Universe. However, they associated partners with Allah in different forms of worship. Therefore, Islam came to purify this concept of Allah being the Lord or *Rabb* and gave it its proper understanding. By doing so, then they would worship Allah alone properly. But the way to achieve that, or the beginning point, is to have the knowledge and correct understanding of Allah's names and attributes. If one has knowledge of and a correct understanding of Allah's names and attributes, then one would never turn to anyone else or direct any form of worship to anyone other than Allah. Hence, a correct and detailed understanding of Allah's names and attributes is truly the foundation for the correct fulfillment of the other types of *tauheed*.² He further states that *tauheed al-ruboobiyah* is like a tree. Its root, then, is *tauheed al-asmaa wa al-sifaat*. In other words, *tauheed al-ruboobiyah* stands on a foundation, which is *tauheed al-asmaa wa al-sifaat*. If that root or foundation is not found, the tree itself may be diseased and weak.³

However, given that parable, the real fruit of *tauheed al-asma wa al-sifaat*, once again, is *tauheed al-uloohiyah*. The more that one knows about Allah and His attributes, the more one will love Allah, fear Allah and have hope in Allah. Definitely, the more one knows about Allah, the more one will love Allah and desire to please Allah and have Allah pleased with him. Hence, the correct understanding of the names and attributes of Allah is very important and very beneficial. Those people who stray on this issue have harmed themselves greatly and lost a great fortune.

The Division of *Tauheed* Into Two Categories

The division of *tauheed* into three categories is a very common presentation of the concept of *tauheed*. Another important presentation of it is to divide it into two categories.⁴ It is important to note at the outset that the two ways are simply two presentations of exactly the same concepts and ideas. In essence, there is no difference between them. However, one approach may be

¹ Muhammad Qutb, *Raka'at al-Imaan* (Riyadh: Daar Ishbeeliyah, 1997), p. 105.

² Ahmad Salaam, *Muqaddimah fi Fiqh Usool al-Dawah* (Beirut: Daar ibn Hazm, 1990), p. 97.

³ Salaam, p. 100.

⁴ This is the approach found in Haafidh ibn Ahmad Haakimi, *Maaraj al-Qabool* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiya, 1983), vol. 1, *passim*; Abdul Majeed al-Shaadhi, *Had al-Islam wa Haqiqat al-Imaan* (Makkah: Umm al-Qura University, 1983), *passim*; Shams al-Din ibn al-Qayyim, *Madaaraj al-Salikeen* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitaab al-Arabi, n.d.), vol. 3, pp. 445-451. The further subdivisions that will be discussed are mostly from al-Shaadhi.

easier for some to understand and grasp than the other— and the correct understanding is the goal of both presentations.

A second way to view *tauheed* is to divide it into two categories. These two categories may, in essence, be referred to as “*tauheed* in theory” and “*tauheed* in practice”.¹ One’s beliefs about Allah must be correct. That is, at the theoretical or rational level, one must know what to believe about Allah. These aspects are clearly presented and explained in the Quran and sunnah. However, *tauheed* is not simply a theoretical matter, a matter of “dry” belief or academic discussion. It is something that is supposed to be put into practice in the life of a Muslim. Hence, *tauheed* goes beyond the simple matter of, “What do I believe about Allah,” to the question, “What are the ramifications that this belief must have on my life and actions?” This is the other essential half of *tauheed*: how one relates to Allah and implements that belief in Allah.

Ibn Abu al-Izz mentioned this conceptualization of *tauheed* when he stated,

The *tauheed* which the prophets preached and the heavenly books taught are of two kinds: *tauheed* in knowledge and recognition and *tauheed* in will and intention. The first is to affirm that God is unique in His essence, attributes, name and acts; that there is nothing like Him in any respect; and that He is as He has said about Himself or as His Prophet (peace be on him) has said about Him. The Quran has expounded this type of *tawhid* in the clearest fashion, as may be found in the beginning of *surah al-Hadid* (chapter 57), *Taha* (chapter 20), end of *al-Hashr* (chapter 59), beginning of *Alif Lam Mim Tanzeel* (chapter 32), beginning of *ali ‘Imran* (chapter 3), all of *al-Ikhlaas* (chapter 112) and so on.

The second type of *tauheed*, *tauheed* in actions and intention, is described in *al-Kafirun* (chapter 109), in the verse, “Say: O People of the Book, let us agree to a statement that is fair and just between you and us...” (3:64), in the first and last parts of *Tanzil al-Kitab* (chapter 39), in the beginning, middle and end of *Yunus* (chapter 10), in the beginning and ending of *al-Araaf* (chapter 7) and the whole of *al-Anaam* (chapter 6).²

Figure 2.3 is a graphical representation of this conceptualization of *tauheed*. The two basic or general categories are quite basic and simple to understand. To understand them fully, they have been divided into separate subsections. In this way of discussing *tauheed*, specific emphasis is given to some issues that are grouped together under the three categories of *tauheed* mentioned earlier.

¹ These are the author’s terminology but they fairly reflect what is meant by the concepts.

² ibn Abu-l-Izz, vol. 1, p. 42. Again, virtually the same words may be found in ibn al-Qayyim, *Madaarij*, vol. 3, p. 449.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

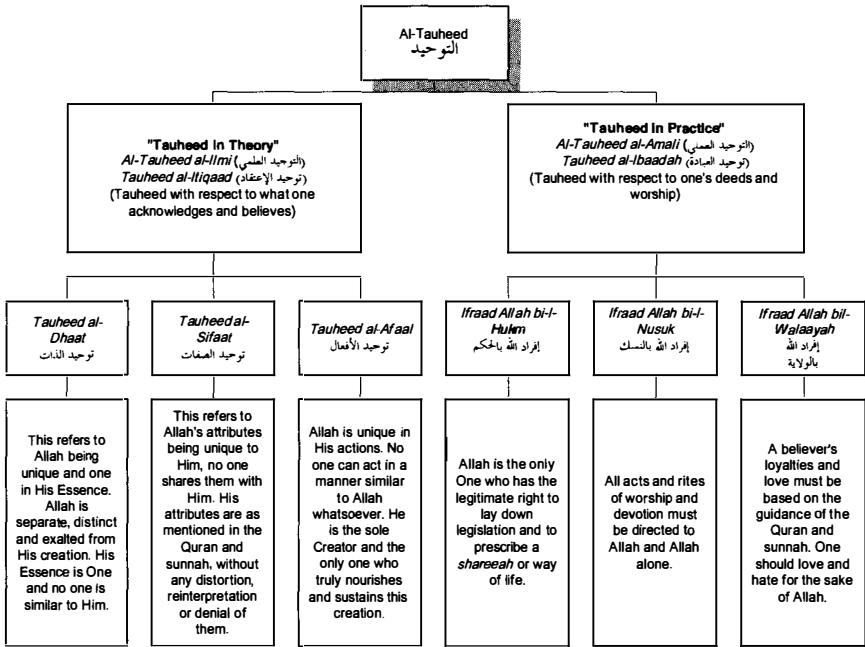


Figure 2.3 Graphical Representation of the Division of *Tauheed* into Two Categories

(1) **“Tauheed in Theory”**: This category of *tauheed* is actually known by many names, including *al-tauheed al-'ilmi al-khabari al-'itiqaadi* (*tauheed* with respect to what one knows and believes to be true), *tauheed al-'itiqaad* (*tauheed* with respect to what one believes) and *tauheed al-marafah wa al-ithbaat* (*tauheed* with respect to what one recognizes and affirms of Allah). This category of *tauheed* can also be divided into three subcategories: *tauheed al-dhaat* (the Oneness of Allah with respect to His being and essence, that He is separate and distinct from His creation); *tauheed al-sifaat* (the Oneness of Allah with respect to His attributes, which are unique unto Him alone); *tauheed al-afaal* (the Oneness of Allah with respect to His actions, being the sole Creator of the Universe and the One who nourishes it). These are shown and defined in Figure 2.2.

In essence, the topics covered under this branch of *tauheed* are the same as those discussed under *tauheed al-ruboobiyah* and *tauheed al-asma wa al-sifaat*.

(2) **“Tauheed in Practice”**: This branch of *tauheed* is also known by other names, including *tauheed al-talab wa al-qasd* (*tauheed* with respect to one's goal and purpose; that is, one's goal and purpose is to worship Allah

alone), *tauheed al-'ibaadah* (*tauheed* with respect to one's *ibaadah* or acts of worship; that is, one worships Allah and Allah alone) and *al-tauheed al-'amali* (*tauheed* with respect to one's deeds; that is, one only performs the deeds that are pleasing and acceptable to Allah).

This branch of *tauheed* is often divided into three subcategories. Each of these subcategories form an essential and necessary aspect of implementing *tauheed* in one's life. These three can be characterized in the following statements: (a) *Ifraad Allah bi-l-Nusuk* (making Allah the only object of one's ritual acts of worship); (b) *Ifraad Allah bi-l-Hukm* (submitting oneself only to the commands and revelation coming from Allah); and (c) *Ifraad Allah bi-l-Walaayah* (submitting one's loyalties and love to the commands and guidance of the revelation of Allah). Each of these three shall be discussed separately.

(a) *Ifraad Allah bi-l-Nusuk* (making Allah the only object of one's ritual acts of worship): Every rite of worship must be done solely for the sake of Allah, according to His commands and seeking His pleasure. Allah says in the Quran,

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ

“Say: Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, who has no partner for Him” (*al-Anaam* 162-163). Another verse states,

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ ۚ لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا
لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ

“And from among His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate to Allah Who created them, if you (really) worship Him” (*Fussilat* 37). Indeed, this is the essence of the verse that every Muslim recites in every one of his prayers:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“You only do we worship and in You only do we seek help” (*al-Faatiha* 5).

As was alluded to earlier, any rite of worship, be it prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, sacrificing an animal, vowing and so forth, must be done only for the sake of Allah. Similarly, all supplications and prayers must be directed toward Allah. If someone does any of these acts for someone other than Allah, even if he theoretically upholds the oneness of Allah, he is negating his *tauheed* by, in practice, not fulfilling what he believes theoretically.

This category also covers the acts of worship of the heart, which were mentioned earlier. These include putting one's trust only in Allah, having fear and devotion only for Allah and so forth.

(b) *Ifraad Allah bi-l-Hukm* (submitting oneself only to the commands and revelation coming from Allah): In order for one's *tauheed* to be correct, one must reject and deny any form of *taaghoot*, false god or false object of worship and submission. Allah says in the Quran,

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنْ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَأَجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

“And verily, We have sent among every nation a Messenger proclaiming, ‘Worship Allah [alone] and avoid all false deities (*al-taaghoot*)’” (*al-Nahl* 36). Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab has divided *taghoots* into five categories:

- (1) The devil who is calling to the worship of anything other than Allah.
- (2) The tyrannical ruler who has changed the laws of Allah.
- (3) The one who rules in accordance with something other than what Allah has revealed.
- (4) The one who claims knowledge of the Unseen.
- (5) The one who is worshipped instead of Allah while he himself is pleased with such worship.¹

Allah has made it clear that judging and ruling in accord with what He has revealed is an essential obligation upon the believers. In fact, it is one of the main purposes for which the Book was revealed. Allah has said,

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ

“Mankind was one community and Allah sent prophets with glad tidings and warnings, and with them He sent the Scripture in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed” (*al-Baqara* 213). Another verse states,

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَبَكَ اللَّهُ

“Surely, We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book in truth that you might judge between men by that which Allah has shown you” (*al-Nisaa* 105). Judging by the Book of Allah is a characteristic of the believers while judging by anything else— any form of false god or lawgiver— is a characteristic of pure hypocrites and disbelievers. Allah has said,

¹ Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhaab, *Mualafaat al-Shaikh al-Imam Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhaab* (Maktaba ibn Taimiya, n.d.), vol. 1 pp. 376-378. The same passage may be found in Saalih ibn Muhammad al-Sa'uwi, *Majmuat al-Manaahil al-'Idhaab feema ala al-Abd li-Rabb al-Arbaab* (no city or publisher given, 1414 A.H.), vol. 1, pp. 24-25.

وَيَقُولُونَ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالرَّسُولِ وَأَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ
 وَمَا أَوْلَتْكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَإِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِذَا
 فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ يَأْتُوا إِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ أَفِي
 قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ أَمْ ارْتَابُوا أَمْ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَخِيفَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَسُولُهُ بَلْ
 أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ
 وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
 الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“They [the hypocrites] say, ‘We have believed in Allah and in the Messenger and we obey,’ then a party of them turn away thereafter, such are not believers. When they are called to Allah and His Messenger to judge between them, lo, a party of them refuse [to come] and turn away. But if the right is with them, they come to him willingly with submission. Is there a disease in their hearts? Or do they doubt or fear lest Allah and His Messenger should wrong them in judgment? Nay, it is they themselves who are the wrongdoers. The only saying of the faithful believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say, ‘We hear and we obey.’ And those are the successful” (*al-Noor* 47-51).

Ruling in accord with what Allah has revealed is the same as singling out Allah for obedience. One owes his complete and total obedience only to Allah. This obedience is, in essence, a form of worship. Allah has said,

إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ

“The dominion [of rule and judgment] is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him, that is the [true] straight religion” (*Yoosuf* 40). Another verse states,

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهَبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ
 مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمُّرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا
 يُشْرِكُونَ

“They [the Jews and Christians] took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah and [they also took] Messiah, son of Mary [as Lord], but

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

they were commanded to worship none but One God. There is no God but He. Praise and glory be to Him, from having the partners they associate [with Him]” (*al-Tauba* 31). The manner in which they took their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allah is that they would allow them to decree for them what was permissible and what was forbidden instead of relying only on what Allah had revealed for such laws.

Ibn Taimiya once wrote,

Islam requires complete submission to Allah alone. Whoever submits to Him and someone else has associated a partner with Allah (*shirk*). Whoever does not submit to Him has haughtily refused to worship Him. The one who commits *shirk* as well as the one who haughtily refuses to worship Him is a disbeliever. Submission to Him alone encompasses worshipping Him alone and obeying Him alone.¹

In his commentary on the Quran, al-Shanqeeti wrote, “Associating partners with Allah with respect to His rule and associating partners with Him in worship are one and the same thing. There is no difference between them whatsoever. Whoever follows a system or way of life other than Allah’s or a legal system other than Allah’s... is like one who worships an idol or prostrates to a false god. There is no difference between the two of them in any respect whatsoever. They are one and the same thing. They are both associating partners with Allah.”²

Al-Abdul-Lateef demonstrates that refusal to rule according to what Allah revealed violates every aspect of *tauheed*.³ As was just mentioned, *tauheed al-ibaada* implies that Allah alone is obeyed and has absolute authority in one’s life. If one follows or obeys anything else, despite what Allah has revealed, he is giving a share of his servitude to that other source of law rather than to Allah alone.

Refusing to submit to and implement Allah’s *shareeah* also violates *tauheed al-ruboobiyah*. *Tauheed al-ruboobiyah* implies that Allah is the Complete Owner and Master of the Universe. He is in charge and has the right to control and direct everything in the Universe. Everything in this Universe either must or should take place according to His Command and Decree.⁴ This is why Allah has used the word *arbab* (plural of *rabb* or Lord) in the verse just quoted,

¹ Ibn Taimiya, *Majmoo*, vol. 3, p. 91.

² Quoted in Abdul Rahmaan al-Sudais, *al-Haakimiyah fi Tafseer Adhwa al-Bayaan* (Riyadh: Daar Taiba, 1412 A.H.) p. 53.

³ Abdul Azeez al-Abdul-Lateef, *Nawaaqidh al-Imaan al-Qauliyah wa al-Amaliyah* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1414 A.H.), pp. 296.

⁴ Natural phenomena must and does act according to Allah’s law. However, if Allah has given man “free choice” concerning a matter, then man should act in accordance with what Allah has commanded.

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهَبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“They [the Jews and Christians] took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah and [they also took] Messiah, son of Mary [as Lord], while they were commanded to worship none but One God. There is no God but He. Praise and glory be to Him, from having the partners they associate [with Him]” (*al-Tauba* 31).

Furthermore, *al-Hakm* (*al-Hakam*, “the Judge and the Decider”¹) is considered one of the names of Allah. Belief in this name of Allah requires that one take all matters to Allah’s revelation and ruling. As Allah says,

وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا

“And He shares not His Rule and Legislation with anyone” (*al-Kahf* 26).

Al-Abdul-Lateef also talks about another aspect of *tauheed*, which is called *tauheed al-itibaa’* (*tauheed* concerning following). This aspect of *tauheed* means that the only one who is to be followed and completely obeyed is the one whom Allah sent for that purpose, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Hence, not following his way and, instead, choosing to follow another’s way or law violates this aspect of *tauheed*.² Muhammad ibn Ibrahim wrote, “Anyone who rules in accord with something other than what the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) brought is ruling by a *taaghoot* (false god) and taking it as the decider of his affairs.”³

¹ Allah is the One who judges between His servants with justice, fairness and equity. He wrongs no soul even the slightest amount. Similarly, His decrees and laws are the most just. For a complete discussion of the meaning of this name, see Muhammad al-Hamood, *Al-Nahaj al-Asma fi Sharh Asma Allah al-Husna* (Kuwait: Maktaba al-Imaam al-Dhahabi, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 225-240.

² Cf., Al-Abdul-Lateef, pp. 296-302.

³ Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Ali-Shaikh, *Tahkeem al-Qawaaneen* (no city or publisher given, 1411 A.H.), p. 9. This brings up another very important point. What about the rulers who do not apply the guidance of Allah in their lands? Are they all considered unbelievers because of this act? Many people, on both sides of this question, have made mistakes concerning this point. Allah says in the Quran, “Whoever does not rule by what Allah has revealed are unbelievers” (*al-Maaidah* 44). Ibn Abbas, in interpreting this verse, was asked about the rulers of his time who did not always apply the Islamic law to everything. He answered that what they are doing does fall under this verse but it is a *kufir* that is less than the great *kufir*. That is, it does not mean that they are no longer to be considered Muslims. Actually, there are different types of rulers— some of them are clearly unbelievers while others cannot be considered such. If a ruler openly performs the practices of Islam and he believes that it is obligatory upon him to apply the *shareeah* yet he does not do so completely for some reason, then this is what Ibn Abbas was describing when he said, “*Kufir* that is less than *kufir*.” Such a ruler is not to be considered a non-Muslim although he may be considered a *faasiq* or evildoer. In fact, that ruler is very much similar to a person who

(c) *Ifraad Allah bi-l-Walaayah* (submitting one's loyalties and love to the commands and guidance of the revelation of Allah): Having loyalty for the sake of Allah and basing one's love and hatred on guidance from Allah is an essential condition for one's faith to be sound and correct.¹ Allah says in the Quran,

تَرَى كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَبِئْسَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لَهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ
 أَنْ سَخِطَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَفِي الْعَذَابِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَلَوْ كَانُوا يُؤْمِنُونَ
 بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ مَا اتَّخَذُوا لَهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَلَكِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ
 فَاسِقُونَ

“You see many of them taking the disbelievers as their *auliyaa* [friends and protectors]. Evil indeed is that which their own selves have sent forward before them. For that reason, Allah's wrath fell upon them and in torment they will abide. And had they believed in Allah and in the Prophet and in what was revealed to him, they would not have taken them [the disbelievers] as *auliyaa*, but many of them are disobedient to Allah” (*al-Maaidah* 80-81). According to ibn Taimiya, the last statement, “and had they believed,” is a conditional statement implying that those who do such an act do not have any faith whatsoever.²

Allah also says,

knows that he must obey Allah yet due to some reason, for example, desire or lust, he commits an act of disobedience towards Allah. Such a person, due to that sin alone, does not become a disbeliever. Other rulers openly deny Islam and say that they prefer some other form of government and economy, like socialism or capitalism. This verse also applies to them as these people prefer some other guidance to the guidance of Allah. This is clearly the greater *kufr* without any doubt or dispute about it. There are other rulers who do not deny Islam openly yet they do not believe that it is obligatory upon them to enforce the *shareeah* or they may oppose or refuse to apply the *shareeah* because they do not believe in its implementation. This is also a type of *kufr*, the greater kind, and the person becomes a non-Muslim even if he prays and fasts and performs some of the other rites of Islam. Finally, there are those who claim that they want Islam while in reality they do not want to apply the *shareeah* and they may even have a hatred in their heart for Islam. This person is clearly a hypocrite and hypocrisy is a type of *kufr*. An excellent discussion of this topic may be found in Abdul Azeez Kaamil, *al-Hukum wa al-Tahaakum fi Khitaab al-Wahi* (Riyadh: Daar Taiba, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 253-264.

¹ It is extremely important to note that, like ruling not in accord with what Allah has revealed, there are different levels of not making loyalty for the sake of Allah. Such loyalty for what is displeasing to Allah may reach the level that the person falls out of the fold of Islam. (This is what some scholars refer to as *al-tawali*.) However, at other times, the act may be a sinful act but does not take the person out of the fold of Islam.

² Ibn Taimiya, *Kitaab al-Imaan*, p. 14.

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ
 الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ
 حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا
 دِينَكُمْ هُزُؤًا وَلَعِبًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكَفَّارَ أَوْلِيَاءَ
 وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Verily, your Protector and Helper is Allah, His Messenger, and the believers— those who establish the prayer, and give zakat, and they bow down [in submission]. And whosoever takes Allah, His Messenger and those who believe as Protectors, then the party of Allah will be the victorious. O you who believe! Take not for *auliya* [protectors and helpers] those who take your religion for a mockery and fun from among those who received the Scripture [Jews and Christians] before you, nor from among the disbelievers. And fear Allah if you indeed are true believers” (*al-Maaidah* 55-57).

In another verse, Allah states,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ
 أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
 الظَّالِمِينَ

“O believers! Take not the Jews and the Christians as friends and protectors. They are but friends and protectors to one another. And if any among you take them as *auliyaa* [loyal friends and protectors], then surely he is one of them. Certainly, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people” (*al-Maaidah* 51).

Concerning this topic as a whole, Hamad ibn Ateeq once wrote that there is nothing more stressed and there is nothing that has more evidence provided for it, after the obligation of *tauheed*, than the topic of opposing and not having loyalty for the disbelievers.¹

Every Muslim must realize that part of the essential meaning of the word *ilaah* (“God”) is the one who is adored, extolled and loved in the heart. A verse in the Quran states,

¹ Quoted in al-Abdul-Lateef, p. 359.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ إِنَّنِي بَرَاءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي فَإِنَّهُ سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً فِي عَقْبِهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

“And [remember] when Abraham said to his father and to his people, ‘Verily, I am innocent of what you worship, except Him Who did create me, and verily, He will guide me.’ And he made it a lasting word among his offspring, that they may turn back [to Allah]” (*al-Zukhruf* 26-28). Abdul Rahmaan ibn Hasan pointed out that in this verse, Ibrahim says, “I am innocent of what you worship,” this means that there is none worthy of worship, love and adoration— except, “Him Who did create me,” who is Allah. The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) was stating, in different words, the testimony of faith. Hence, part of the testimony of faith is that one completely frees himself and absolves himself from anything that is worshipped besides Allah.¹ Allah has obligated the believers to be free of and dissociate themselves from any form of polytheism or polytheist. The believer is ordered to oppose their falsehood and to have dislike for them in general.

The key behind this aspect is the proper and complete love for Allah and the pure and total worship of Allah. If a person truly and correctly loves Allah, Allah will be more beloved to him than anything else. In addition, he will love whatever Allah loves and despise whatever Allah despises. In particular, he will be disgusted and have complete contempt for anything that is an affront to his Beloved, Allah. Obviously, associating partners with Allah and the worship of others while only Allah is deserving of worship is the greatest insult to and disrespect of Allah. It is part of the testimony of faith that one opposes such deviations from Allah’s guidance. If the Muslim does not do so, then he does not have the correct understanding or implementation of his statement of faith, “There is none worthy of worship and adoration except Allah.”

Mahmaas al-Jalood wrote,

Those who give loyalty to the disbelievers and do not oppose them are not worshipping Allah in the proper way that He is to be worshipped. In worship, they are associating others with what is exclusively His. This is because if they were worshipping Allah properly, how could they openly show approval, love and support for the enemies of Allah and the enemies of His religion, of the disbelievers, polytheists and apostates. If a Muslim obeys the disbelievers, shows love and support for them in their disbelief, supports them with wealth,

¹ Ibn Hasan was quoted in Mahmaas al-Jalood, *al-Muwaalat wa al-Muaadaat fi al-Shariah al-Islamiya* (Al-Mansoorah: al-Yaqeen li-l-Nashr wa al-Tauzee’, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 132-133. A similar analysis of Quranic statements being restatements of the testimony of faith may be made for *al-Kahf* 16 and *ali-Imraan* 64.

weapons, manpower or advice and helps them in those matters, and cuts off his relationship with the Muslims or makes his ties with the disbelievers stronger than his ties with the Muslims, then he has violated the meaning of, "There is none worthy of worship except Allah," and apostatized from Islam. The ruling concerning him is that he has fallen into disbelief. Because, in such a case, he will be considered one of the polytheists, with respect to both legal ruling and in action. He did not fulfill the meaning of, "There is none worthy of worship except Allah," denying what it denies and affirming what it affirms, even if he says it tens of times. This is because the truthfulness of a statement is indicated by actions.¹

An Incorrect Conceptualization of *Tauheed*

The term *tauheed* is used quite often by many sects in Islam. Everyone claims to have *tauheed*. The only true *tauheed* is that which was taught by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to his Companions and which came down from them. In later years, philosophers and scholastic theologians developed their own concepts of *tauheed* which shared some aspects with the true *tauheed* but also strayed from it in many aspects.

Similarly, the Sufis developed their own concept and levels of *tauheed*. In reality, in many cases, what they claim to be *tauheed* is nothing but *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) and *kufr* (disbelief). Hence it is important to be aware of some of their misconceptions that they spread among Muslims. Concerning their views of *tauheed*, ibn Abu al-Izz wrote,

Now that it is established that *al-tawhid al-uloohiyah* is what the prophets preached and what the heavenly books taught, as has been pointed out, then one should not listen to the statement of those who divide *tawhid* into [the following] three types: This first type of *tawhid*, they say, is the *tawhid* of the commoners. The second type is the *tawhid* of the elect which, they say, is the *tawhid* that is realized in mystical experience. The third is the *tawhid* of the elect of the elect (*khaasat al-khaasah*). This *tawhid*, they believe, is affirmed by the Eternal Being Himself. No one should heed these statements for the people who were most perfect in *tawhid* are the prophets (peace be on them all)... No *tawhid* can be more complete than the *tawhid* which the messengers stated, preached and struggled for. That is why Allah commanded His Prophet (peace be on him) to follow in their footsteps. After describing Abraham's argument with his people in support of *tawhid* and his denunciation of *shirk*, and after mentioning other prophets

¹ al-Jalood, vol. 1, pp. 136-137.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

among his descendants, Allah says, “Those were the ones who received Allah’s guidance; follow then their way” (*al-Anaam* 90). No one can be more complete in *tawhid* than those whom the Prophet (peace be upon him) was told to follow...

The *millah* (way, religion) of Abraham is *tawhid*. The religion of Muhammad is every statement, action, and belief that He brought from Allah. The ‘statement of sincerity’ is the testimony that there is no god but Allah. The *fitrah* of Islam is the natural disposition man has been given to love and worship only Allah without ascribing any partner to Him and submitting to Him with complete servitude, humility and reverence.

This is the *tawhid* of the most elite or dear from among the chosen ones of Allah. Whoever turns away from it is the fool of all fools. Allah has Himself said, “Who turns away from the faith of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly? Him We chose and rendered pure in this world, and he will be in the Hereafter in the ranks of the righteous. Behold! His Lord said to him, ‘Submit to me,’ [and] he said, ‘I submit to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe’” (*al-Baqara* 130-131).

The second and third types of *tawhid*, which have been called the *tawhid* of the elect and of the elect of the elect, culminate in the passing away of the self (*fana*) which most Sufis strive for. It is a dangerous alley which leads to [the false concept of] union (*ittihad*). Read these lines which Shaykh al-Islam Abu Ismail al-Ansari al-Harwi, may Allah have mercy on him, composed,¹ “No one affirms the unity of the One, For whoever affirms His unity denies it. Whoever describes Him, His description of Unity is void and unacceptable to the One. The real affirmation of His unity is what the One Himself does, and whoever tries to describe Him is a heretic.”

Although the author of these lines did not mean to imply union (*ittihad*), he has used vague words which an exponent of union is likely to interpret on his lines and think that the author belongs to his way of thinking. If he had used the words which the *shariah* uses and which are clear and non-misleading, it would have been more proper. Had we been required to

¹For a review and criticism of Al-Ansari’s views expressed in these lines of poetry, see ibn Qayyim, *Madaarij al-Saalikeen*, vol. 3, p. 518. Ibn al-Qayyim makes the point that in various verses of the Quran, Allah has testified that His angels, His prophets and their followers who have knowledge affirm and expound His unity. It is not, therefore, correct for anyone to say that no one has truly affirmed God’s unity and that those who have so ventured have been guilty of heresy.

believe in what these lines suggest, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would have mentioned it, invited people to believe in it, and explained it at length. But there is no proof that he ever distinguished between a *tawhid* of a commoner, a *tawhid* of the elect and a *tawhid* of the elect of the elect. There is absolutely no allusion to it anywhere. In fact, there is nothing even close to it.

Here is the Book of Allah, the hadith of the Prophet (peace be on him), the traditions of the best people of all ages after the age of the Prophet and the works of the leading scholars. Is there any mention of *fana* in any of them? Has anyone of them talked about these stages of *tawhid*? In fact, this concept developed later when some people became excessive with respect to some parts of the religion, just as the Khawarij did earlier in Islam or the Christians did in their religion. Allah has condemned all excess in religion and has strictly prohibited them. Allah states, “O People of the Book! Commit not excesses in your religion; nor say aught of Allah except the truth” (*al-Nisa* 171). And also, “Say: O People of the Book! Exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by, who mislead many and strayed themselves from the even way” (*al-Maaidah* 77).¹

A very important point that ibn Abu al-Izz makes in that passage is that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was the most knowledgeable of Allah. The best worshipper of Allah was the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The best way to submit and serve Allah is the way of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The best and correct beliefs about Allah are those of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). If Muslims would truly reflect on this point and apply it properly, then all the innovations that have developed since the Prophet’s time could be removed.

“His angels”²

The second article of faith mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the narration of Umar was belief in the angels. Angels are a type of creation of Allah that is, in general, unseen by man. They have been created

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 1, pp. 53-56.

² Due to space limitations, the discussion of the remaining articles of faith will not be as lengthy as the discussion of the belief in Allah, which may be considered the most important and essential article of faith. In particular, sometimes the evidence for different statements will not be stated but may be found in the references cited. One interested in a complete, although short work, on the angels may consult Umar al-Ashqaar, *Aalam al-Malaaiikah al-Abraar* (Kuwait: Maktabah al-Falaah, n.d.), *passim*.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

from light but they do have forms and bodies. They are servants of Allah and have no aspect of divinity to them whatsoever. They submit to His command completely and never stray from fulfilling His orders. Qutb notes that the angels are at all times involved with what is true and correct. They never stray from what is correct even for one second, as humans and jinn do.¹

Salaam points out that if a person does not believe in angels, he then cannot believe in the coming of revelation to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is because it was an angel, Gabriel, that brought the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore, belief in the Quran cannot be confirmed unless one believes in the angels, as a class, and the Angel Gabriel, in particular, who brought that revelation to the Prophet (peace be upon him).²

According to ibn Uthaimen, proper belief in the angels comprises four matters:³ First, one must believe in their existence. Second, one must believe in them in general but also one must believe in their names that have been explicitly stated in either the Quran or authentic sunnah. For example, one of the angels is named *Jibreel* (Gabriel). He was the angel who brought the revelation to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Third, one must believe in their attributes as stated in the Quran or sunnah. For example, it is stated in a hadith that the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw the Angel Gabriel covering the horizon and he had six hundred wings. This shows that this species of creation is a truly great and marvelous creation of Allah. It is also demonstrated, such as in this hadith currently being discussed, that an angel can appear in different forms, such as in the form of a human. This also demonstrates Allah's great power and ability to do whatever He wills.

Fourth, one must believe in the actions that they perform as mentioned in the Quran or authentic hadith. It is stated in the Quran that they worship Allah and glorify Him. It is also indicated that specific angels have been given specific responsibilities. *Jibreel* is in charge of the "life of the heart" which is a reference to the revelation that has come from Allah. *Israafeel* is responsible for blowing the trumpet that will resurrect the bodies on the Day of Judgment. Hence, he is related to the reviving of life on the Day of Resurrection. *Mikaaeel* is responsible for the rain and vegetation. These are the "sources" of life on earth. Ibn Uthaimin points out that it is perhaps the relationship between these three angels and their "life-giving" responsibilities that led the Prophet (peace be upon him) to open his late-night prayers with the following supplication, "O Allah, Lord of *Jibreel*, *Mikaaeel* and *Israafeel*, the Originator of the Heavens and the Earth, the One who Knows the Unseen and Witnessed,

¹ Qutb, p. 183.

² Salaam, p. 104.

³ Cf., Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, pp. 27-28. "Cf.," is used implying that the points are from ibn Uthaimen but the discussion and explanation is not necessarily from his writing.

You judge between Your slaves in that wherein they differ, guide me to the truth in the matters concerning which they have differed, by Your Leave. You guide whom You will to the Straight Path.”¹

A fifth matter that one must fulfill in his belief in the angels is to have a strong love for them due to their obedience and worship of Allah. Furthermore, they declare the Oneness of Allah and fulfill His commands. They also have strong love and loyalty for the true believers in Allah. They pray to Allah on behalf of the believers and ask Allah to forgive them. They support them in both this life and the Hereafter.

An important aspect related to belief in the angels is that everyone must believe that he has with him at all times two angels that are recording his deeds. The following verses are in reference to those angels:

إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِيَانِ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ ﴿١٧﴾ مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ
إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

“[Remember] that the two receivers [recording angels] receive [him], one sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter, but there is a watcher by him ready [to record it]” (*Qaaf* 17-18).

Some of The Beneficial Results of Proper Belief in the Angels ²

(1) One has knowledge of or recognizes the greatness of Allah and His Power when he ponders over the greatness of the angels. This marvelous creation is an indication of the greatness and knowledge of their Creator. Therefore, their creator is deserving of complete and sincere praise. Thus, Allah, in referring to how He made this creation, has said,

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنَحَةٍ
مَثْنَى وَثُلثَ وَرُبْعَ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the (only) Originator of the heavens and the earth, Who made the angels messengers with wings— two or three or four [sets of wings]. He increases in the creation what He wills. Verily, Allah is able to do all things” (*Faatir* 1).

Qutb states that if one looks at the visible things of this creation, one will be amazed and will see signs pointing to the greatness and wonderfulness of Allah. However, if one realizes that beyond what one can see, there are even great creations that are beyond the view of humans, this should increase one’s

¹ Muhammad ibn Uthaimen, *Majmooat Fataawa wa Rasaail Fadheelat al-Shaikh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-Uthaimen* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1413 A.H.), vol. 3, pp. 160-161.

² Cf., Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, pp. 29-30.

imaan and servitude to Allah. These creatures are beyond the imagination of humans. Therefore, the greatness of Allah's creation does not end with what humans can see but it is much greater and much more wonderful than that.¹

(2) One should be thankful to Allah for His extreme care and concern for humans. He has created these creatures to support the believers, protect them, record their deeds and other aspects which are beneficial to the believers.

(3) One should be thankful to Allah that He has obliged different creatures to worship Him in that matter that they are capable of performing. The angels worship and glorify Allah at all times of day and night. But Allah did not require humans to be in that same state of constant and great worship. However, some creatures are able to do that and if Allah had willed, He could have required humans to perform acts of worship in a manner similar to that of angels. By His mercy and wisdom, though, Allah did not require that from humans.²

(4) Recognizing the great worship of Allah that angels are involved in should make humans yearn to even more devout in their worship of Allah, to get closer to Allah and become beloved to Allah like His noble angels.³

(5) When performing a sin while all alone and not harming the rights of any other human, a person may think that Allah is all-forgiving and merciful and he will then hope that Allah will forgive him for that sin. However, he must remember that it is not only Allah who is seeing what he is doing. The angels are also there recording his deeds and the angels are also harmed by his sin. Therefore, although he has not harmed any other human, he has harmed one of Allah's dear and noble creatures. When he considers this fact, this should be a deterrent keeping him from sinning even when all alone.

“His books”

Belief in Allah's books is the third article of faith mentioned in this hadith. It refers to the revelations that Allah sent down to His messengers as a mercy and a guidance to lead mankind to success in this life and happiness in the Hereafter. In particular, the Quran is the final revelation. It is the uncreated speech of Allah.

Ibn Uthaimen points out that the belief in Allah's books comprises four aspects:⁴ First, one must believe that those books were truly revealed from Allah. Second, one must specifically believe in the books mentioned in the Quran and sunnah. They are the Quran revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the *Taurah* (التوراة) revealed to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), the *Injeel* (الإنجيل) revealed to the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon

¹ Qutb, p. 178.

² Cf., Qutb, pp. 180-181.

³ Qutb, p. 188.

⁴ Cf., Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, pp. 32-33.

him) and the *Zaboor* (الزبور) revealed to the Prophet David (peace be upon him). There is also reference in the Quran to the “pages” of Abraham and Moses. The books that the Jews and Christians possess today, which they call the Torah, Gospel and Psalms, may contain some of those original revelations but there is no question that they have been distorted. Hence, to believe in the *Torah* of Moses, for example, does not mean that a Muslim believes in the first five books of the Old Testament. The two are different books although the latter may possess some of what was in the original *Taurah*.

Third, one must also believe in everything that Allah has revealed, whether it be in the Quran or in the previous books. That is, for example, if the Quran states something, then the Muslim must believe in it. He has no choice in this matter. If he rejects any statement in it, he has negated his beliefs in the Books of Allah. Allah says,

أَفْتُوْمُنُوْنَ بِبَعْضِ الْكُتُبِ وَتَكْفُرُوْنَ بِبَعْضِ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَٰلِكَ
مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يُرَدُّوْنَ اِلَىٰ اَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ
وَمَا اَللّٰهُ بِغَفِيْلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ

“Then do you believe in a part of the Scripture and you reject the rest? Then what is the recompense of those who do so among you, except disgrace in the life of this world. And on the Day of Resurrection they shall be consigned to the most grievous torment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do” (*al-Baqara* 85).

Fourth, one must act in accord with the non-abrogated revelation, which is the Quran. One must be pleased with it and submit to it completely. This is so even if the person does not completely grasp the wisdom behind the command or statement.

All of the previous revelations of Allah have been abrogated by the final revelation, the Quran. There is no need for any Muslim to turn to the remnants of any of the earlier scriptures. Everything that he needs for his guidance is contained in the Quran and what it points to, such as the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Allah has stated in the Quran,

وَاَنْزَلْنَا اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ
وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ فَاَحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا اَنْزَلَ اَللّٰهُ

“And to you We have revealed the Scripture in truth, confirming whatever Scripture that came before it, and a watcher and judge over it. So judge among them according to what Allah has revealed” (*al-Maidah* 48). Commenting on this verse, ibn Uthaimen says, “It is a ruler over the previous scriptures.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

Hence, it is not allowed to act in accord with any ruling of the rulings from the previous scriptures unless it is verified and accepted by the Quran.”¹

It is one of the greatest blessings of Allah that He sent revelations for mankind. These revelations guide man to the purpose for which he was created. This is one of the many aspects of this creation that helps a human being see and recognize the truth. Commenting on this point, Idris wrote,

God created men so that they may serve Him. His being a servant of God constitutes the essence of man. Man cannot therefore attain to his true humanity and acquire peace of mind unless he realizes this aim for which he was created. But how can he do this? God, being merciful and just, has helped him in many ways. He granted him... an originally good nature that is inclined to know and serve its true Lord. He granted him a mind that possesses a moral sense and the ability to reason. He made the whole universe a natural book full of signs that lead a thinking person to God. But to make things more specific and to give him more detailed knowledge of his Lord, and to show him in a more detailed manner how to serve Him, God has been sending down verbal messages through His prophets chosen from among men, ever since the creation of man. Hence, the description of these messages in the Quran as guidance, light, signs, reminders, etc.²

In fact, not only did He send revelations for mankind but He also sent specific and different revelations according to the needs and circumstances of different people over time. This is another expression of Allah’s great mercy for mankind. This process continued until the Quran was revealed, containing all the guidance that mankind needs from the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) until the Day of Judgment. Since it is meant to be a guidance for all times until the Day of Resurrection, as opposed to the earlier scriptures, Allah has protected the Quran from any tampering, mistakes or distortions. Allah has said,

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

“Verily, it is We who have sent down the Reminder [the Quran] and surely We will guard it [from corruption]” (*al-Hijr* 9).

The Previous Scriptures

As noted above, the scriptures that were revealed prior to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are not the same as what the people today possess and call the Torah, Gospel and so forth. The Quran makes it clear that

¹ Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, pp. 32-33.

² Idris, pp. 18-19.

the earlier peoples distorted their books in three different manners: (1) they distorted the meaning or interpretation of it while leaving the wording the same; (2) they distorted and changed the wording of the text; and (3) they distorted the message by concealing what Allah had revealed to them.¹

Allah says about the previous peoples,

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ
فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَأَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَبُئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ

“(And remember) when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture (Jews and Christians) to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it, but they threw it away behind their backs and purchased with it some miserable gain. And indeed, worst is that which they bought” (*ali-Imraan* 187).

One of the most important aspects that the Jews and Christians tried to conceal were the clear signs in their books of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Allah refers to this blatant cover up of the truth in the verse,

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنْهُمْ
لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“Those to whom We gave the Scripture (Jews and Christians) recognize him (Muhammad) as they recognize their own sons. But, verily, a party of them conceal the truth while they know it” (*al-Baqara* 146).

Concerning distorting the meaning or wording of their scriptures, Allah says in the Quran about the Christians,

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلُونِ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا
هُوَ مِنْ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ
وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“And verily, among them is a party who distort the Book with their tongues, so that you may think it is from the Book but it is not from the Book, and they says, ‘This is from Allah,’ but it is not from Allah. And they state a lie against Allah while they know it” (*ali-Imraan* 78).

Allah has also said about the Jews,

¹ For more details on these three points, see Qutb, pp. 195-201.

فِيمَا نَقَضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَلْسِيَةً يَحْرَفُونَ
 الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى
 خَائِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ

“So because of their [the Tribes of Israel] breach of their covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts grow hard. They change the words from their [right] places and have abandoned a good part of the message that was sent to them. And you will not cease to discover deceit in them, except a few of them” (*al-Maaidah* 13).¹

“His messengers”

The next article of faith mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) is belief in the messengers of Allah.² A messenger is any human who was chosen by Allah to receive revelation from Him and who was commanded to pass that revelation on. A person cannot by himself, through spiritual exercises, incantations or whatever, reach the level of being a messenger or prophet. It is Allah alone who chooses His messengers and He knows best whom to choose. Allah says,

اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ

“Allah chooses messengers from angels and from men. Verily, Allah is all-hearer, all-seer” (*al-Hajj* 75). Allah also says,

اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ

“Allah knows best with whom to place His message” (*al-Anaam* 124).

¹ One of the worst atrocities that has infiltrated their books is their stories of the earlier prophets and messengers. In an apparent attempt to disgrace them, the compilers of those books have included all sorts of horrendous stories about them detailing actions that one would not even expect from impious people, not to speak of messengers and prophets of God. The next article of faith, belief in the messengers, includes the fact that Allah chooses specific people to be His prophets and messengers and they, therefore, must possess certain qualities that put them high above performing some of the deeds that the Jews and Christians have claimed about them.

² According to al-Qaari (vol. 1, p. 57), the reason messengers are explicitly and only mentioned, as opposed to messengers and prophets, is because that the essential belief is the belief in the messengers. This is because it was the messengers who received the revelations and conveyed them to others. One could state that the prophets were the followers of the messengers. Hence, the most important aspect is to believe in the one who received and conveyed the message. Allah knows best.

The first of the messengers was Noah (*Nooh*).¹ Every people were sent messengers and these messengers came with the same fundamental teaching:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

“And verily, We have sent among every nation a Messenger proclaiming, ‘Worship Allah [alone] and avoid all false deities’” (*al-Nahl* 36). The final messenger and prophet is the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Allah has said,

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ

“Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger and the Seal of the Prophets” (*al-Ahzaab* 40).

It is important to note that all of these messengers and prophets were simply human beings. They did not have any divine status or attribute of any kind.² They had no knowledge of the unseen except for that which Allah revealed to them. Their loftiest attribute is that of being a servant of Allah. Such is Allah’s description of them in the Quran. Indeed, with respect to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), in reference to three of the greatest events in his life, Allah refers to him as His servant.³

Correct belief in the messengers comprises four aspects⁴: First, one must believe that the message of all of them is the truth from Allah. If a person today denies any single one of them who is confirmed in the Quran or authentic hadith, then he is in fact denying all of them. Allah says about the people of Noah,

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“The people of Noah belied the messengers” (*al-Shuaraa* 105). However, Noah was the first messenger. This implies that, in essence, if a person denies one messenger, he is in fact denying all of them since their message is essentially one and consistent.

Therefore, the so-called followers of Jesus who refuse to follow the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are actually denying their belief in Jesus as even in their own gospels there are plenty of signs that another messenger would come, but they do not wish to recognize these signs. Allah has referred to such aspects in the following verses,

¹ As for Adam, he was a prophet and not a messenger. Every messenger was a prophet but not vice-versa. For the differences between a prophet (*nabi*) and messenger (*rasool*), see the author’s “Questions and Answers,” *Al-Basheer* (Vol. 2, No. 1, May-June 1988), pp. 5-7.

² This is obviously one of the ways by which the Christians strayed. They raised their Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) to a divine status while it is clear from their own book that he was simply a human being who prayed and beseeched God on a number of occasions.

³ See *al-Furqaan* 1, *al-Israa* 1 and *al-Jinn* 119.

⁴ Cf., ibn Uthameen, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, pp. 36-38.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“Those [Jews and Christians] to whom We gave the Scripture recognize him as they recognize their sons. But, verily, a party of them conceal the truth while they know it” (*al-Baqara* 146).

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي

التَّورَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ

“Those who follow the Messenger, the prophet who can neither read or write, whom they find written in the Torah and the Gospel...” (*al-Araaf* 157).

Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

لَا يَسْمَعُ بِي أَحَدٌ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ يَهُودِيٌّ وَلَا نَصْرَانِيٌّ ثُمَّ وَالَّذِي نَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ
يَمُوتُ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِالَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَّا كَانَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ

“By the One in whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, there will be no Jew or Christian of this nation who hears of me¹ and then dies without believing in that with which I have been sent except that he will be one of the inhabitants of the Hell-fire.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

This is one of the aspects that distinguishes Muslims from the earlier peoples. Muslims believe in all of the prophets. However, the others refused some— whether it be the Jews rejecting Jesus (peace be upon him) or the Jews and Christians rejecting the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)— although, in reality, they had no grounds whatsoever to refuse the later prophet. Each messenger came with clear signs and evidence. Their rejection by the people could only be based on arrogance, ignorance or hostility to the truth.

Second, one must believe in all of the Messengers mentioned by name in the Quran or sunnah. As for those not mentioned, one must believe in them at a general level², knowing that Allah has sent many messengers although not all of them are mentioned by name in the Quran or hadith. Allah has stated in the Quran,

¹ Meaning everyone from the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) until the Day of Judgment. They are all the Prophet’s Nation because they are all obliged to believe in him and follow him.

² At the same time, no one can claim that a person, for example, Buddha, was a prophet because there is no evidence from the Quran and sunnah to affirm such a claim.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُمْ مَّن قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن لَّمْ
نَقْصُصْ عَلَيْكَ

“And indeed We have sent messengers before you. Of them, some We have related to you their story and some We have not related to you their story” (*Ghaafir* 78).

Third, one must believe in everything that they stated. They communicated their messages from Allah completely and properly. They exerted themselves to propagate Allah’s message. They strove for the sake of Allah in the most complete manner. They were most knowledgeable of Allah and the best worshippers and servants of Allah.¹ The messengers “have been protected from attributing to Allah something of their own invention, judging according to their own desires, falling into major sins, and adding to or diminishing from the religion.”²

Fourth, one must submit to, accept and act in accord with the law of the messenger who has been sent for his guidance. Allah says in the Quran,

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

“We sent no messenger but to be obeyed by Allah’s leave” (*al-Nisaa* 64). With respect to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Allah says in the verse after the verse quoted above,

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِي مَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا

فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

“But no, by your Lord, they can have no faith until they make you judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept them with full submission” (*al-Nisaa* 65).

The believer should realize that the sending of messengers for the benefit and guidance of mankind is a great blessing from Allah. The knowledge that they conveyed is knowledge that is beyond the grasp of the human intellect by itself since it deals with matters of the unseen. Any cursory study of history would demonstrate that mankind is not able to find the absolute and complete truth with respect to God and the worship of Him except through a reliable source that has the necessary knowledge from the proper source, and that is the messenger receiving his knowledge from Allah alone.³

¹ Abdullah al-Muslih and Salaah al-Saawi, *Ma La Yasa'u al-Muslim Jahla* (Islamic Foundation of America, 1995), p. 59.

² Abdur-Rahmaan Abdul-Khaliq, *The General Prescripts of Belief in the Quran and Sunnah* (The Majliss of al-Haqq Publication Society, 1986), p. 18.

³ Cf., Qutb, pp. 226-7.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

Indeed, mankind is in more need of their guidance than they are in need of food and drink. If they are void of food and drink for any period of time, they will die, implying loss of this life. But if they are refusing Allah's guidance through the messengers, they will lose the everlasting bounties of the Hereafter.

Unfortunately for humans, in every era and in every generation, many of them think that they possess a great mind and intellect, therefore, they are not in need of any other human to guide them— even if that human were a messenger of Allah. They think they can find their own way. This arrogance and attributing to their intellects what is well beyond its reach will lead to their final destruction— unless they repent, accept the messengers, believe in what they brought and follow their guidance.

“the Last Day”

“The Last Day” is called such because there will be no new day after it, as the people of Paradise shall be in their abode as will the people of Hell. Among its other names are “The Day of Resurrection,” “The Reality,” “The Event,” “The Day of Judgment,” and “The Overwhelming.” This is the greatest day that mankind shall pass through. Indeed, it will be the gravest and most fearful day. A person's new life will be decided on that day. It will mark a new beginning for each and every soul. This new step may lead to eternal bliss or eternal damnation.¹

Belief in the Last Day implies belief in everything that the Quran or the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated about the events of that Day and thereafter. There are some general aspects (resurrection, judgment and reward, Paradise and Hell) that every Muslim should be aware of and believe in with certainty. There are also more detailed aspects that the Quran or the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) mentioned. The more one has knowledge of that Day and its surrounding events, the greater the effect this belief will have on him. Hence, it is highly recommended for each individual Muslim to learn about the events that occur prior to and on the Day of Resurrection.

As recorded in *Sahih Muslim*, before the Day of Judgment and the destruction of this earth, Allah will send a wind softer than silk, coming from Yemen, that will take the souls of every individual who has even the slightest amount of faith in his heart. Therefore, the events of the end of the earth will only be lived through by the worst of people, those with no faith whatsoever.

One of the first events to occur is the sun rising from the West. At that time, all those people will declare their faith but it will be of no avail to them. Then the Horn shall be blown and all on this earth shall die. Allah says,

¹ For Quranic/rational arguments for the existence of the Hereafter, see Idris, pp. 11-16.

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

“And the trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will swoon away, except him whom Allah wills” (*al-Zumar* 68). This earth and heaven shall then be destroyed. After a period of forty— it is not known whether it is forty hours, days or years— a second Horn will be blown and the people will be resurrected:

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُمْ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ قَالُوا
يَنْوِيلُنَا مَنْ بَعَثَنَا مِن مَّرْقَدِنَا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ

“And the Trumpet will be blown [the second blowing] and, behold, from the graves they will come out quickly to their Lord. They will say, ‘Woe to us! Who has raised us up from our place of sleep?’ [It will be said to them,] ‘This is what the Most Beneficent [Allah] has promised, and the Messengers spoke the truth’” (*Ya-Seen* 51-52).

According to ibn Uthaimen,¹ belief in the last day encompasses three aspects. First is belief in the Resurrection: after the Second Blowing of the Horn, the people will be resurrected in front of Allah. They shall be naked, barefoot and uncircumcised.² Allah says,

كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ وَعَدَّا عَلَيْهَا أَنَا كُنَّا فاعِلِينَ

“As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it. [It is] a promise binding on Us. Truly, We shall do it” (*al-Anbiyaa* 104).

The resurrection is going to be in the same body that the person had in this worldly life. Ibn Uthaimen has pointed out the wisdom and importance of this: “If it were a new creation, it would mean that the body that performed the sins in this world would be safe from any punishment. To come with a new body and have that body punished goes against what is just. Hence, the texts and rational argument indicate that the [person] resurrected is not a new [creation] but a return [of the old creation].”³ He also points out that Allah has the ability to recreate the bodies even after they have disintegrated. Humans may not be able to understand how exactly that is possible— like so many other aspects that humans cannot fathom— but Allah has stated it and a believer knows full well that it is true and well within Allah’s ability to do so.

The second aspect is belief in the accounting or reckoning of the deeds and the reward/punishment for those deeds. This aspect is mentioned and stressed in numerous places in the Quran. Here are a couple of examples:

¹ Cf., Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, pp. 40-41.

² As the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated in a hadith recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

³ Ibn Uthaimen, *Majmoo*, vol. 3, p. 174.

إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا إِيَابَهُمْ ﴿١٥﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ

“Verily, to Us will be their return. Then, verily, upon Us will be their reckoning” (*al-Ghaashiyah* 25-26).

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ
مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاجِبٍ

“And We shall set up balances of justice on the Day of Resurrection, then none will be dealt with unjustly in anything. And if there be the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it. And sufficient are We as those who reckon” (*al-Anbiyaa* 47).

Allah has made it clear that all deeds will be weighed on the Day of Judgment.¹ Allah says,

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٨﴾
وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا
يَظْلِمُونَ

“And the weighing on that Day will be the true weighing. So as for those whose scale [of good deeds] will be heavy, they will be the successful. And as for those whose scale will be light, those are they who will lose their own selves because they denied and rejected Our Signs” (*al-Araaf* 8-9).

Once again, some people might ask, “Actions are like what the philosophers call accidents, without weight or mass, how can they be weighed?” The answer is that Allah has the ability to weigh them. No human has any conception of the Scales themselves that will be used on that day, not to speak of the weights of particular deeds. Allah will weigh them and He is just. Each deed will weigh exactly what it is truly worth according to Allah’s scale.²

One should always recall that the reward Allah gives to His servants is an act of His mercy as He rewards them more than what their deeds entail.

¹ There is a difference of opinion concerning what exactly will be put on the scales on the Day of Judgment. Some say that the person himself will be weighed. Some say that it is the person’s recorded slate of deeds. Others say that the actions themselves will be weighed. There is strong evidence for all three of those opinions. In fact, most likely all of the person, his record and his deeds will be weighed. Allah knows best. Cf., Ahmad al-Ali, *Mashaahid al-Qiyaamah fi al-Hadeeth al-Nabawi* (Al-Mansoorah, Egypt: Dar al-Wafaa, 1991), pp. 150-153.

² Ibn Uthaimin, *Majmoo*, vol. 3, p. 179. He also discusses the question of whether there is just one scale or numerous scales.

However, Allah's punishment is out of His justice and He does not punish anyone more than what he deserves.

The third essential aspect of belief in the Last Day is belief in Heaven and Hell. Heaven is the eternal abode or reward for the believers. Hell is the eternal abode of punishment for the disbelievers. The stronger opinion is that they both are in existence at this present time and they both shall exist forever. They are not simply states of mind as some non-Muslims and a few heretical Muslims believe. Allah and His Messenger made mention of them and have described them clearly and in unequivocal terms. There is absolutely no room for any Muslim to deny their existence or their descriptions.

About Heaven, for example, Allah has said,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ ﴿٧﴾
 جَزَاؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
 أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ

“Verily, those who believe and do righteous deeds, they are the best of creatures. Their reward with their Lord is gardens of eternity, underneath which rivers flow, they will abide therein forever. Allah being well-pleased with them and they with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord” (*al-Bayyinah* 7-8).

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“No person knows what joy is kept hidden for him as a reward for what they used to do” (*al-Sajdah* 17).

Concerning Hell, for example, Allah has said,

إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا وَإِنْ يَسْتَغِيثُوا يُغَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ
 كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا

“Verily, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a Fire whose walls will be surrounding them. And if they ask for relief, they will be granted water like boiling oil that will scald their faces. Terrible the drink and evil a resting place” (*al-Kahf* 29).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنَ الْكٰفِرِينَ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَا يُجِدُونَ

وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١١﴾ يَوْمَ تَقَلَّبُ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُولُونَ يٰلَيْتَنَّا أَطَعْنَا

اللَّهِ وَأَطَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ

“Verily, Allah has cursed the disbelievers and has prepared for them a flaming Fire. They will abide therein forever and they will find neither a protector or a helper. On the Day when their faces would be turned and rolled in all sides of the Fire, they will say, ‘Oh, would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger’” (*al-Ahzaab* 64-66).

Aspects of the Grave

Ibn Taimiya points out that belief in the Last Day also includes belief in everything that shall occur to a person after his death and before the Day of Resurrection.¹ This includes the trial in the grave and the pleasure or punishment in the grave. The trial in the grave is mentioned in an authentic hadith recorded by al-Tirmidhi. It states that two angels, al-Munkar (المنكر) and al-Nakeer (النكير), come to the person and ask him: What did you use to say about this man [meaning the Prophet (peace be upon him)]? Other narrations mention two angels coming and asking three questions: Who is your Lord? What is your religion? Who is your prophet?²

The punishment and reward in the grave are what is referred to in the following two verses of the Quran. The first is a description of the blessings coming through the angels before the believers enter Paradise. The second is in reference to the punishment wrongdoers receive before the day of Judgment:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَمُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ

“Verily, those who say our Lord is Allah and then they stand straight [along the straight path], on them the angels will descend [at the time of their death, saying,] ‘Fear you not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of the Paradise which you have been promised’” (*Fussilat* 30).

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَاسِطُوا أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرَجُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ يَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

“If you could but see when the wrongdoers are in the agonies of death, while the angels are stretching forth their hands [saying], ‘Deliver your souls. This day you shall be recompensed with the torment of degradation because of what

¹ Quoted in ibn Uthaimen, *Majmoo*, vol. 3, p. 169.

² For the texts of these hadith, see al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami al-Sagheer*, vol. 1, p. 186 and vol. 1, p. 344.

you used to utter against Allah that was not the truth. And you used to arrogantly reject His signs with disrespect” (*al-Anaam* 93).

Many people ask the following question about the punishment in the grave: Is the punishment in the grave a punishment that afflicts the soul only or does it also afflict the body, which over time decomposes? Ibn Uthaimin has answered this question by saying,

The punishment in the grave is first and foremost upon the soul and, perhaps, it also reaches the body. However, it being foremost upon the soul does not mean that the body does not get any of it. In fact, it must receive some of that punishment or pleasure, even if it is not direct. Know that the punishment or pleasure in the grave is the opposite of the punishment or pleasure in this world. The punishment or pleasure in this world is [first and foremost] upon the body and it then affects the soul. In the period between death and the Day of Judgment, the pleasure or punishment is upon the soul and it also has an affect upon the body.¹

Ibn Uthaimin also addresses the following question: How can one say that the grave squeezes the body of a disbeliever, to the point that his ribs are crushed², while if the grave is uncovered one will find no change in the coffin or the person? Ibn Uthaimin responded by saying,

First and foremost, the punishment of the grave is upon the soul. It is not something physically experienced by the body. If it were something physically experienced and witnessed upon the body, it would not be one of the matters of faith in the Unseen. And there would be no benefit to such belief. However, it is from the matters of the Unseen that is related to the soul. A person may see in a dream, while he is sleeping in his bed, that he is standing, going, coming, beating someone or being beaten. He might even see, while he is sleeping in his bed, that he traveled to perform *Umra*, circumambulated the Kaaba and went between the two hillocks of Safa and Marwa, shaved or trimmed his hair and then returned to his homeland. All the while, his body is in his bed and does not change at all. Therefore, the affairs of the soul are different from that of the body.³

There are additional detailed aspects related to the Hereafter that a believer should learn about and believe in. Due to space limitations, they

¹ Ibn Uthaimin, *Majmoo*, vol. 3, p. 173. Of course, in Paradise and Hell, the pleasure and punishment will be both on the soul and the body.

² These aspects are all stated in authentic hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). For more details, see Umar al-Ashqar, *Al-Yaum al-Aakhir: al-Qiyamah al-Sughra* (Kuwait: Maktab al-Falaah, 1986), pp. 41-83.

³ Ibn Uthaimin, *Majmoo*, vol. 3, p. 173.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

cannot be discussed in detail here.¹ These matters include: (1) The Fount or Cistern of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)²; (2) The different intercessions³; (3) The distribution of the books of deeds; (4) Passing over the *siraat* (bridge) over Hell⁴; and (5) The entrance into Paradise and Hell with all of its related aspects.

Importance of Proper Belief in the Last Day

The belief in and knowledge of the great events of the Last Day and the Hereafter should have some very profound effects on the individual— if he takes the time to remember and seriously think about that Day. First, it should make the believer rush to perform good deeds, knowing the reward that may be in store for them. The bounties of Paradise are greater than what any eye has seen or even what any mind could imagine. First and foremost, this great reward includes the pleasure of Allah and the opportunity to see Him in the Hereafter. If a person could possibly be conscious of this aspect at every moment of his life, he would be anxiously seeking and searching for any good deed he could perform.

Second, the threat of punishment should sway the person from committing any sin, no matter how “light”. No sin performed in this world could be worth the punishment it could bring about in the Hereafter. Furthermore, by committing sins, the person may also be earning the displeasure of Allah, his Lord, Creator and Beloved.

Third, according to ibn Uthaimin, the reckoning and justice of the Day of Judgment should bring comfort and solace to the heart of the believer. It is normal for humans to have a hatred for injustice. In this world, it appears to occur often. Those who cheat and who are unethical many times get ahead in this world without ever suffering for what they have done. However, that is only because, on a grand scale, this world is not the final place for judgment, reward and punishment. They will not escape the evil that they are doing. The good deeds of a person will also not be in vain, as they sometimes seem to be in this world. The time will come for all those matters to be settled and to be settled in a just manner. And that time is the Day of Judgment.⁵

Fourth, without the guidance of Allah and the proper belief in Allah, the result could be complete despair and no purpose to living. If there is no purpose to living, then there is no purpose for being moral, for doing what is right or for any type of work. In fact, this is the conclusion that Jean-Paul

¹ Although not used as a reference here due to its detail, Salaam (pp. 120-145) has provided an excellent yet concise discussion of many of the aspects of the Hereafter

² For a discussion in English on this topic, see Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-Barbahaaree, *Explanation of the Creed* (Birmingham, UK: Al-Haneef Publications, 1995), p. 36.

³ See al-Barbahaaree, p. 37.

⁴ See al-Barbahaaree, p. 38.

⁵ Ibn Uthaimin, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, p. 46.

Sartre came to. He is considered by many to be a leading thinker of this century and yet he concluded that all of this creation has no purpose and it is all in vain and there is no wisdom or meaning to the existence of man. Allah's response to this unfortunate way of thinking that some humans come to is:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَطْلًا ذَلِكُمْ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ

“We have not created the heaven and earth in vain. That is the presumption of those who disbelieve. So woe to the disbelievers from the Fire” (Saad 27).

“and to believe in the divine decree (*al-Qadar*), [both] the good and the evil thereof.”

The Restatement of “to believe in”

The first aspect that one may note is that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) repeated the word, “to believe in,” before mentioning divine destiny (*al-Qadar*). The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not repeat this word before any of the other articles of faith. Obviously, there must have been some reason for this. The scholars have discussed and differed concerning the reasoning behind this.

One view, expressed by al-Qaari, is that there is some “verbal distance” between the beginning of the sentence and the last article of faith. Hence, the word was repeated to state that *al-Qadar* is also something that must be believed in.¹ In this author's view, this argument does not sound very convincing.

Al-Ubayy states that it has been mentioned that the reason behind the repeating of the word, “to believe in,” is that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) knew that the people would later differ about *al-Qadar*.² Indeed, the concept of *al-Qadar* is one that has led to a great deal of division and difference of opinion in the history of Islam. Some groups openly denied its existence completely. Hence, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) emphasized that it is an essential part of *imaan* to believe in *al-Qadar*.

A third view is given by al-Mudaabaghi. He states that the governing word, “to believe in,” has been repeated due to the importance of the matter of *al-Qadar*. Its importance is not in the manner just described in the second view, but because it is something concerning which only those who are truly knowledgeable of the religion of Allah realize. They alone understand its

¹ Al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 58.

² Al-Ubayy, vol. 1, p. 67.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

importance and the fact that one must believe in it. This is different from the other articles of faith that are, in general, known and recognized by all Muslims.¹

Belief in *al-Qadar*

The next and final article of faith mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) is belief in “divine decree” or *al-Qadar*. Idris discusses the meaning of this word and states,

The original meaning of the word *Qadar* is specified measure or amount, whether of quantities or qualities. It has many other usages which branch out from this core. Thus *yuqad-dir* means, among other things, to measure or decide the quantity, quality, position, etc., of something before you actually make it. And it is this latter sense which interests us here.²

It is obligatory upon every Muslim to believe in the concept of *Qadar* or Divine Decree. In fact, this hadith of Jibreel was passed on by Abdullah ibn Umar when some people came to him telling him that there had appeared a people who were rejecting *Qadar*. The beginning of the narration in *Sahih Muslim* is as follows:

It is narrated on the authority of Yahya ibn Yamur that the first man who discussed *Qadar* in Basra was Ma'bad al-Juhani. I [Yahya] along with Humaid ibn Abdul Rahman al-Himyari set out for pilgrimage or *Umrah* and said, “If it should so happen that we come into contact with anyone of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), we shall ask him about what is being talked about concerning *Qadar*.” Unexpectedly, we came across ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab while he was entering the mosque. I and my friend surrounded him. One of us was on his right side and the other stood on his left. I expected that my friend would authorize me to speak [for both of us]. Therefore, I said, “O Abu Abdul Rahman [Abdullah ibn Umar], there have appeared some persons in our land who recite the Quran and pursue knowledge.” Then, after explaining their affairs, I said, “They claim that there is no such thing as Divine Decree and all events are new [to everyone, including Allah].” [Abdullah ibn Umar] then said, “When you happen to meet such persons, tell them that I have nothing to do with them and they have nothing to do with me. And, verily, they are in no way responsible for my belief.” Abdullah ibn Umar then swore by Allah and said, “If any of them [who does not believe in Divine Decree] had

¹ Al-Mudaabaghi, p. 71. He also mentions the first view stated by al-Qaari above.

² Idris, p. 24.

with him gold equal to the bulk of the Mountain of Uhud and then he should spend it [in the way of Allah], Allah would not accept that from him unless he affirms his faith in Divine Decree.”¹ He then said, “My father Umar ibn al-Khattaab told me...” [He then went on to narrate the hadith of Jibreel.]²

Ibn al-Qayyim shows that there are four “levels” or aspects of belief in *Qadar*. If one does not believe in these four aspects, he does not have the correct or proper belief in Allah.³

The first level is belief in Allah’s knowledge of everything, both of universals and particulars, before its existence. This is related to both, what is sometimes referred to as, the actions of Allah, such as producing rain, giving life and so forth, as well as the actions of human beings. Allah has foreknowledge of all of the deeds of the creation according to His ever-existing knowledge that He is described as having eternally. This includes His knowledge of all their affairs with respect to obedience, disobedience, sustenance and life-spans.

This aspect can be concluded from many Quranic verses, including:

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظِلْمَتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَاسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

“And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. None knows them but He. And He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea; not a leaf falls, but he knows it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth nor anything fresh or dry, but is written in a Clear Record” (*al-Anaam* 59).

The second level of belief in *Qadar* is belief in Allah’s recording of all things before He created the heavens and the earth. Hence, Allah not only knew and knows what will happen, but Allah has also recorded this information in the Preserved Table (*al-Lauh al-Mahfoodh* اللوح المحفوظ). Such an act is not difficult for Allah whatsoever. Allah says,

¹ Ibn Hubairah points out that this hadith demonstrates that some people may read the Quran and study a great deal of knowledge, however, they have a deficiency in their beliefs and they follow heresies. Therefore, their deeds will not be raised to Allah whatsoever and their studying of the religion will not be accepted by Allah. Their evil or false beliefs will prevent their deeds from being accepted. This is because the beliefs are the foundations of one’s religion and only a practice that has the proper foundation is pleasing to Allah. See Ibn Hubairah, vol. 1, p. 299.

² Siddiqui, *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1, pp. 1-2 (with modifications).

³ See Shams al-Din Ibn al-Qayyim, *Shifa al-Aleel fi Masaa’il al-Qadha wa al-Qadar wa al-Hikma wa al-Taleel* (Beirut: Daar al-Marifah, n.d.), pp. 29-65.

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ
ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

“Don’t you know that Allah knows all that is in heaven and on earth? Verily, it is all in the Book. Verily, that is easy for Allah” (*al-Hajj* 70). Allah also says,

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ
أَنْ نَّبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

“No calamity occurs on the earth or among yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book [of Decrees] before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah” (*al-Hadeed* 22). Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

كَتَبَ اللَّهُ مَقَادِيرَ الْخَلَائِقِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ بِخَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ قَالَ
وَعَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ

“Allah recorded the measures of the creation five thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth.” He also said, “And His Throne was over the water.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

Ibn al-Qayyim points out that there are actually four different types of “pre-recording” or “pre-determination” of future events.¹ These four are the following: (a) The pre-existent measure by the knowledge of Allah that is recorded in the Preserved Tablet; (b) Allah’s decree concerning the life of an individual while he is still a fetus in the womb of his mother.² This includes the person’s sustenance, life span, deeds and whether he will be successful or miserable. (c) A yearly determination that occurs on *Lailat al-Qadr* which measures what will occur during the year.³ (d) A daily pre-measuring for everything that occurs. According to Ibn al-Qayyim and others⁴, based on some reports recorded by al-Tabaraani and others, this is what the following verse is in reference to,

كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ

“Every day He has a matter to bring forth” (*al-Rahmaan* 29). Allah knows best.

¹ See Ibn al-Qayyim, *Shifaa*, pp. 6-24.

² This aspect is mentioned in detail in hadith Number 4 of the *Forty Hadith*.

³ *Surah al-Dukhaan*, verses 3-4, are in reference to this recording.

⁴ This last type is also mentioned in Abdul Rahman al-Mahmood, *al-Qadha wa al-Qadar fi Dhau al-Kitaab wa al-Sunnah wa Madhaahib al-Naas feeh* (Riyadh: Daar al-Nashr al-Dauli, 1994), p. 51; Muhammad al-Hammad, *al-Imaan bi-l-Qadha wa al-Qadar* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1416 A.H.), p. 71.

The third level is to believe in Allah’s decreeing of everything that is in existence, and if He does not will something, it can never come into existence. Once again, this also refers to all things. It refers to Allah’s actions of giving life, sustenance and so forth; and it also includes all of the acts performed by human beings. Nothing can be done unless Allah decrees it and allows it to occur. A person may intend or try, for example, to shoot and kill another person but such can only occur if Allah decrees it. The person may take all the necessary steps but if Allah does not will it to occur, it will not occur. In the case just mentioned, Allah may will the gun to jam or the shooter’s hand to flinch and miss his target and so forth.

This aspect of *Qadar* may also be concluded from numerous pieces of evidence. For example, Allah says,

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَقْتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ
وَلَكِنْ اٰخْتَلَفُوْا فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ ءَامَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا
اٰقْتَلْتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيْدُ

“If Allah had willed, succeeding generations would not have fought against each other, after clear verses of Allah had come to them. But they differed, some of them believing and others disbelieving. If Allah had willed, they would not have fought against one another, but Allah does what He likes” (*al-Baqara* 253). Allah also says,

اِنَّ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ يَّسْتَقِيْمَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَمَا
تَشَآءُوْنَ اِلَّا اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

“Verily, this [Quran] is no less than a reminder to whomsoever among you who wills to walk straight. And you will not will such unless [it be] that Allah wills, the Lord of the Worlds” (*al-Takweer* 27-29).

Ibn Uthaimen also offers a rational argument for this aspect of belief in *Qadar*. He says that it must be accepted that Allah is the Owner, Master and Controller of this creation. Hence, it cannot be the case, as long as everything is under His Control and part of His Dominion, that something occurs in His Dominion that He does not want to happen. Therefore, everything that occurs in His creation is by His Will. Nothing could ever occur unless He willed it. Otherwise, His control and mastery over His dominion would be deficient and lacking, as things would be occurring in His dominion that either He did not will to occur or they occurred without His knowledge. These hypotheses are unacceptable.¹

¹ Ibn Uthaimen, *Majmooat*, vol. 3, p. 195.

The fourth level of belief in *Qadar* is the belief in Allah's creating of everything, bringing of everything into existence and making everything be. This aspect is also demonstrated by numerous verses in the Quran, including:

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا ﴿١٠١﴾ الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا

“Blessed be He who sent down the Criterion to His slave [Muhammad] that he may be one who warns the Worlds. He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and who has begotten no offspring and for whom there is no partner in the dominion. He has created everything, and has measured it exactly according to its due measurements” (*al-Furqaan* 1-2). Also,

اللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

“Allah has created everything” (*al-Zumar* 62). Another verse states,

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ

“Verily, We created all things with Divine Pre-ordainment” (*al-Qamar* 49). Allah also says,

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“And Allah has created you and what you make” (*al-Saaffaat* 96).

Ibn Uthaimin has explained this point by saying,

Everything is a creation of Allah. Even the deeds of mankind are creations of Allah. Although they are by [man's] free choice and will, they are creations of Allah. This is because every act of a human is the result of two aspects: a definitive will [to do the act] and the complete ability [to do the act]. For example, suppose that in front of you is a stone weighing twenty pounds. I say to you, “Lift this stone,” and you say, “I don't want to lift it.” In this case, your lack of will has prevented you from lifting the stone. If I said a second time to you, “Lift that stone,” and you said, “Yes, I will listen and do what you have said.” In this case, if you wanted to lift it but you were not capable of lifting it, you would not have lifted it because you did not have the capability to do so. If I said to you a third time, “Lift that stone,” and you complied and lifted it above your head, that was because you had the ability and the will to do it.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

All of our deeds that we perform are, therefore, the result of a definitive will and complete ability.¹ The one who created that ability and will is Allah. If Allah had made you paralyzed, you would not have the ability. If you turned your attention to some other deed, you would not have done it...

Therefore, we say: All of the actions of humans are created by Allah. This is because they are the result of definitive will and complete ability. The one who created that will and ability is Allah. The way in which Allah is the creator of that will and capability is that the will and ability are two characteristics of the one who wants something and the one who has ability but the one who created that person with that ability was Allah. The One who created the person who has specific characteristics is also the one who created those characteristics. This makes the matter clear and shows that the actions of human beings are the creation of Allah.²

Actually, there are a number of questions and misconceptions that have arisen surrounding the concept of *Qadar*. Due to space limitations, they cannot be dealt with in detail here. However, in a not-too-lengthy passage, Jaafar Sheikh Idris has adequately dealt with a number of such issues. He wrote,

God decided to create man as a free agent, but He knows (and how can He not know?) before creating every man how he is going to use his free will; what, for example, his reaction would be when a Prophet clarifies God's message to him... "But if we are free to use our will," a Qadari³ might say, "we may use it in ways that contradict God's will, and in that case we would not be right in claiming that everything is willed or decreed by God." The Quran answers this question by reminding us that it was God who willed that we shall be willful, and it is He who allows us to use our will. [He then quotes *surah al-Insaan* 29-30, also quoted above.] "If so," says a Qadari, "He could have prevented us from doing evil." Yes, indeed he could, "Had God willed, He would have brought them all together to the guidance; if thy Lord had willed whoever is in the earth would have believed, all of them, all together" [*Yunus*, X:99]... But He had willed that men shall be free especially in regard to matters of belief and disbelief. "Say: 'The truth is from your Lord; so let whosoever will believe, and let whosoever will disbelieve'" [*al-Kahf*, XVIII:29]...

¹ This should probably say, "All of our voluntary deeds..." because there are some deeds that humans perform involuntarily and without a definitive will.

² Ibn Uthaimen, *Majmooat*, vol. 3, pp. 196-197.

³ A Qadari is one who denies the concept of *al-Qadar* altogether.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

“If our actions are willed by God,” someone might say, “then they are in fact His actions.” This objection is based on a confusion. God wills what we will in the sense of granting us the will to choose and enabling us to execute that will, i.e., He creates all that makes it possible for us to do it. He does not will it in the sense of doing it, otherwise it would be quite in order to say, when we drink or eat or sleep for instance, that God performed these actions. God creates them, He does not do or perform them. Another objection, based on another confusion, is that if God allows us to do evil, then He approves of it and likes it. But to will something in the sense of allowing a person to do it is one thing; and to approve of his action and commend it is quite another...¹

“[both] the good and the evil thereof”

After mentioning, “the good and evil thereof,” other narrations mention, “the sweet and the sour thereof”. Al-Mudaabaghi states that the good is obedience to Allah while the evil is disobedience. The sweet is what is beloved to the soul, such as rain, health and so forth. The sour is what is displeasing to the soul, such as illness and disease.²

Ibn al-Qayyim points out that what is meant by “evil” is with respect to the human beings and not with respect to Allah. The “evil” is the result of the human’s act of ignorance, wrong, oppression and sin. However, it was allowed and brought into being by Allah. But no evil is to be attributed to Allah because, with respect to Allah, the act is good and full of wisdom, as it must be a result of Allah’s knowledge and wisdom. Any act of that nature must, in its essence, be good and cannot be pure evil. This is supported by the Prophet’s hadith,

وَالشَّرُّ لَيْسَ إِلَيْكَ

“Evil is not to be attributed to You.” (Recorded by Muslim.) That is because every act that occurs is the result of some wisdom and goodness and can never be pure evil. The individual himself may think it otherwise, but in reality there is wisdom and good in everything that occurs in Allah’s creation.³

Ibn Uthaimen gives an example illustrating this point. Allah says in the Quran,

¹ Idris, pp. 25-27.

² Al-Mudaabaghi, p. 71.

³ See Abdul Azeez al-Rasheed, *al-Tanbeehaat al-Sanniya ala al-Aqeeda al-Waasitiya* (Daar al-Rasheed li-I-Nashr wa al-Tauzee’), p. 263.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ
الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

“Evil has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that Allah may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return [by repenting]” (*al-Room* 41). In this verse, Allah states the evil (*fasaad*) that has appeared, the cause for it and its result. The evil (*fasaad*) and the cause of it are both evil (*sharr*). However, the goal of it is good: that Allah may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return [by repenting]. Hence, there is a wisdom and a goal behind that *fasaad*. This goal and wisdom makes the entire action something good and not a pure evil.¹

Pure evil, on the other hand, would be one in which there was no benefit or positive result related to it. Allah’s wisdom and knowledge preclude the existence of acts of that nature.²

The Fruits of Proper Belief in *al-Qadar*³

(1) When a person realizes that all things are under the control and decree of Allah, he is freeing his belief from any form of *shirk* or associating partners with Allah in His Lordship. There is truly only One Creator and Master of this creation. Nothing occurs except by His will and permission. When this is firmly in the heart of the person, he then also realizes that there is none worthy of praying to, seeking assistance from, relying upon, and so forth, except that one Lord. Hence, he directs all of his acts of worship toward that One who has decreed and determined all matters. Thus, both *tauheed al-ruboobiyah* and *tauheed al-uloohiyah* are correctly and completely fulfilled with the proper belief in *al-Qadar*.

(2) A person will put one’s reliance upon Allah. A person should follow the outward “causes and effects” that one sees in this world. However, he must realize that those “causes and effects” will not bring about any ends unless Allah so wills them to do so. Hence, a believer never puts his complete trust and reliance upon his own actions or the worldly aspects that he might have some control over. Instead, he follows whatever causes he may know of

¹ Muhammad ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh al-Aqeedah al-Waasitiyah* (al-Damaam, Saudi Arabia: Daar ibn al-Jauzi, 1415 A.H.), vol. 1, pp. 191-192. Also see, in the same work, vol. 1, pp. 70-72.

² Even the creation of Satan is not a pure evil. See Umar al-Ashqar, *The World of the Jinn and Devils* (Boulder, CO: Al-Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 1998), pp. 225-243.

³ In his work on *al-Qadar*, al-Hammad (pp. 31-44) mentions twenty-five benefits or fruits of the belief in *al-Qadar*. Here, just a few examples shall be given from a number of different sources.

which lead to a desired end and then he puts his trust in Allah to bring about that desired end.¹

(3) Ibn Uthaimen argues that with proper belief in *al-Qadar*, one does not become arrogant and boastful. If he achieves any goal that he desired, he knows that such goal only came about because Allah, in His mercy, had decreed it for him. If Allah had so wished, He could have put many obstacles in his way and prevented him from reaching his goal. Therefore, instead of becoming full of himself and arrogant upon reaching his goal, the person who truly believes in *al-Qadar* becomes very thankful to Allah for bringing about that blessing.²

(4) The proper belief in *al-Qadar* brings about tranquillity and peace of mind. The person realizes that everything that occurs is according to Allah's Divine Decree. Furthermore, there is a wisdom behind everything Allah does. Hence, if the person loses a beloved or something of this world, he does not go insane, despair or give up hope. Instead, he realizes that such was the will of Allah that he must accept. He must also realize that such has occurred for a purpose. It did not occur haphazardly or accidentally, without any reason behind it. Allah has said,

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ
 أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا
 تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

“No calamity befalls on the earth or in yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book [of Decrees] before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah. In order that you may not be sad over matters that you fail to achieve, nor rejoice because of that which has been given to you. And Allah likes not prideful boasters” (*al-Hadeed* 22-23).³

(5) Belief in *al-Qadar* gives a person strength and courage. He knows that Allah has recorded his life and his sustenance for him. Such comes only from Allah and is already decreed. Hence, he need not fear struggling and fighting for the sake of Allah as the time of his death is already recorded. He need not fear anyone when it comes to his sustenance and provision as such come only from Allah and have been already recorded for him. No human can cut off his sustenance and livelihood if Allah has decreed that he shall continue to receive provisions and sustenance from some source.⁴

¹ Cf., ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, p. 58.

² Cf., ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, p. 58.

³ Cf., ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Usool al-Imaan*, p. 58.

⁴ Cf., Salaam, p. 173.

(6) When a person does not believe that there is a wise being controlling this universe and that everything just happens by chance, then there is no real need to work and strive for any goal. This striving does not really increase the chance of achieving one's goal, if everything is truly by chance or the merciless, impersonal works of nature. However, when one realizes that everything happens according to Allah's decree and wisdom and that Allah has designed natural and moral laws for this creation, he knows that if he abides by what Allah has guided him to, Allah will help him and he will be able to achieve his goals by the help and will of Allah.

Some Conclusions about the Islamic Beliefs

In the preceding pages, many of the basic aspects of Islamic beliefs have been discussed. Before moving on to the next topic mentioned in this hadith of Jibreel, some important conclusions should be stated about these beliefs.¹

First, they are the beliefs that are pleasing to Allah and they are part of the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon the believers. Allah has stated, describing this *deen* that the Angel Jibreel came to teach the Muslims in this hadith,

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ
الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

“This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as a religion” (*al-Maaidah* 3).

No other creed or way of life can make such a claim because every other ideology has either been completely invented by man (such as existentialism) or have been distorted from the pure teachings originally revealed by God (such as Judaism and Christianity). The only ideology that can realistically, logically and historically make a claim for itself that it is truly pleasing to God is the ideology or creed of Islam.

Second, it is the foundation of the correct worship of Allah. Therefore, it is the foundation for the proper way of life in this world, such that a person lives his life according to the purpose for which he was created. Allah says,

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I created not jinn and mankind except for them to worship Me alone” (*al-Dhaariyaat* 56).

Third, this belief, when it is understood in its complete and proper sense, encompasses all of the person. There is no moment of his life except that

¹ For a comparable discussion, see Qutb, pp. 435-443.

he is guided and inspired by these articles of faith that he adheres to. In this way, every aspect of his life becomes a virtual application and enactment of these articles of faith. He begins to fulfill what the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was ordered in the Quran to say and fulfill,

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“Say: My prayers, my rites of sacrifice, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds” (*al-Anaam* 162).

Fourth, since this belief and resulting way of life is the only one that comes from the Creator of mankind and the One who knows the inner secrets of mankind, it is the only one that can put one’s life in a true equilibrium and balance, without any extremes of any sort. It is the only ideology that can strike the proper balance between the material world and the spiritual world. It also strikes the proper balance between aspects of the experienced world as well as the unseen. It strikes a balance, for example, between following the outward causes of this worldly life and belief in *qadar*. It also strikes a balance between all of the different aspects of life as a whole, social, political, economic and so forth. Therefore, it is the only ideology that can truly bring peace and solace to the heart.

He said, “Tell me about *al-Ihsaan* (goodness).”

The Implication of “a” in *al-Ihsaan*

The *al* (ال) in *al-ihsaan* implies that the matter referred to is something known and recognized by the speakers: the known *ihsaan*. *Ihsaan* and its linguistic relatives are mentioned in a number of places in the Quran.¹ For example, Allah says,

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعِمُوا إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا وَأَحْسَنُوا
وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“On those who believe and do righteous good deeds, there is no sin for what they ate [in the past], if they fear Allah and believe and do righteous deeds, and again fear Allah and believe, and once again fear Allah and did good deeds

¹ Ibn Rajab (*Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 125-126) points out that, like the concepts of *islaam* and *imaan*, *ihsaan* is sometimes mentioned by itself and is sometimes mentioned in conjunction with *islaam* and *imaan*. When mentioned by itself, it includes the aspects of *islaam* and *imaan*. When mentioned in conjunction with these two terms, it has its own special connotation.

with *ihsaan* (perfection). And Allah loves the good-doers (*muhsineen*)” (*al-Maa'idah* 93). The *al* might imply that it is that concept that is being referred to. The Angel Jibreel asked about it so that the people would understand how great and important a concept it is.¹ On the other hand, others state that it is not referring to that known concept but it is referring to *ikhlaas* (purity of action).²

However, the first interpretation is more apparent. It implies that there are three levels in Islam: the level of *Islaam*, the level of *Imaan* and the level of *Ihsaan*, as was alluded to in the discussion on the concept of *Imaan*.

A General Conception of *Ihsaan*

The lexical meaning of *ihsaan* implies doing well, doing goodness, behaving with others in a goodly manner. It is the opposite of causing harm to someone else. In such a case, the form of the word will be followed with a preposition. However, the word also implies perfecting something or doing something in the best way. This is, perhaps, closer to what is meant by the word *ihsaan* in this particular hadith.³ However, the two concepts are not inseparable. A person will behave towards others in the best way possible if he is truly doing that to please Allah. Hence, he excels both in his relation towards Allah—or rites of worship—as well as in his relationship to Allah’s creatures, due to his knowledge that Allah is watching him.

Therefore, *ihsaan* is a very comprehensive term. It includes all types of acts of goodness to others. Its meaning is that a person spreads good instead of harm to others. He uses his wealth, knowledge, position and body to do good to others. He gives part of his wealth in zakat and charity, and that is *ihsaan*. He spreads his knowledge and never misses an opportunity to guide others, and that is *ihsaan* with respect to his knowledge. He uses his rightful position and influence to help those that are deserving and in need of help. That is also *ihsaan*. He helps his brother get into his car or to carry something and that is an example of *ihsaan* with respect to his body.⁴

In this hadith of Jibreel, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not give a dictionary-type definition of *ihsaan*. Instead, he explained the main motivating factor behind *ihsaan* or goodness and excellence. This is the fact that Allah is watching one’s actions. If the heart is aware of that fact, the person will hope to please his Lord and fear displeasing Him. This will bring about purity in his heart. When such *ikhlaas* or purity is present in the heart, he will do what he can for Allah’s sake. This also means that he will try to do everything in the best possible way. He will be concerned about the quality of his deeds and not simply their quantity or outward execution.⁵

¹ Al-Haitami, p. 79.

² Al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 54.

³ See al-Aini, vol. 1, p. 288.

⁴ Cf., Ibn Uthaimin, *Majmoat*, vol. 3, pp. 216-217.

⁵ Salaam, p. 183.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

The general concept of *ihsaan* will be discussed in more detail when hadith number 17 is discussed, Allah willing. However, in this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is discussing a particular aspect or level of *ihsaan*. The discussion here will concentrate on this type of *ihsaan*.

He answered, “It is that you worship Allah as if you see Him. And even though you do not see Him, He sees you.”

Perhaps the first matter that needs to be discussed is whether these two sentences embody one concept or two distinct concepts. Scholars have interpreted this hadith in both ways.

The View that Two Concepts are Being Conveyed

Ibn Rajab¹, ibn Hajr² and others are of the view that this hadith describes two different levels of awareness at which a believer may be. One of the positions is loftier than the other. If a person cannot achieve the loftier position, he should at least seek the less loftier position. It is as if the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, “Worship Allah³ as if you are seeing him. But if you cannot achieve that level, worship Him knowing that He sees you.”

The believers and *muhsineen*⁴ differ quite a bit in the levels that they reach, depending on their levels of *imaan* and *ihsaan*. The loftier position is known as *al-mushaahadah* (“personal witnessing”). This is not the real seeing of Allah but a very strong feeling in the heart. This is where the realization of Allah’s presence, by His knowledge and mercy, is so great that the person practically witnesses Allah in front of him. The person’s thought and mind become completely attuned to the act of worship he is performing. This is the implication of the first sentence, “It is that you worship Allah as if you see Him.” There is no question that if one could see Allah, this would have a profound effect on his worship and obedience of Allah. This can be seen in the following hadith:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَلَائِكَةً يَطُوفُونَ فِي الطَّرِيقِ يَلْتَمِسُونَ أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ فَإِذَا وَجَدُوا قَوْمًا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ تَنَادَوْا هَلُمُّوا إِلَيَّ حَاجَتِكُمْ قَالَ فَيَحْفُوهُمْ بِأَجْنِحَتِهِمْ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا قَالَ فَيَسْأَلُهُمْ

¹ In his commentary to *Sahih al-Bukhari*, ibn Rajab only presents this view while in his commentary to al-Nawawi’s *40 Hadith*, he presents both. See ibn Rajab, *Fath*, vol. 1, pp. 211f; ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 128.

² Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 164.

³ The reader is reminded that the Islamic concept of “worship” is not simply a matter of specific rites that a person performs. Instead, it is a complete form of servitude to Allah that encompasses one’s outward acts as well as the acts of the heart, as described earlier.

⁴ Those characterized by the quality of *ihsaan*.

رُبُّهُمْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ مِنْهُمْ مَا يَقُولُ عِبَادِي قَالُوا يَقُولُونَ يُسَبِّحُونَكَ وَيُكَبِّرُونَكَ وَيَحْمَدُونَكَ
وَيُتَمَجِّدُونَكَ قَالَ فَيَقُولُ هَلْ رَأَوْنِي قَالَ فَيَقُولُونَ لَا وَاللَّهِ مَا رَأَوْكَ قَالَ فَيَقُولُ وَكَيْفَ لَوْ
رَأَوْنِي قَالَ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ رَأَوْكَ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ لَكَ عِبَادَةً وَأَشَدَّ لَكَ تَمَجِيدًا وَتَحْمِيدًا وَأَكْثَرَ
لَكَ تَسْبِيحًا

“Allah has some angels who look for those who celebrate the Praises of Allah on the roads and paths. And when they find some people celebrating the Praises of Allah, they call each other, saying, ‘Come to the object of your pursuit.’ The angels then encircle them with their wings up to the sky of the world. Then their Lord asks them, although He is most knowledgeable of them, ‘What do My slaves do?’ The angels reply, ‘They say, *subhaanallaah*, *allaahu akbar* and *al-hamdulillaah*.’ Allah then says, ‘Did they see Me?’ The angels reply, ‘No, by Allah, they didn’t see You.’ Allah says, ‘How would it have been if they saw Me?’ The angels reply, ‘If they saw You, they would worship You more devoutly, and celebrate Your Glory more deeply, and more often declare Your freedom from any resemblance to anything...’”¹

The effect of the feeling of the seeing of Allah on the person is that he will perform every act of obedience in the best way possible. He practically sees Allah in front of him so he knows full well— beyond a mere theoretical belief— that Allah is observing everything that he is doing. He will be extremely shy and embarrassed to do anything in a less than perfect or excellent manner. He will also be filled with the fear, awe and admiration of Allah. He will make every effort to please Allah who he “sees” in front of him. He will exert himself to perform his act of worship in the best way possible, without any deficiency.

So the person who reaches the higher level of *ihsaan* has reached a level wherein his heart practically witnesses his Lord, wherein he becomes full of pleasure when being alone with his Lord and when he remembers Allah, speaks to Allah and beseeches Him. These acts become the most beautiful and enjoyable acts in his eyes. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself was undoubtedly at this level of worship of Allah. He one time said,

وَجُعِلَ قُرَّةُ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ

“The sweetness of my eye has been made the prayer.”²

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari. See Khan, vol. 8, pp. 278-279.

² Recorded by al-Nasaai and Ahmad. Al-Albaani has called it *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 599.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

If a person is not able to reach that level or if it is difficult for him, then he moves to the lower level where he worships Allah realizing full well that Allah is watching him and knows both what goes on externally and inside of the person's heart and soul. This level has been termed *al-muraaqabah* ("the level of one who is being observed and watched"). This level of *ihsaan* is still quite important and beneficial. The person knows that Allah is seeing him and observing every action that he performs. This can drive a Muslim to perfect and excel in his acts of worship. Hence, this level also leads to *ihsaan* or excellence in worship.

But this feeling cannot be considered as strong as in the first case of *al-mushaahadah*. The feeling of being watched may not always be that strong in a person's heart. Even though he may theoretically know that he is being watched, he may still be lax at times. He does not experience the same feelings of awe and humility than the feeling of he who is practically seeing Allah in front of him.¹

Thus, the presence of either level of *ihsaan* makes the person worship Allah in an excellent manner— which is what *ihsaan* would imply linguistically. Those who reach the level of *ihsaan* are far ahead of those Muslims who may know and believe— but unfortunately only at a theoretical or academic level— that Allah knows and witnesses all things. All Muslims must know and believe this. But as long as that knowledge has no real effect on their worship of Allah, they are not deserving of the title of *Muhsin*, or a person who has the quality of *ihsaan*. Yes, they legally fulfill their obligations of worship. But those acts are lacking in spirit and quality and, therefore, they do not rise to the level of *ihsaan* and excellent worship of Allah.

Ibn Uthaimin notes other aspects that differentiate between these two levels of *ihsaan*. According to him, *al-ihsaan* with respect to the worship of Allah is where the person worships Allah as if he sees Him, as is stated in this hadith. This type of worship is the worship of craving, yearning and delight. This makes the person, on his very own, very keen on performing the acts of worship. This is because he sincerely loves that act and he will seek that act of worship because he loves it so much. He will anxiously desire to get closer to Allah and will turn to Him as if he is seeing Allah. The lower level of *al-ihsaan* is one of fleeing and fear. If one does not worship Allah as if he is seeing him, he must at least realize that Allah is seeing him. That is, he is being watched. His deeds are being accounted for. Hence, the person should fear the Watcher's punishment and displeasure. This level or drive behind worship is considered lower than the first. However, all worship is actually built upon these two aspects: extreme love and extreme submission. When love is present, the

¹ The reader can envision the case of a guard vis-a-vis a surveillance camera. In both cases, the person knows that he is being watched. But, many times, in one case the feeling is much stronger and has a greater effect.

person seeks the object. When submission is present, there is fear and flight.¹ Ibn Uthaimin does not make this point, but it must be noted that those of the lower level of *ihsaan* also have this feeling. They do not see Allah yet, at the same time, they know that Allah is seeing them. Hence, they combine both of these aspects of love and submission and that is one of the reasons why their worship of Allah is so excellent.

If this understanding of the hadith is accepted, then, as was mentioned by al-Qastilaani, al-Ubayy and al-Shanqeeti², there are three levels for the Muslim with respect to *ihsaan*.³ The lowest level is where the Muslim fulfills all of the minimum requirements of an act. Hence, he has performed the act and has fulfilled that legal requirement. This person must theoretically recognize that Allah has witnessed his act. However, that knowledge may not have much or any real affect on his act of worship. The highest level is where one is at a position where he practically sees Allah in front of him. This was the state of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). The middle level is the one who has not reached the level of feeling that he sees Allah but he has reached the level that he very much feels that Allah is observing and watching every act he performs. Hence, he also excels in his acts beyond those of the first level mentioned above, but not to the level of the loftiest position. Al-Ubayy then states, "All three of these positions are *ihsaan*. However, the *ihsaan* that is a condition for the soundness of an act of worship is the first level. The *ihsaan* of the last two levels are characteristic of the more devout, special people. Many are not capable of reaching those levels."⁴

The View that Only One Concept is Being Conveyed

An alternative view of this hadith is given by al-Nawawi, al-Sindi and Uthmani.⁵ According to this view, the two sentences are just conveying one concept. In other words, it was as if the Prophet (peace be upon him) had said, "Although you do not actually see Allah, you should still excel in your worship because He is seeing you." Ibn Rajab points out that it is as if the second statement is a causal statement for the first.

Uthmani has presented the logic behind the reasoning of this view,

The first sentence [that you worship Allah as if you see Him] deals with the real objective, but there was a possibility of a

¹ Ibn Uthaimin, *Majmooat*, vol. 3, p. 218.

² Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Qastilaani, *Irshaad al-Saari li-Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 140; al-Ubayy, vol. 1, p. 68; al-Shanqeeti, *Kauthar*, vol. 2, p. 349.

³ Every Muslim should have some level of *ihsaan*, in the same way that he must have some level of *imaan*. However, those deserving of the title of *mu'min* (believer) should have a higher level of *ihsaan* than those who are simply *muslim*. Next comes those who outdo other believers in *ihsaan*. Those are the people who are deserving of the title of *muhsin*, and for them shall be a special reward in the Hereafter.

⁴ Al-Ubayy, vol. 1, p. 68.

⁵ See Uthmani, vol. 1, p. 537.

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doubt arising, which he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] has answered in the second sentence [that Allah sees you although you cannot see him]. This can be understood by an analogy. Suppose, there are some people present before a king in his palace. Now, how far these will observe the requisite respect and dignity of the court is known to everyone. There are two things here. The one is that the king is looking at them and also that they see the king. What is the reason behind this perfect observance of respect and obedience? Which reason has motivated their attitude of subservience? Is it the seeing of the king or their seeing the king? By a little deliberation, it will be clear that it is the king's seeing them (which really matters). For instance, if there is a blind man amongst them who cannot see the king, would his observance of respect and subservience for the king be in any case less than that of the others?¹

This argument has some merit to it. However, it seems that the interpretation given by ibn Hajr and others is to be preferred. The analogy or question that Uthmani presented may not be quite complete. In the first case of *al-mushaahadah*, the person both feels that Allah is watching him and that he can also see Allah in front of him. Hence, there is a stronger and clearer motivating factor. When a person is being watched but does not feel the presence of the one watching him, he may become forgetful or neglectful of the fact that he is being watched. Allah knows best.

This is Not in Reference to Rites of Worship Only

Nomani has made a very important point with respect to this portion of this hadith. He wrote,

Often it is maintained about this part of the above Tradition that it applies exclusively to *Namaz* (Prayer).² It is said that only *Namaz* is required to be offered with full humility and devotion. But the words of the Tradition do not justify it. It speaks of *T'abud* which denotes absolute worship and obeisance. Thus, there is no justification for limiting the Prophet's observation to *Namaz*. Moreover, in another version of this Tradition the word *Takhshi* has been used in the place of *T'abud*, which, when translated into English reads: "*Ihsaan* means that you fear God as if you saw Him." Yet another version has it that "*Ihsaan* means that you perform every act for the sake of God and in such a way that you were seeing Him." Both of these accounts make it clear that *Ihsaan* is not

¹ Uthmani, vol. 1, p. 537.

² *Namaz* is the Urdu word for prayer or *salat*. Nomani's book was originally written in Urdu and then translated into English.

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related only to *Namaz* but it covers the entire range of living and doing and its pith and substance is that every act of worship and obeisance should be performed and all the Divine commands carried out and the prospect of Final Reckoning dreaded as if the Lord was present before us and watching every act and movement of ours.¹

The Reward for *al-Ihsaan* and Its Relationship to This Hadith

The hadith makes it clear that the one who has *ihsaan* either worships Allah as if he is seeing Him or, at the very least, he is fully conscious of the fact that Allah is seeing him. The *muhsin* will receive a special reward for this attitude of worship. Allah has stated in the Quran,

لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ

“For those who have done good is the best and even more” (*Yoonus* 26). In *Sahih Muslim*, it is stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained the meaning of “even more” as the bounty of seeing Allah in the Hereafter. Hence, the one who worships Allah as if he is seeing Him or who knows that Allah is seeing him² while he is worshipping will be rewarded by the great reward of seeing Allah in the Hereafter.

This is the opposite of the recompense of the disbelievers in the Hereafter:

كَأَنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَّحْجُوبُونَ

“Nay, surely, they (evil-doers) will be veiled from seeing their Lord that Day” (*al-Mutaffifeen* 15). These people refused to submit to Allah. Instead of worshipping Allah as if they see Him, they behaved as if Allah had no idea of what they were doing. Hence, their recompense is that they will be veiled from seeing Allah in the Hereafter in the same way that they have kept themselves from worshipping Him in this life.

The Hadith Does not Imply Seeing Allah in this World

Both ibn Rajab and ibn Hajr are adamant that this hadith does not imply the possibility of seeing Allah while one is alive in this world. They say that this is how some unfortunate Sufis have incorrectly interpreted this hadith.

¹ Nomani, vol. 1, pp. 61-62. In the original work, *Ihsaan* was spelled *Ehsan*. It was changed here for the sake of consistency.

² Every Muslim must believe that Allah is aware of and sees his every action. However, the intensity of this feeling varies from believer. Hence, the corresponding reward in the Hereafter may also vary according to this varying intensity. Allah knows best.

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Ibn Hajr demonstrates that these people are both ignorant of the Arabic language as well as the other narrations of this hadith.¹

Ibn Rajab also discusses the “seeing” of Allah with one’s heart while one is alive in this world. He stated,

As for whoever claims that the hearts can reach a level in this life where they can physically see Allah in the same way they will see them by their sights in the Hereafter— as some of the Sufis claim— [it should be known] that this is a false claim. That special level is a level that some of the Companions, such as Abu Dharr, ibn Abbas and others, including one narration from Aisha, stated occurred for the Prophet (peace be upon him) [only] twice...

He states that such was something special for the Prophet (peace be upon him) that distinguished him from others. However, the Sufis claim that some of them reach that level often or are always in such a state. Hence, they consider their “saints” to be superior to the prophets. Ibn Rajab then stated, “Branching off from this belief are many of their aspects of misguidance and ignorance. And Allah guides whomsoever He wills to the Straight Path.”²

He said, “Tell me about [the time of] the Hour.” He answered, “The one being asked does not know more than the one asking.”

“Tell me about [the time of] the Hour.”

In the narration from Ammaara ibn al-Qa’qa’a, the question is explicitly stated as, “When is the Hour?”³ It is to that question that the Messenger of Allah’s (peace be upon him) response is directed. Furthermore, in the narration of Abu Farwa, it is also mentioned that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) lowered his head and did not respond. The Angel repeated the question three times and the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) then raised his head and responded.⁴

“The one being asked does not know more than the one asking.”

This response is not meant to imply that the two of them were equal in some knowledge concerning the occurrence of that Day. Instead, it was meant to say that this knowledge is something that Allah has kept to Himself and has not conveyed to anyone. In fact, in the narration in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the

¹ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, pp. 164-165.

² Ibn Rajab, *Fath*, vol. 1, pp. 214-215.

³ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 165.

⁴ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 165.

Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned that there were five aspects that are known only to Allah. And then the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited the verse,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنزِلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي
نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ
خَبِيرٌ

“Verily, Allah, with Him (alone), is the knowledge of the Hour. He [alone] sends down the rain, and knows that which is in the wombs. No person knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no person knows in what land he will die. Verily, Allah is All-Knower, All-Aware” (*Luqmaan* 34).¹

One should note how the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) responded to the question. At that time, as shall be discussed below, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was not aware that the questioner was the Angel Gabriel. However, his response was in a general form and its meaning is: “No one being questioned about this matter will have any more knowledge concerning it than any one who may ask such a question.” That is, no one of mankind will ever have knowledge of when the Day of Resurrection will occur. Hence, anyone who claims to have such exact knowledge is either a blatant liar or a deluded fool.

According to al-Qurtubi, the purpose of this question was to put an end to any further asking of when the Day will occur. Many people— as can be seen by reference to it in the Quran and hadith, such as *surah al-Naaziaat* 42-44 and *al-Araaf* 187— would ask the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) about when the Day would occur. Due to the nature of the Prophet’s response in this question and the later statement that the questioner was the Angel Gabriel, it became understood that such knowledge would never become available to mankind. The noblest of the human beings and the noblest of the angels have no knowledge whatsoever of when that Day shall occur. Hence, there is no need to ever ask this question again. Therefore, one can also see that the purpose of this question was different from the purpose of the previous questions. The previous questions were posed in order to extract beneficial knowledge while this question was posed to bring an end to the asking of this particular question.²

¹ According to al-Qurtubi (quoted in ibn Rajab, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 216), the meaning of the verse is that none of mankind shall ever have definite knowledge of those things before they occur. However, one could have conjecture concerning them based on some signs that are apparent to him (such as concerning rainfall). This conjecture is sometimes wrong and sometimes right. Such conjectures are not what is prohibited or denied in this verse. Allah knows best.

² Al-Qurtubi was quoted in ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, pp. 165-166.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

Why is it that the knowledge of the Hour has not been given to mankind? Allah knows best, but there may be two important aspects related to this fact. First, for the individual, the more important matter is not the occurrence of the Hour but the occurrence of his own individual Hour. That is, the more important issue is for the person to realize that he is going to face death. When his death occurs, this is his “Hour,” as his deeds will have come to an end and after that there will be only reckoning. This important aspect was alluded to by the Prophet (peace be upon him) when he once asked by a bedouin about the time of the Hour and he pointed to the youngest boy among them and said,

إِنْ يَعْشُرُ هَذَا لَا يُدْرِكُهُ الْهَرَمُ حَتَّى تَقُومَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَاعَتُكُمْ

“If this [boy] should live, he will not become old and decrepit until your Hour has already been established for you.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Again, the time of the Hour is not what is important. The second important aspect is how one spends one’s life in preparation for the final Hour. On another occasion, a bedouin asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) when the Hour would come and his response was,

وَيْلَكَ وَمَا أَعَدَدْتَ لَهَا

“Woe to you! What have you prepared for it?” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) Hence, the individual is required to prepare for the Hour by faith and good deeds. He has no obligation with respect to when and how it will occur.

He said, “Tell me about its signs ¹.” He answered...

The Importance of the Signs of the Hour

No one can know when the Day of Judgment will occur. However, Allah has mercifully taught His messengers some of the signs that alert one to the fact that the Hour is approaching. These signs play a very important role, especially for those who live at a time distant from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and who did not experience first hand his teaching and example. These

¹ The question was about “signs,” in the plural. In the response, the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned only two signs. This is problematic because, in Arabic, the minimum of a plural is generally considered to be three rather than two, which is a dual form only. A response to this is that two can be considered a plural. Another response is that in other narrations of the hadith, three signs are mentioned. (Cf., ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 166.) The third sign that is mentioned in the other hadith is that the barefoot, scantily clothed, ignorant people will become the leaders of the people.

signs reinforce one's belief in the Prophet (peace be upon him). More importantly, these signs, if one takes the time to reflect upon them, are a reminder of the Day of Judgment. They should revive the heart of the person and make him recall what he is doing on this earth and to where all this is heading.

There is a very direct and clear relationship between the signs of the Hour and *ihsaan*. When one witnesses these signs around him, they should be clear reminders of Allah and one's future meeting with Allah. They should be a reminder that Allah has foreknowledge of everything that is occurring in this world— this is how He could convey those signs to His messenger. Therefore, Allah also has knowledge of everything the person is doing. Allah is watching and aware of every act of His creatures. At the very least, this consciousness, which comes about through witnessing the Signs of the Hour, should make the person worship and fear Allah knowing full well that He is seeing him. This is that level of *ihsaan* known as *al-muraaqabah*, which was explained earlier.

The signs of the Hour can be divided into two types. First are those that occur as part of the changes in everyday life. The second are the extraordinary or supernatural events that will occur just before the actual Hour. In his reply, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) only mentioned some signs of the former category. Perhaps, Allah knows best, this is because these are the signs that have much more of an effect on one's *ihsaan* in everyday worship, although the recognition of these signs are sometimes more difficult or subtle.

Why it is Called "the Hour"

The "Hour"¹ refers to the Last Day or the Day of Judgment. There are a number of explanations for why it is called the Hour. Some say it is called the "Hour" because, although it will last for a very long time, it will be established suddenly, to the point that a person who is holding some food in his hand will not be able to taste it. For example, Allah says in the Quran,

فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ بَعْتَةٌ فَمَقَدَّ جَاءَ أَشْرَاطُهَا

"Do they then await [anything] other than the Hour— that it should come upon them suddenly? But some of its portents have already come" (*Muhammad* 18). Hence, it is referring to the first event or beginning of the Hour that will come all of a sudden.

It could also be referred to as the "Hour" because that is with respect to the "timing" of Allah. Allah says,

¹ During the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the word *saah* ("hour") did not mean "hour" in the sense of sixty minutes. However, it did mean a portion of time that was neither extremely long or extremely short.

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ

“The angels and the *Rooh* (Gabriel) ascend to Him in a Day the measure whereof is fifty thousand years” (*al-Maarij* 4). Hence, it is a very long event but as part of that day, it is like but one hour.¹

Finally, some say it is called an “Hour” in the way of a good omen—hoping that it will pass easily and quickly—in the same way that, in Arabic, an important matter is referred to as the successful matter.

“The slave-girl shall give birth to her master.”

The scholars have differed concerning the interpretation of this sign of the Hour. Indeed, it is difficult to explain many of the signs of the Hour that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) stated. In some cases, perhaps only those who actually live through the events being described will have a complete and correct understanding of what the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was actually alluding to. For example, it may be only in modern times that one truly witnesses and understands what the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant by women who are dressed but naked. Before modern times, the scholars could only hypothesize as to exactly what that was referring to.

Ibn al-Tin says that there are seven explanations for this sign mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Ibn Hajr says that in reality these seven opinions boil down to four separate and distinct opinions. These four are:²

(1) Al-Khattaabi mentions that its meaning is that Islam will spread, dominate the lands of the disbelievers and take their inhabitants as slaves. Then a man will have a child through his slave-girl and that child shall be like her master because she is the daughter of her master. Al-Nawawi states that this is the opinion of the majority of the scholars. However, this interpretation is somewhat problematic. Ibn Hajr points out that such a thing existed during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the early years of Islam. The implication of the speech is that such an event will occur close to the Day of Judgment and will be a sign of its coming. Others give a slightly different interpretation by saying that a woman will give birth to a child and then that child will end up being the king of the land. Hence, the woman will fall under his general citizenry and he will be her master. Some even say that the king will later buy his own mother who was a slave, either out of ignorance or

¹ There is a hadith in *Musnad Ahmad* that states, “By the One in whose hand is my soul, it [the Hour] will be made so easy upon the believer that it will be easier upon him than an obligatory prayer that he used to pray in this world.” However, according to al-Albaani, the chain of this hadith is weak. See al-Albaani’s footnotes to Muhammad al-Tabreezi, *Mishkat al-Masaabeeh* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1985), vol. 3, p. 1544.

² Cf., ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 167.

knowingly, and then use her as a servant. Hence, the mother has given birth to her own master.

(2) A second interpretation is that the slave-girls who have given birth to the owner's children will be sold by the owners. There will be so much selling of such women that the woman's own son will later buy her and not realize that it is his mother. Hence, the one she gave birth to will become her master. According to some scholars, if a slave-girl gives birth to a child, she cannot then be sold and she becomes free on her master's death. Hence, this sign of the Hour reflects either ignorance of the laws of Islam or disdain for the laws of Islam in the later years. However, some scholars say that such sales are permissible so that is neither a sign of ignorance or disdain. Finally, to reconcile the two views, some say that the woman are sold while they are still pregnant and this is absolutely forbidden according to the consensus of the scholars.

(3) A third interpretation is that a woman gives birth to a child. However, that child was not the result of a completely legal act of intercourse, such as the child being the result of fornication or an improper marriage. Then the mother is sold in a proper and correct manner and she continues to be sold until, finally, her own child buys her.

(4) The fourth interpretation is that the children will disobey their mothers. The child will end up treating his own mother like a slave owner treats a slave girl, showing disdain, perhaps beating her and, in general, treating her simply like a servant. In this case, "her master" is either figurative or in the sense of the one who brings up the other. This is the view that ibn Hajr prefers. He states that it is the most general. Furthermore, it is parallel to the next sign that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated. That is, it is further evidence that the society has changed so much that things are, in essence, upside down. This is a sign of the coming of the Hour as things are no longer in the way that they should be.

"And you will see the barefooted, scantily-clothed, destitute shepherds competing in constructing lofty buildings."

The point of this sign is, as al-Qurtubi mentioned, that, once again, the affairs will be turned upside down. The bedouins will be in charge, taking over by force and having the wealth in their hands. Their only concern after that will be competition and boasting in constructing tall buildings. Al-Qurtubi, who died in 671 A.H., said, "We have witnessed that during this time."¹

In general, it means that those not qualified to be in charge and to have the wealth in their hands will be running the affairs and will be in control of the wealth. They will not know the proper way to deal with their wealth or how to

¹ Al-Qurtubi was quoted in al-Shanqeeti, vol. 2, p. 362. Al-Qurtubi's statement, "by force," is based on other narrations of this hadith.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

run the affairs. Hence, they will waste their money in extravagance and frivolous pursuits. Other hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) give the same impression of what will occur before the Hour. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

لَا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حَتَّى يَكُونَ أَسْعَدَ النَّاسِ بِالدُّنْيَا لُكْعُ ابْنِ لُكْعٍ

“The Hour will not be established until the happiest of all people with this world is Luka’ ibn Luka’.”¹ The name Luka’ ibn Luka’ means “the most ignorant, stupid fool, the son of the most ignorant stupid fool.” Another hadith states,

فَإِذَا ضَيَّعَتِ الْأَمَانَةُ فَانْتَظِرِ السَّاعَةَ قَالَ كَيْفَ إِضَاعَتُهَا قَالَ إِذَا وُسِّدَ الْأَمْرُ إِلَى غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ
فَانْتَظِرِ السَّاعَةَ

“If the ‘trust’ is lost, then expect the Hour.” He was asked, “How will it be lost?” He answered, “When the affairs are in the hands of those who are not qualified for it, then expect the Hour.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

Note that the word العراء is usually translated as “naked”. However, al-Qaari points out that it also applies to the person who has left a part of his body that should be covered uncovered.² This is the most likely meaning here and, hence, the translation “scantily-clothed” has been used. Allah knows best.

Summary of the Two Signs Mentioned in the Hadith

Both of the signs indicate that the state of affairs will not be proper. In the first sign, those that are deserving of authority, respect and good treatment— mothers— will be treated with disdain and without their due respect. In the second sign, those that are not deserving of wealth and authority or who do not know how to handle it will receive wealth and authority. One can only imagine what society as a whole must be like when such occurs. Ibn Rajab wrote,

The points that are mentioned in these signs of the Hour in this hadith go back to the fact that matters are not in the hands of qualified people, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned in [another hadith quoted above]... If the barefoot, scantily-clothed shepherds— and they are the people of ignorance and crudeness— are the leaders of the people and

¹ Ibn Hajr states that this hadith is in *Sahih al-Bukhari* but this does not seem to be correct. It was recorded by Ahmad and al-Tirmidhi. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1238.

² Al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 63.

the owners of the resources and wealth, to the point that they compete in constructing buildings, then the entire structure of the religion and worldly affairs will be ruined and in disarray. If the leader of the people is someone who used to be poor and destitute, and he is the ruler over the people, regardless if that is a general rule or a specific rule only in some matters, then it is hardly conceivable that such a person will give the people their rights. Indeed, instead, he will hide from them what wealth he possesses. One of the early scholars stated, "For you to stretch your hand to the mouth of a sea monster and he bites on to it is better than for you to stretch your hand to the hand of a rich person who used to be poor."¹ If in addition to being ignorant, he is also coarse and harsh, then religion will also be ruined. This is because it is of no importance to him to rectify the religion of the people nor to teach them their religion. His only concern is to gather and store wealth. He will not be concerned with how the people's religion has become ruined or what poor soul has lost his life out of need....

If the kings and rulers of the people are of that nature, then all of the other affairs will also be turned upside down. The liar will be believed in and the truthful one will not. The deceitful one will be trusted and the trustworthy one will be deceived. The ignorant one will speak while the scholar will remain silent. Alternatively, there will not be any scholars at all. It is authentically reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "One of the signs of the Hour is that knowledge will be removed and ignorance will be dominant." [Recorded by al-Bukhari.] He also stated, "Knowledge shall be taken away by the taking away of the scholars, until no scholar is left. The people will take ignorant persons as their leaders. They shall ask them and they will reply without knowledge. They are misguided and they misguide others." [Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.] Al-Sha'bi said, "The Hour will not be established until knowledge becomes ignorance and ignorance becomes knowledge." This is all part of the turning upside down of the realities at the end of Time and the affairs being the opposite of what they should be.²

Perhaps American society is very much approaching the first sign. Nowadays, children seem to have more rights than their parents. If a parent even somewhat mildly disciplines his or her child, he or she may be arrested and the children taken away. On the other hand, young teens may even beat up their parents, and hardly get more than a slap on the wrist from the authorities.

¹ The one who made that statement was Sufyaan al-Thauri.

² Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 140-141.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

Perhaps one of the greatest signs of this turning upside down of the ways things should be is the place of the Muslims vis-a-vis the disbelievers today. Although Muslims should be witnesses against mankind, leading mankind and demonstrating the truth of Islam, today that is definitely not the case. Indeed, the case is almost completely the opposite. Muslims are under the control and influence of the disbelievers. This is definitely a case of the affairs being in the wrong hands and may be considered a sign that the Hour is approaching.

Al-Qaari also points out that the first sign, concerning the slave girl giving birth to her master, implies the presence of a great deal of injustice, evil and ignorance. These aspects even reach the higher classes of society, as they are the ones most likely to have slaves and so forth. The second sign implies extreme love for this world and a neglect of what this world leads to in the Hereafter. The desire for this world is also exhibited among the lowest classes who can barely clothe themselves.¹

Then he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] said, “O Umar, do you know who the questioner was...”

Then he went away. I stayed for a long time.

As was noted earlier, the narrations of Umar and Abu Huraira greatly differ as to when the Prophet (peace be upon him) identified the questioner as being the angel Gabriel. Many scholars pointed out that Umar left in search of the person and, upon not finding him, returned to his home which was some distance from the Prophet’s mosque. Al-Qadhaah further speculates that on the following day it was Umar’s neighbors turn to be with the Prophet (peace be upon him), as they used to alternate being with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and then they would tell each other what happened on that day. Hence, it was not until the third day, as is explicitly stated in some narrations, that Umar was told by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) who the questioner was. However, the others who stayed around the Prophet (peace be upon him), such as Abu Huraira, were told shortly afterwards that it was the Angel Gabriel who had asked those questions.²

Then he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] said, “O Umar, do you know who the questioner was?”

In many different narrations of the hadith, it is clear that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself was not aware of the true identity of the

¹ Cf., al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 63.

² Al-Qadhaah, pp. 20-21.

questioner until after the angel had departed. In the narration of Abu Furwah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “By the One who sent Muhammad with the truth, I was not more aware of who he was than any man among you. [I didn’t know] that he was Gabriel.” In the hadith of Abu Amr it states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Glory be to Allah, that was Gabriel who came to teach the people their religion. By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, he never came to me before except that I recognized him, except for this time.” The narration from al-Taimi is similar and states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not know who he was until he departed.¹

“It was [the Angel] Gabriel who came to teach you your religion (*Deen*).”

Commenting on these words, Ibn Uthaimin stated,

[He came to teach the religion] although it was the Prophet (peace be upon him), in reality, who was teaching the religion. However, the Prophet (peace be upon him) called Gabriel the teacher. This is because he was the one who asked and the teaching was due to him. One can conclude from this that the one who is the cause of something is similar to the one who does the direct act. When it comes to capital offenses, the jurists have derived the legal principle: The cause of the act is similar to the one who directly performs the act. For that reason, the Prophet (peace be upon him) called Gabriel a teacher because he was the cause of the teaching of the religion by the Prophet (peace be upon him), through the responses to his questions. Second, if a person asks a question to which he knows the answer and he only asks so that the people would know the answer to that question, he has become a teacher.²

The Angel Gabriel came to teach the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions the *deen*. This *deen* or way of life is actually the religion of Allah. Therefore, for one’s *deen* to be correct, it must be built upon what Allah has revealed, through revelation, by sending the Angel or from the words of His messenger (peace be upon him). If any Muslim wants to know his *deen* he must turn to these sources and he must not turn to other non-Islamic sources to get guidance and understanding of the religion. Allah says in the Quran,

اتَّبِعْ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord. There is none worthy of worship but Him. And turn away from the polytheists” (*al-Anaam* 106). If one is supposed to turn away from them and have nothing to do with them, also one would not go to them for guidance and inspiration. The disbelievers in

¹ For these different narrations, see ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 170.

² Ibn Uthaimin, *Majmoat*, vol. 3, p. 222.

general, those who turn away from what Allah has revealed, only have some small knowledge of the apparent aspects of this world but they actually have no knowledge of the reality of life and man's purpose here. Hence, they can offer no real guidance to anyone. Allah says,

فَاعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٢٩﴾ ذَٰلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن أَهْتَدَىٰ

“Therefore stay away [O Muhammad] from him who turns away from Our Reminder [this Quran] and desires nothing but the life of this world. That is what they could reach of knowledge. Verily, your Lord is He who knows best who goes astray from His path, and He knows best him who receives guidance” (*al-Najm* 29-30).

The Religion (*Deen*)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) described what the Angel taught as being the *Deen* or religion. In Arabic, *deen* is a word that means any creed that is followed, any way of life that is implemented openly and inwardly or any ideology that one follows.¹ Its root implies to submit to something and accept it as the authority or rule. So the *deen* of any person is, in reality, that way of life or ideology to which he submits and by which he lives his life in toto. For the Muslim, his *deen* must be the *deen* of Islam. Therefore, the *deen* or religion of Islam must cover and dominate all of the aspects of one's life.²

Deen, when looked at more closely in the light of this hadith, comprises the states of Islam, *Imaan* and *Ihsaan*. For a person to try to complete his religion, he must try to complete all three aspects. Nomani summarizes this point,

In fact, three things make the sum-total of Faith. Firstly [*sic*], the bondsman surrenders himself wholly to God and casts his life into the mold of submission to Him. This is what Islam actually is and its tenets and practices are the signs and symbols of this fundamental reality. Secondly, the major transcendental truths the Apostles of God have revealed³ and called on mankind to believe in are accepted as true. This is *Imaan*. Thirdly, should God, in His Infinite Mercy, make it possible for one to complete the stages of Islam and *Imaan*, the

¹ Cf., W. al-Umari, p. 55.

² Cf., W. al-Umari, p. 58.

³ This must be some sort of typographical error in the English text. Most likely, it should read, “received”.

third and ultimate stage is that the consciousness of God... became so strong that allegiance was rendered to Him and His commands were carried out as if He was present before our own eyes in all His Glory and Splendour, and watching all our deeds and actions closely. This state of feeling is called *Ihsaan*.¹

Additional Points Related to This Hadith

- In some of the narrations of this hadith, it is stated that since the Prophet (peace be upon him) would sit among his Companions like any one of them, it was difficult for strangers to come and recognize the Prophet (peace be upon him). Hence, the Companions sought permission to erect a special elevated place for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to sit and teach from. Al-Qurtubi concludes from this that it is recommended for the teacher or scholar to sit in a reserved elevated place for the purpose of being recognized and for teaching, if needed.²
- In some narrations of the hadith, it is stated that the Angel Jibreel sat in the same manner that one sits in the ritual prayer.³ According to some commentators, this points out the importance of posture or of the sitting position while gaining knowledge. One should sit in such a way that he will be attentive and will fully grasp the teacher's words.
- Al-Nawawi also concludes from this hadith that if a person or scholar is asked a question and he does not know the response to that question, he must show that he does not know the answer. This is what the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did in response to the angel's question about the occurrence of the Last Day. This will not lessen the person's status in any way. It will be a sign of his piety and fear of Allah, the Exalted.⁴ Indeed, many of the early scholars had a reputation for saying, "I don't know," when asked questions whose responses they did not know. Imam Malik was once asked forty questions and to thirty-two of them, he replied, "I do not know."⁵ Unfortunately, many people do not wish to "demonstrate" their ignorance and attempt to answer questions even when they truly do not know the answers to them. Such a path is very dangerous as the person's ignorant reply may be taken and followed by others.
- This hadith demonstrates that questions and answers are a good way of conveying knowledge. Indeed, asking good questions in itself is a good way of producing knowledge. Gabriel simply asked questions but the Prophet (peace be upon him) described him as the one who was teaching.

¹ Nomani, vol. 1, p. 64.

² See ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 159.

³ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 160.

⁴ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih*, vol. 1, p. 158.

⁵ Al-Shanqeeti, vol. 2, p. 352.

Hadith #2: The Hadith of Jibreel

An expression in Arabic states, “Asking good questions is half of knowledge.”¹ Sultaan says further that the teacher or caller to Islam must use every means to make the subject appealing and interesting to the listener.²

- It is important to note, as al-Nawawi has done, that simply because the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) mentioned something as a sign of the Hour, this does not necessarily mean that such an act is forbidden, blameworthy or permissible. For example, a hadith states that there will be a time when one man will have to look after fifty women. This is obviously not forbidden. Hence, by themselves, no fiqh conclusion can be made from a specific sign of the Hour. Allah knows best.³

Summary of the Hadith

- The pillars or foundation upon which Islam, the submission to Allah, rests are five: the declaration of the testimony of faith, the establishment of the prayers, the paying of Zakat, the fasting of Ramadhaan and the pilgrimage.
- The articles of faith in which all Muslims must believe are six: belief in Allah, the angels, the messengers, the books, the Day of Resurrection and Divine Decree.
- As for *ihsaan*, Al-Nawawi’s following statement provides an excellent summary of the Messenger of Allah’s (peace be upon him) answer to the meaning of *ihsaan*: “This is one of the comprehensive expressions that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was given. This is because if anyone of us could stand in worship while he is seeing Allah, then he would not leave anything that would be in his ability of submission, humility, fear, beautiful features, and combine them all both outwardly and inwardly. One would take care to complete the act in the best possible way.... Hence, the purpose of these words is to encourage purity in worship and recognition by the person that his Lord is watching him, so that he will be as complete as possible when it comes to submission, humility and fear.”⁴
- The religion or *deen* is comprised of the three different levels of *islaam*, *imaan* and *ihsaan*. The one who continues only at the level of Islam until he dies will be saved from being forever in the Hell-fire, although he may enter it due to his sins. On the other end, the one who continues in *ihsaan*

¹ Cf., ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 171.

² Sultaan, p. 49.

³ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih*, vol. 1, p. 159.

⁴ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, vol. 1, p. 158. Al-Suyooti has almost exactly the same words but he does not ascribe them to al-Nawawi. See Jallaal al-Din al-Suyooti, *al-Deebaaaj ala Saheeh Muslim ibn al-Hajjaaj* (Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia: Daar ibn Affaan, 1996), vol. 1, p. 6.

until he dies will go directly to Paradise and will have the pleasure of seeing Allah in the Hereafter.¹

- The knowledge of when the Hour will be established is known only to Allah. The noblest of mankind and the noblest of the angels demonstrated that they have no knowledge of when it will occur. Some Shiites and Sufis make outlandish claims that their Imams and saints have knowledge of the Unseen— some even say that the saints look at the Preserved Tablet. In fact, some even claim that their Imams or saints have all the knowledge, just like Allah.² These beliefs go against the Quran and sunnah and if a person insists on them even after being shown their falsehood, the insistence on this belief takes him out of the fold of Islam.
- Allah has blessed mankind with the knowledge of some of the signs of the Hour. These signs that occur around the person should act as reminders of the coming Hour and Judgment. This should also remind him that Allah sees and knows all things, including what the person himself is doing at any moment.

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 215.

² For quotes from Shiite sources, see Sultaan, p. 51; for quotes of a Sufi nature, see al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 62.

Hadith #3:
Islam Has Been Built on Five [Pillars]

عن أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ
اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
يَقُولُ: بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ وَحَجِّ
الْبَيْتِ وَصَوْمِ رَمَضَانَ
رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ وَمُسْلِمٌ

On the authority of Abu Abdul Rahmaan Abdullah, the son of Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allah be pleased with both of them) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: “Islam is built upon five [pillars¹]: testifying that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the prayers, giving the zakat, making the pilgrimage to the House and fasting the month of Ramadhaan.”

Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary

- عنهما - “on both of them,” this is in reference to both Abdullah ibn Umar and his father Umar.
بني - “has been built”
على - “upon”
خمس - “five”

¹ In their translation of this hadith, Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies make the following comment, “The word ‘pillars’ does not appear in the Arabic but has been supplied for clarity of meaning. Pillars (*arkan*) is the generally accepted term in this context.” Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies, p. 34, fn. 1. The narration from Abdul Razzaaq explicitly mentions “supports” or “props”. In the narration in *Sahih Muslim*, five is in the feminine form, which would imply *arkaan* or pillars. Cf., Ibn Hajar, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 72.

Takhreej

This hadith has been narrated through numerous chains from Abdullah ibn Umar ibn al-Khattaab. It was recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, al-Nasaai, al-Tirmidhi, al-Baihaqi (in three different works), ibn Khuzaima in his *Sahih*, ibn Hibbaan in his *Sahih*, al-Tabaraani in his *al-Kabeer* and numerous others. The hadith has also been narrated from the Companion Jareer ibn Abdullah al-Bajali. Through Jareer it was recorded by al-Tabaraani with a *sahih* chain.¹

General Comments On This Hadith

This hadith is of extreme importance, for it lays down the fundamental aspects of outward submission to Allah. This submission is based on some foundations, in a way similar to a structure. If the person fulfills these aspects, he has laid down a solid ground or foundation for his religion as a whole. The other acts of Islam are completions or finishing touches to this excellent foundation. However, if a person is lacking in any of these pillars, then the entire structure may be threatened, as shall be discussed in the commentary.

About The Narrator: Abdullah ibn Umar ibn al-Khattaab

Abdullah ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (10 Before Hijra/613 C.E.—73 A.H./692 C.E.) was the eldest son of Umar ibn al-Khattaab. He was one of the most outstanding younger Companions. He embraced Islam with his father. He was too young for the battle of Badr but he participated in all battles of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) after that.

He was an extremely pious man. He avoided all of the political strife of his time. He was a learned scholar, known for his piety and strict imitation of prophetic precepts. His religious rulings and example had a great influence over the Madinan school of Imam Malik ibn Anas. He was known as one of the "four Abdullahs" who spread a great deal of knowledge in the early years of Islam. (The other three were Abdullah ibn Abbaas, Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As and Abdullah ibn al-Zubair.) He also participated in the jihad in North Africa.

He was known for having tears in his eyes while narrating hadith. He distinguished himself as a narrator of hadith, second only to the most prolific narrator Abu Hurairah. Some 2,630 hadith have been attributed to his authority. Some of his students included Saeed ibn al-Musayyab, al-Hasan al-Basri, al-Zuhri, Muhammad ibn Sireen, Naafi and many others.

Near the end of his life, he lost his eyesight. He is considered to be the last of the Companions to die in Makkah.

¹ See ibn Muhammad, pp. 57-59.

Hadith #3: Islam Has Been Built Upon Five [Pillars]

“Islam is built upon five [pillars]”

Here, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has given a parable in which he gives a picture of Islam like that of a house. The foundations or pillars of the house are five. If the house is missing these five, then, in reality, it does not exist at all. The other acts of Islam are like complementary parts or parts that add to the completeness of the house. If any of the complementary parts are missing, the house is still standing but it has a deficiency; it is not complete or perfect. However, if all of the pillars are missing, the house will not be standing or in existence at all. In particular, if the main pillar is missing¹, the house cannot stand or be said to exist. This aspect is agreed upon by all scholars.²

This hadith could lead to some confusion because the four acts mentioned are all founded upon the first pillar of the *shahaadah*, as was just mentioned. Obviously, no deed will be of any worth unless the first pillar is fulfilled. But then the question arises: How can a foundation also be a foundation for the other foundations? The reply is that it is permissible to build one thing upon another and, in the end, they all make up one essential structure with more than one pillar. The scholars give an example of a type of house, which may be similar to a tent of leather or fur. This house is built upon five pillars. The main pillar or prop is in the middle while the remaining four pillars are around it and give support to it. However, as long as that middle pillar is there and standing, the house is considered to be existing and standing. If that middle pillar should fall, even if the other pillars are still present, the house would no longer be considered standing. Hence, taken as a whole, all five are the foundations. But individually those other four foundations are still dependent on the health and well-being of the main and most important prop.³

In reality, the first pillar is the axiomatic foundation for the remaining pillars, which are its practical implementation. The first pillar leads to the enactment and fulfillment of the remaining pillars. The firmer the first pillar is for an individual, the stronger will be the remaining pillars. They all must go together and be working in unison. One time al-Hasan al-Basri was present at someone's deathbed. He asked him, “What have you prepared for this moment?” He answered, “I have said the testimony of faith for so many years.” Al-Hasan said, “That is the prop but where are the tent ropes?”⁴ That is, the main prop is supposed to be supported and enacted upon by the acts of Islam. If they are not present, then not much actually exists of the structure.

¹ The main pillar is the testimony of faith.

² Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 145. What if some of the other pillars are missing? This question will be answered separately for each pillar below.

³ Cf., Ibn Hajr, *Fath* (Daar al-Fikr), vol. 1, pp. 72-73; al-Shanqeeti, vol. 1, p. 415.

⁴ Quoted in al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 66.

“testifying that there is none worthy of worship except Allah”

The testimony of faith or *shahaadah* is a combination of negation and affirmation. The negation comes first followed by the exception of affirmation. This is considered the strongest form of all-inclusiveness in the Arabic language. The *shahaadah*, therefore, means: There is absolutely none worthy of worship and there is no true God except Allah and only Allah.

In essence, one is testifying to his belief in the Islamic concept of *tauheed*, as discussed in detail in the previous hadith under the heading “Belief in Allah.”

The Conditions of *La ilaaha illa-llaah*¹

Muslims know that the key to Paradise is the statement, “There is none worthy of worship except Allah.” Yet many Muslims simply rely upon this statement and believe that as long as they have said it, nothing will harm them. Because of this mere verbal statement of the *shahaadah*, they think they will be granted Paradise. However, the mere saying of the statement is not sufficient for salvation. In fact, the hypocrites used to say, “I testify that none is worthy of worship except Allah and...” yet Allah describes them as liars and says that they shall abide in the lowest abyss of the Hell-fire.

This statement or testimony is the key to Paradise. However, its saying must meet certain conditions. Al-Hasan al-Basri once told a person, “What have you prepared for death?” He replied, “The testimony that there is none worthy of worship except Allah.” Al-Hasan told him, “That has some conditions to it. And beware of defaming chaste women.”² The famous Follower Wahb ibn Munabbih was once asked, “Isn’t the statement of *la ilaaha illa-llaah* the key to Paradise?” He answered, “Yes, but every key has ridges. If you come with the key that has the right ridges, the door will open for you. Yet if you do not have the right ridges, the door will not open for you.” These ridges are conditions that differentiate Muslims who will benefit from that statement from those who will not benefit from that statement, no matter how many times a day they may have made that statement.

Before discussing the conditions of the *shahaadah*, there is one more point that should be made. Some people have a tendency to take one hadith or one verse and then, based on that one text, make a general conclusion solely based on that one text. For example, one could conclude from some hadith that

¹ The conditions of the testimony of faith are well-known and discussed in numerous works. Most of the above information has been derived from Hakimi, *Maarij*, vol. 1, pp. 307-315; Abdullah ibn Jibreen, *al-Shahadataan* (no city or publisher given, 1990), pp. 77-86. This author also presented much of this material on the two parts of the *shahaadah* in his *The Friday Prayer: Part II: Khutbahs (I)* (Aurora, CO: IANA, 1994), pp. 4-19; *The Friday Prayer: Part II: Khutbahs (III)* (Ann Arbor, MI: IANA, 1995), pp. 35-42.

² The person al-Hasan was speaking to was a poet who would defame the pious women and that is why al-Hasan made that point to him. See Baadi, vol. 1, pp. 162-164.

Hadith #3: Islam Has Been Built Upon Five [Pillars]

whoever simply says, “There is no God except Allah,” will enter Paradise. But, actually, one must realize that all of the Quran and hadith complement each other and explain one another. To find the correct position on any one question, one must bring together all of the related verses and hadith and see what the true Islamic position is on that question. The same is true for the conditions of the *shahaadah*.

A study of the verses of the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) will show find that the conditions of the *shahaadah* are seven, eight or nine in number depending on how one views them. It is important that every Muslim ensures that he is meeting these conditions in his own life with respect to his own testimony of faith.

The first condition is knowledge or *al-ilm* (العلم). One must have the necessary basic understanding of what is meant by the *shahaadah*. One must understand what the *shahaadah* is affirming and what the *shahaadah* is denying. Allah says in the Quran,

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

“So know that there is no God save Allah, and ask forgiveness for your sin and for the believing men and the believing women” (*Muhammad* 19). Similarly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ

“Whoever dies knowing that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah shall enter Paradise.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

In fact, the *shahaadah* itself is a testimony. When one testifies to something, one must know what it is that he is testifying concerning. Obviously, a testimony about something that one does not have any knowledge of is unacceptable. Allah says in the Quran,

إِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“Save him who bears witness unto the truth knowingly” (*al-Zukhruf* 86).

Therefore, the basics of the *shahaadah* must be understood by the person testifying to it.¹ If he does not understand, for example, that Allah is the only one worthy of worship and that all other gods are false gods, then he does not even have the most elementary understanding of what it is he claims to be testifying to. Such a *shahaadah* cannot be considered a proper one that is acceptable to Allah.

¹ If the person is unfamiliar with detailed knowledge concerning Allah but adheres to the basic fundamental aspects, that does not deny his being a Muslim. However, he must not afterwards reject any detailed aspect once the knowledge or evidence comes to him. Cf., W. al-Umari, p. 49.

The second condition of the *shahaadah* is certainty or *al-yaqeen* (اليقين). This is the opposite of doubt and uncertainty. In Islam, in fact, any kind of doubt concerning anything confirmed in the Quran or the sunnah is equivalent to *kufr* or disbelief.¹ One must, in his heart, be absolutely certain of the truth of the *shahaadah*. One's heart must not be wavering in any way when one testifies to the truth of, "There is none worthy of worship except Allah." Allah describes the true believers as those who have belief in Allah and then their hearts waver not. Allah says,

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ

"The (true) believers are only those who believe in Allah and His messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the sincere" (*al-Hujuraat* 15). Similarly, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَا يَلْقَى اللَّهُ بِهِمَا عَبْدٌ غَيْرَ شَاكٍ فِيهِمَا إِلَّا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ

"No one meets Allah with the testimony that there is none worthy of worship but Allah and I am the Messenger of Allah, and he has no doubt about that statement, except that he will enter Paradise." (Recorded by Muslim.)

On the other hand, Allah describes the hypocrites as those people whose hearts are wavering. For example, Allah says,

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُونَ

"They alone seek leave of you [not to participate in jihad] who believe not in Allah and the Last Day and whose hearts feel doubt, so in their doubt they waver" (*al-Taubah* 45).

Many scholars have stated that the diseases of the heart, or the doubts and suspicions that one allows into one's heart, are more dangerous for a person's faith than lusts and desires. This is because lusts and desires may be satisfied at some time yet the person still knows them to be wrong. He may then eventually be able to control himself, repent and give up those evil deeds.

¹ An exception to this is related to the case of ignorance where one is doubtful about something and is not aware that it is proven in the Quran and sunnah. But once the person knows that something is definitively confirmed in the Quran or sunnah, there is no excuse for him to have any doubt about it.

On the other hand, doubts and suspicions may linger in the heart, with no cure, until the person finally leaves Islam entirely or continues to practice Islam while, in fact, in his heart he does not have the true faith.

One of the greatest cures for these doubts is knowledge. A sound knowledge of the Quran and sunnah removes most, or all, of these doubts. By study and understanding, one may attain certainty. And as one studies and learns more, his certainty will be made firmer and firmer.

The third condition of the *shahaadah* is acceptance or *al-qabool* (القبول). If a person has the knowledge of and certainty in the *shahaadah*, this must be followed by acceptance, with the tongue and heart, of whatever that *shahaadah* implies. Whoever refuses to accept the *shahaadah* and its implications, even if he knows that it is true and is certain about its truth, is a disbeliever. This refusal to accept is sometimes due to pride, envy or other reasons. In any case, the *shahaadah* is not a true *shahaadah* without its unconditional acceptance.

The scholars talk about this condition as a general condition in the manner just described. However, there is also a more detailed aspect that one must be aware of. This condition also means that he believes in whatever is stated in the Quran or stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him), without any right to choose what he wants to believe and what he wants to reject. Allah says in the Quran,

أَفْتُمُونُونَ بَعْضَ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ ۗ

“Do you believe in part of the Book and reject part of it? And what is the reward of those who do so save ignominy in the life of the world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be consigned to the most grievous doom” (*al-Baqara* 85). Allah has also said,

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَىٰ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُّبِينًا

“It is not for a believing man or believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter, to have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and is Messenger has indeed strayed in plain error” (*al-Ahzaab* 36).

The fourth condition of the *shahaadah* is submission and compliance or *al-inqiyad* (الانقياد). This implies the actual physical enactment by deeds of one’s *shahaadah*. This is one of the main meanings of the word Islam itself, “the submission to the will and commands of Allah.” Allah commands this in the Quran,

وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ

“Turn unto Him repentant, and surrender unto Him” (*al-Zumar* 54). Allah has praised those who submit to His command by their actions. Allah says,

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ

“Who is better in religion than he who surrenders his purpose to Allah while doing good” (*al-Nisaa* 125).

Allah has made it a condition of faith that one submits to the command of Allah and His messenger. Allah says,

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا

فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

“But nay, by your Lord, they will not truly believe until they make you [the Messenger of Allah] judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which you decide, and submit with full submission” (*al-Nisaa* 65).

As was discussed in the discussion on *imaan*, the *shahaadah* is a testimony of faith that must be implemented in one’s heart, tongue and actions. In one’s heart, for example, one must have love for Allah, fear of Allah and hope in Him. With one’s tongue, one must testify to the *shahaadah*. With one’s actions, one is supposed to implement what the testimony of faith requires of him. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim and yet performs no corresponding acts, either does not understand Islam whatsoever or is bearing testimony against himself that his testimony of faith is not a true and correct testimony of faith.

This does not mean that the true believer never falls into sin. Indeed, true believers do commit sins. But as long as they recognize that what they did is not correct and it is inconsistent with their obligation of submitting to Allah, then they have not violated the soundness of their testimony or *shahaadah*.

The fifth condition is truthfulness or *al-sidq* (الصدق), as opposed to hypocrisy and dishonesty. This means that when one says the *shahaadah*, he is saying it honestly, actually meaning it. He is not lying when it comes to his testimony of faith or simply trying to deceive or fool anyone. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ يَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صِدْقًا مِنْ قَلْبِهِ إِلَّا حَرَّمَهُ اللَّهُ

عَلَى النَّارِ

Hadith #3: Islam Has Been Built Upon Five [Pillars]

“No one bears testimony to there being no one worthy of worship save Allah, sincerely from his heart, except that Allah makes the Hell-fire forbidden for him.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

Most people have heard of those who say the testimony of faith yet they are not saying it honestly. They do not believe in it. They are simply saying it in order to protect themselves or to get some gain from doing so. These are the hypocrites. Allah has described them in the opening of the Quran with the following words,

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَيَأْتِيَوْمَ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُم بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾
يُخَدِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالدِّينَ ءَامَنُوا وَمَا يُخَدَعُونَ إِلَّا أُنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾
فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ

“And of mankind are some who say, ‘We believe in Allah and the Last Day,’ when they believe not. They think to beguile Allah and those who believe, and they beguile none save themselves, but they perceive not. In their hearts is a disease, and Allah increases their disease. A painful doom is theirs because they lie” (*al-Baqara* 8-10).

The *shahaadah* of those who become Muslims only to benefit from being Muslim and not because they believe in Islam will be rejected by Allah in the Hereafter. They will face a painful punishment due to their lying.

The sixth condition is a pure sincerity or *al-ikhlaas* (الإخلاص). When one declares the *shahaadah*, one must do that solely for the sake of Allah. One must not do it for any other reason or anyone else’s sake. In this manner, the meaning of purity is the opposite of *shirk* or ascribing partners with Allah. One becomes and remains Muslim solely to serve Allah, to avoid His anger and punishment and to gain His mercy and reward. Allah says in the Quran,

فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ

“Worship Allah, making religion pure for him” (*al-Zumar* 2). Allah also says,

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ

وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ

“And they are ordered not else than to serve Allah, keeping religion pure for Him, as men by nature upright and to establish worship and to pay the poor-due. That is the true religion” (*al-Bayyinah* 5). The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ حَرَّمَ عَلَى النَّارِ مَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَتَّبِعِي بِذَلِكَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ

“Allah has forbidden for the Hell-fire anyone who says, ‘There is no one worthy of worship except Allah,’ and says so desiring the face [and pleasure] of Allah.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

This is something that all Muslims should think about, but especially those who grew up in Muslim families and were born Muslim. Everyone should be clear to himself that he is Muslim only for the sake of Allah. A Muslim cannot be a Muslim for the sake of his parents, friends, family, community or worldly goal. It must be clear in the mind that one is a Muslim for the sake of Allah first, last and only.

The seventh condition is love or *al-mahabbah* (المحبة). That is, the believer loves this *shahaadah*, he loves in accordance with the *shahaadah*, he loves the implications and requirements of the *shahaadah* and he loves those who act and strive based on this *shahaadah*. This is a necessary condition of the *shahaadah*. If a person makes the *shahaadah* but does not love the *shahaadah* and what it stands for, then, in fact, his faith is not complete. It is not the faith of a true believer. If he has no love for this *shahaadah* or if he actually feels hatred for it, he has negated his *shahaadah*.

The true believer puts no one as an equal to Allah in his love. Allah says in the Quran,

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ

“Yet of mankind are some who take unto themselves (objects of worship which they set as) rivals to Allah, loving them with a love like (that which is due to) Allah only. However, those who believe are stauncher in their love of Allah” (*al-Baqara* 165). Elsewhere Allah says,

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ
وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ
إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ
بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

“Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brethren, your wives, your tribe, the wealth you have acquired, merchandise for which you fear that there will be no sale, or dwellings you desire are dearer to you than Allah and His messenger and striving in His way: then wait till Allah brings His command to pass. Allah guides not wrongdoing folk” (*al-Taubah* 24). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ وَجَدَ حَلَاوَةَ الْإِيمَانِ أَنْ يَكُونَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا

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“Whoever has three characteristics has tasted the sweetness of faith. [The first of these] is that he loves Allah and His Messenger more than he loves anyone else...” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

An eighth condition of the *shahaadah* is that the person who makes the *shahaadah* must deny every other object of worship. Although that is clear in the words of the testimony of faith, it does not seem clear to everyone who makes that testimony. Therefore, it needs to be mentioned explicitly.

In *surah al-Baqara*, Allah reminds Muslims of this important aspect of the *shahaadah*. The *shahaadah* is not merely an affirmation but it is both an affirmation and a negation. Allah states,

فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا
أَنْفِصَامَ لَهَا

“And he who rejects false deities and believes in Allah has grasped a firm handhold which will never break” (*al-Baqara* 256). The Prophet (peace be upon him) emphasized this point when he said,

مَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَكَفَرَ بِمَا يُعْبَدُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ مَالَهُ وَدَمَهُ وَحِسَابَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ

“Whoever says there is no one worthy of worship except Allah and denies whatever is worshipped besides Allah, then his wealth and blood are protected and his accounting will be with Allah.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

Although this condition should be obvious to everyone who says the words of the *shahaadah*, one can still find Muslims who say the *shahaadah* and then make acts of worship for beings or things other than Allah. One can find them going to the graveyards and worshipping those in the graves. They will perform acts of worship, not for the sake of Allah, but for the sake of the dead “saints” (*auliya*) in the grave.

The ninth condition of the *shahaadah* is that the Muslim adheres to the *shahaadah* until he dies. This is a must if the *shahaadah* is to mean anything in the Hereafter. One cannot rest on his laurels of what he may have done in the past. No, indeed, the *shahaadah* must be his banner until his death. Allah says in the Quran,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O believers, observe your duty to Allah with right observance, and die not save as Muslims [surrendering yourselves to Allah]” (*ali-Imraan* 102).

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah ¹

Most everyone knows that to enter into Islam one must bear witness that there is none worthy of worship save Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Many times the first part of the *shahaadah* or testimony is discussed in detail. However, it is just as important to understand the meaning and the implications of the second part of the *shahaadah*. Indeed, sometimes one strays from the Straight Path and from Islam itself because he is not implementing the second part of the *shahaadah* properly.

When one testifies that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, he is stating his belief that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was chosen by Allah to be His Messenger and to convey His Message. Allah says in the Quran,

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ^{٥٦}

“And your Lord creates whatsoever He wills and He chooses” (*al-Qasas* 68). Allah creates and has power to do all things. Allah specifically chose the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be His Messenger. In another verse, Allah says,

اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ^{٥٧}

“Allah knows best with whom to place His Message” (*al-Anaam* 124).

This implies some characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as obviously Allah, due to His justice, wisdom and mercy, would not choose one who is treacherous or lying to be His Messenger. Allah would not choose anyone for such an important mission whom He knew would not convey the message or who would use the position to his own advantage. If anyone claims that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not actually convey the entire message or that he distorted it in any way, he is actually saying that Allah did not know who was the correct or best person to be a messenger. This is obvious disbelief.

Second, when one makes the *shahaadah*, he is also testifying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been sent for all of mankind until the Day of Judgment. Allah says in the Quran,

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا

“Say [O Muhammad]: O mankind! Verily, I am sent to you all as the Messenger of Allah” (*al-Araaf* 158). Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

¹ In preparing this section, the author once again benefited greatly from ibn Jibreen, *al-Shahadataan*, pp. 29-76.

أُعْطِيتُ خَمْسًا لَمْ يُعْطَهُنَّ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ قَبْلِي... وَكَانَ النَّبِيُّ يُبْعَثُ إِلَى قَوْمِهِ خَاصَّةً
وَبُعِثْتُ إِلَى النَّاسِ كَافَّةً

“I have been given five aspects that were not given to any prophet before me... [One of which is] every prophet was sent only to his people while I have been sent to all of mankind.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

It is obligatory upon everyone from the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) until the Day of Judgment to believe in and follow the Prophet (peace be upon him). If the message of Islam clearly reaches a person and he still refuses to believe in and follow the Prophet (peace be upon him), he is a disbeliever and will be in the Hell-fire forever— unless he repents and embraces Islam.

However, this also implies that the Prophet’s teachings and his sunnah are valid and obligatory upon all of mankind until the Day of Judgment. That is, his example and teaching was not simply for the people of Arabia at his time. Instead, it is just as valid and just as important for each and every Muslim today, whether he be in New York or Malaysia.

Some people seem to try to resist the idea that they have to follow the Prophet (peace be upon him). When they do so, they must realize that they are going against what they have testified to. They have testified that the Prophet’s message, which includes both the Quran and his inspired sunnah, is for all of mankind— including each and everyone alive today.

Third, when one declares the *shahaadah*, he is testifying that he believes with certainty that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) conveyed the message— he conveyed it correctly, he conveyed all of it, and he conveyed it clearly. Allah says in the Quran,

وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

“The Messenger’s duty is only to convey (the message) in a clear way” (*al-Noor* 54). The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself said,

قَدْ تَرَكْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْبَيْضَاءِ لَيْلُهَا كَنَهَارُهَا لَا يَزِيغُ عَنْهَا بَعْدِي إِلَّا هَالِكٌ

“I left you on a bright path whose night and day are alike. No one strays from it after me except he is destroyed.”¹

The Prophet (peace be upon him) conveyed all of the guidance and revelation that he received from Allah. He conveyed and explained it in a clear manner. Therefore, when one makes the *shahaadah*, he is also testifying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) conveyed all the aspects of the religion— its

¹ Recorded by Ahmad and al-Baihaqi. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami al-Sagheer*, vol. 2, p. 805, hadith no. 4369.

fundamental as well as its secondary aspects. There is no part of the religion that one needs for his guidance that was not conveyed to mankind or that Allah or the Prophet (peace be upon him) may have possibly forgotten.

Therefore, when this complete and clear guidance from the Prophet (peace be upon him) is present, there is no need for any Muslim to turn to other sources for guidance. There is no need for one to turn to the books of the Jews or Christians. Indeed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) told Umar, when he saw him reading the Torah, that if the Prophet Moses were alive at his time, he would also have to follow the way of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).¹ There is no need for any Muslim to turn to the Greek philosophers, for example, to learn about theology. In fact, there is no need for Muslims to turn the religious or spiritual teachings of any non-Muslims to get guidance. All that is needed is to be found in the Quran and sunnah. This is part of what the Muslim is testifying to. The Muslim bears witness that the Prophet (peace be upon him) conveyed the entire message. This is all part of the meaning of the *shahaadah*.

When one declares, "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah," one is also declaring that he is the final prophet sent by Allah. Allah says in the Quran,

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ

"Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the Prophets" (*al-Ahzaab* 40).

There is to be no prophet who is going to come after the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). No new prophet and no new scripture will come that will abrogate what the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) brought. Furthermore, if anyone after the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) claims to be a prophet, it is known automatically that such a person is a liar and a deceiver.² He must be opposed and it should be declared to all that his claim to prophethood is false. To accept anyone as a prophet after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is to falsify one's declaration of the *shahaadah*.

When one makes the testimony of faith or the *shahaadah*, this not only implies that he believes in certain things but it also implies that he accepts certain responsibilities that stem from that *shahaadah*. For example, when he says that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, for that *shahaadah* to be a correct form of *shahaadah*, it means that he is now taking on the responsibility of worshipping no one other than Allah. Similarly, when one

¹ This is recorded by Ahmad and ibn Maajah. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 805.

² The Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) will return before the Day of Judgment. However, he will not be coming as a prophet or messenger but only as a follower of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his *shareeah*.

says, “I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah,” he is taking on certain responsibilities with respect to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). When he is lacking in any of these responsibilities, then he is lacking in his complete fulfillment of his testimony of faith. It can even get to the point that he negates his *shahaadah* completely by refusing to fulfill his responsibility to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

One of these obligations toward the Prophet (peace be upon him) is to love him. This does not just imply any form of love but complete *imaan* requires that one loves the Prophet (peace be upon him) more than anyone or anything else of this world. Allah says in the Quran,

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ ءَابَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ
وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسْكِنٌ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ
إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ
بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

“Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your kindred, the wealth that you have gained, the commerce in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you delight are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger, and striving hard and fighting in His cause, then wait until Allah brings about His Decision (torment). And Allah guides not the people who are disobedient” (*al-Taubah* 24).

Second, when one makes the testimony of faith, this means that he is accepting the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as his example of how to live and behave in a way that is correct and pleasing to Allah. Allah says in the Quran,

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ
الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

“Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example to follow for him who hopes in (a good meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much” (*al-Ahzaab* 21). Allah also says,

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ

“Say (O Muhammad): If you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you your sins” (*ali-Imraan* 31)

It is very strange that some people can declare the testimony of faith and declare that Muhammad is the Messenger and Prophet of Allah— yet at the

same time they do not consider him an example of the way of life that a believer should follow. Not only do they not take him as an example for themselves, they actually oppose others who do take the Prophet (peace be upon him) as their example. This is nothing but a clear sign that such a person does not have a clear understanding of the meaning and implications of the testimony of faith that he made.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said,

أَمَّا وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لأَحْشَاكُمُ لِلَّهِ وَأَتَّقَاكُمْ لَهُ لَكِنِّي أَصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ وَأُصَلِّي وَأَرْقُدُ وَأَتَزَوَّجُ
النِّسَاءَ فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَن سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

“I swear by Allah that I am the most fearful of Allah and most conscious of Him than all of you. But I also [as part of my sunnah] fast and break my fast, pray and sleep [at night] and I marry women. Whoever turns away from my sunnah is not from me [that is, is not one of my true followers].” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained that he is the most fearful of Allah and God-conscious. Therefore, there is no excuse for anyone not to follow his example and guidance. But he also stated that the one who turns away from his practice and example is not from him. One cannot truthfully claim to believe in and accept the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and, at the same time, refuse to accept his life as the example that one must strive to emulate.

Ruling Concerning One who Violates the *Shahaadah*

Anyone who knowingly and willingly violates the *shahaadah* becomes a disbeliever. There is agreement of all the scholars on this point. For example, if anyone worships anything or anybody else along with his worship of Allah, such as worshipping Jesus along with worshipping Allah, then that person becomes a disbeliever. Similarly, if anyone curses the Prophet (peace be upon him) or claims that he was a liar, this person has violated the second portion of his testimony of faith and, thereby, falls outside of the fold of Islam.

What About the Other Articles of Faith?

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated the pillars of Islam. However, he did not mention the other articles of faith like he did in the Hadith of Gabriel. The reason was that there was no need to do so. The other articles are encompassed and included under the second part of the testimony of faith. If a person is accepting the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a Messenger of Allah, it means that he believes in all of the aspects that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) taught. Hence, this must include all of

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the other articles of faith that the Prophet (peace be upon him) explicitly mentioned in the hadith of Gabriel.¹ In other words, the articles of faith were implicitly implied as soon as the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned the testimony of faith.

"establishing the prayers"

The Meaning of *salaat* ("prayer")

Salaat is a word that existed in the Arabic language before the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). However, its meaning in Islam is something different and special. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) demonstrated the proper manner of prayer that is pleasing to Allah. Hence, he said,

صَلُّوا كَمَا رَأَيْتُمُونِي أُصَلِّي

"Pray in the manner that you have seen me praying."²

Although the *shareeah* definition of the term *salaat* is quite clear, many times an understanding of a word's root or derivation sheds more light on the understanding of the concept itself. The generally accepted view is that the word *salaat* lexically means *dua* (supplication). The *salaat* itself is composed of a number of supplications.³

Prayer and supplications are from the most important aspects of worship. The worshipper turns to the one he is worshipping and invokes him. On this point, Muhammad Rasheed Ridha wrote,

¹ Cf., al-Shanqeeti, vol. 1, p. 412.

² This is one of the strongest evidences for the place of the sunnah in Islam. Without referring to the sunnah, no one could possibly know the correct form of prayer, although it is something essential to Islam. Those who claim to follow the Quran and yet refuse to follow the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are simply displaying their ignorance because it is not possible to know how the Quran is to be applied without reference to the Prophet's explanation and implementation of the Quran itself. This is above and beyond the fact that it is the Quran that obliges Muslims to follow and obey the Prophet (peace be upon him).

³ Although *dua* is generally considered the meaning of the word *salaat*, ibn al-Jauzi mentions other possible derivations. One interpretation is that the word comes from the expression, *salait al-ood*. That is where one softens and straightens a piece of wood by burning it. The person who prays also becomes softened and humbles himself before Allah through the prayer. Al-Qurtubi adds yet some other possible derivations, including it being derived from "constancy or continuance". In other words, when one is continually burned by a fire, the expression is *saliya bi-l-naar*. In this way, the word implies, says al-Qurtubi, that one must continue to worship Allah in the manner that He has so prescribed. Cf., Abdul Rahman ibn al-Jauzi, *Zaad al-Maseer fi Ilm al-Tafseer* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1987), vol. 1, p. 20; Muhammad al-Qurtubi, *al-Jaami li-Ahkaam al-Quran* (Beirut: Daar Ihyaa al-Turaath al-Arabi, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 169.

Salat is the showing of one's need and dependence upon the worshipped one, by speech, action or both. This is what is meant by their statement, "The meaning of *salat* is supplication," as one demonstrates his need for the Great, the Noble, even if just in action, in order to bring about some need, continuation of some bounty or repelling of some harm or punishment.¹

Rasheed Ridha states about the form of the Islamic prayer,

Prayer, in the manner we have just mentioned [where one demonstrates his need and reliance upon his Lord] is demonstrated in Islam in the best way possible. This is the prayer that Allah has made obligatory upon the Muslims. These statements and actions, starting with the opening statement of "Allah is greatest" and ending with the salutations, in the way that the confirmed sunnah has shown, is one of the best ways to express the feeling of need for the worshipped. It also demonstrates the soul's admiration and awe [for the one he is worshipping], if the person establishes it and performs it in its proper manner.²

The Meaning of "Establishing the Prayers"

A very important aspect that one should note about this hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as well as about the Hadith of Gabriel is that what is commanded is not simply the "performance" of prayer.

Al-Raaghib al-Isfahaani points out that the word for "performer of prayer" is rarely used in the Quran. In fact, one of the few verses in which Allah ever describes the "performers of prayers" is in the verse,

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

"So woe unto those performers of prayers who delay their prayer from its stated fixed time" (*al-Maa'oon* 4-5). Allah is ordering something very different from the simple act of "performing prayers". Allah is requiring from the believers *iqaaamat al-salaat* ("the establishment of the prayers"). Hence, one of the pillars of Islam is not simply praying but it is something special, which Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) called, "establishing the prayer." Only if one performs the prayer properly and correctly is one deserving of praise. This points out that the number of people who pray are many while the number that establish the prayer are few. This is like the statement narrated

¹ Muhammad Rasheed Ridha, *Tafseer al-Quran al-Hakeem* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 128.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 128-129.

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from Umar about the *Hajj*, “The number who performed the Hajj are few while the riders [present at the *Hajj*] are many.”¹

Al-Dausiri also pointed out one difference between the two phrases of “establishing the prayer” and “performing the prayer.” He said, “[Allah] did not say ‘performers of prayer’ but He said, ‘those who establish the prayer.’ Allah distinguished between them in order to distinguish between the true and real prayer and the prayer in form only. The true prayer is the prayer of the heart and soul, the prayer of humility, the prayer of those who stand silently and in fear in front of Allah.”² The prayer “in form only” was never the goal of the command.

Definitely part of the establishing of the prayer is the establishment of the spiritual and inward aspects of the prayer, as al-Dausiri has alluded to. But that is certainly not the only difference between the two as can be seen in the definition or statements about “establishing the prayer” as given by many of the scholars of Islam. For example, the famous commentator on the Quran, ibn Jareer al-Tabari wrote, “Establishing it means to perform it within its proper limits, with its obligatory aspects, with what has been made obligatory concerning it by the one upon whom it has been made obligatory.” Then he quoted the Companion ibn Abbaas as saying, “Establishing the prayer is to perform its bowing, prostrations and reciting in a complete manner as well as having fear of Allah and complete attention to it.”³ The early scholar Qataada also stated, “The establishing of the prayer is to stick to and guard its timing, ablution, bowing and prostration.”⁴

Al-Raazi has made the following conclusion concerning its meaning,

[The praise that is bestowed upon those who establish the prayer] is only for those who establish it on a continual basis without any shortcoming in fulfilling its pillars and conditions. In the same way, the one who ‘establishes’⁵ the provision for the soldiers is described as such only when he fulfills everyone’s rights without any stinginess or shortcoming.⁶

In general, one can say that the “establishing of the prayer,” as mentioned in this hadith and the hadith of the Angel Gabriel, means that one performs and executes the prayer in the proper manner as prescribed in the

¹Cf., Al-Raaghhib al-Isfahaani, *Mu’jam Mufradaat Alfaadh al-Quraan* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, n.d.), p. 433.

² Abdul Rahman al-Dausiri, *Safwat al-Athaar wa al-Mafaheem min Tafseer al-Quran al-Adheem* (Kuwait: Daar al-Arqam, 1981), vol. 2, p. 8.

³Muhammad ibn Jareer al-Tabari, *Jami al-Bayaan an Taweel Ayi al-Quran* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1988), vol. 1, p. 104.

⁴ Quoted in ibn Katheer, vol. 1, p. 168.

⁵ This expression used for the one who supplies, or “establishes”, the soldiers with their food and provisions is from the same root as “the establishing” of the prayer.

⁶ Al-Fakhar al-Raazi, *Al-Tafseer al-Kabeer* (Beirut: Daar Ihyaa al-Turath al-Arabi, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 29.

Quran and sunnah. This includes both the outward as well as the inward aspects of the prayer. Neither of the two are sufficient in themselves to truly establish the prayer. One must be in a state of purity for the prayer. One must perform the prayer in its proper time. One should, in the case of men, perform the prayer in congregation in a mosque. One must perform the prayer according to its rules and regulations, at the same time, though, the physical acts must be accompanied with diligence, submission, humbleness, calmness and so on. One must perform all of the acts of the prayer properly and in the manner demonstrated by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). These are all part of establishing the prayer. These are essential aspects of this very important foundation of the entire structure of Islam.

From all of the above it is clear that what Allah is referring to is not something light or something that can be taken lightly. It is to fulfill the prayers in the best way that one can do so, according to the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), with the correct intention and with the proper attention on the prayer.

It is clear, therefore, that this pillar of Islam is something specific. If a person performs it properly and correctly, then one can say that he has “prayed” and he has “established the prayer”. But if one does not do so, then, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself alluded to, the act of prayer may itself be negated. This was the case when the Prophet (peace be upon him) told the person in the mosque three times, after he had performed the prayer in an inadequate manner,

ارْجِعْ فَصَلِّ فَإِنَّكَ لَمْ تُصَلِّ

“Go back and pray for you have not prayed.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

However, it may be that a person establishes the prayer to some extent. The person has, from a legal point of view, performed his prayer but the reward from Allah for that prayer may be lacking. As the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said,

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَنْصَرِفُ وَمَا كُتِبَ لَهُ إِلَّا عَشْرُ صَلَاتِهِ تُسَعُّهَا تُمْنُهَا سُبْعُهَا سُدُسُهَا خُمْسُهَا
رُبْعُهَا ثُلُثُهَا نِصْفُهَا

“A person may finish from [the prayer] and all that is recorded for him of his prayer is one-tenth of it, one-ninth, one-eighth, one-seventh, one-sixth, one-fifth, one-fourth, one-third or one-half.”¹

¹ Recorded by Abu Dawood and Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 335.

Hadith #3: Islam Has Been Built Upon Five [Pillars]

The meaning of “establishment of the prayer” has been stressed here because that is what the pillar of Islam is. This pillar is not simply the performance of the prayer. It is not performing it in any way or with just physical motions. Nor is it simply praying in the heart without any physical parts to it whatsoever. Nor is it praying the prayer at the time one finds convenient. One must be careful to perform this pillar of Islam in the best and correct manner. On this point, Nadwi wrote,

Salat [prayer] is not merely the name of certain physical movements. It is not a wooden, lifeless ritual or something of a military discipline in which one’s choice or volition has no place. It is an act in which all the three aspects of human existence, physical, mental and spiritual, find their due expression. The body, the mind and the heart participate in it jointly and in an ideal manner. The acts of standing erect, kneeling and prostration appertain to the body, recitation appertains to the tongue, reflection and contemplation to the mind, and fear, repentance and lamentation to the heart...

Human personality is a many-sided thing. It is made up of the body, the mind and the heart. All the fundamental aspects of human existence are represented in *Salat* which is the foremost manifestation of faith. Some religious legists, men of prayer and devoutness, and Jews of the last phase saw only physical action in it while among the Oriental mystics and intellectuals some held it merely to be a form of contemplation and meditation. Yet again, many an ignorant Christian monk and so-called Muslim ascetic thought that it was symbolic of love and devotion, grace and adoration, warmth and ardor, sorrow and broken-heartedness and awe and repentance alone. They all stopped at what they imagined, but, as a little reflection will show, these people were sadly misguided and ignorant of the marvelous comprehensiveness of the institution of *Salat*.¹

The Importance of the Prayer

The importance of the prayer in Islam cannot be overstated. It is the first pillar of Islam that the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned after mentioning the testimony of faith, by which one becomes a Muslim. It was made obligatory upon all the prophets and for all peoples. Allah has declared its obligatory status under majestic circumstances. For example, when Allah spoke directly to Moses, He said,

¹ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *The Four Pillars of Islam* (Lucknow, India: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1976), pp. 22-23.

وَأَنَا آخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى ﴿١٣﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا
فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

“And I have chosen you, so listen to that which is inspired to you. Verily, I am Allah! There is none worthy of worship but I, so worship Me and offer prayer perfectly for My remembrance” (*Taha* 13-14).

Similarly, the prayers were made obligatory upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) during his ascension to heaven. Furthermore, when Allah praises the believers, such as in the beginning of *surah al-Muminoon*, one of the first descriptions He states is their adherence to the prayers.

Once a man asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the most virtuous deed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that the most virtuous deed is the prayer. The man asked again and again. The first three times, the Prophet (peace be upon him) again answered, “The prayer,” then on the fourth occasion he stated, “Jihad in the way of Allah.”¹

The importance of the prayer is demonstrated in many of the Prophet’s statements. For example, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

أَوَّلُ مَا يُحَاسَبُ بِهِ الْعَبْدُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ الصَّلَاةُ فَإِنْ صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ لَهُ سَائِرُ
عَمَلِهِ وَإِنْ فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ سَائِرُ عَمَلِهِ

“The first matter that the slave will be brought to account for on the Day of Judgment is the prayer. If it is sound, then the rest of his deeds will be sound. And if it is bad, then the rest of his deeds will be bad.”²

The importance of the prayers lies in the fact that no matter what actions one performs in his life, the most important aspect is one’s relationship to Allah, that is, one’s faith (*imaan*), God-consciousness (*taqwa*), sincerity (*ikhlaas*) and worship of Allah (*‘ibaadah*). This relationship with Allah is both demonstrated and put into practice, as well as improved and increased, by the prayer. Therefore, if the prayers are sound and proper, the rest of the deeds will be sound and proper; and if the prayers are not sound and proper, then the rest of the deeds will not be sound and proper, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself stated.

In reality, if the prayer is performed properly— with true remembrance of Allah and turning to Him for forgiveness— it will have a lasting effect on

¹ This is from a hadith recorded by Ahmad and ibn Hibbaan. According to al-Albaani, the hadith is *hasan*. Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Targheeb wa al-Tarheeb* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1982), vol. 1, p. 150.

² Recorded by al-Tabaraani. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 503.

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the person. After he finishes the prayer, his heart will be filled with the remembrance of Allah. He will be fearful as well as hopeful of Allah. After that experience, he will not want to move from that lofty position to one wherein he disobeys Allah. Allah has mentioned this aspect of the prayer when He has said,

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

“Verily, the prayer keeps one from the great sins and evil deeds” (*al-Ankaboot* 45). Nadwi has described this effect in the following eloquent way,

Its aim is to generate within the subliminal self of man such spiritual power, light of faith and awareness of God as can enable him to strive successfully against all kinds of evils and temptations and remain steadfast at times of trial and adversity and protect himself against the weaknesses of the flesh and the mischief of immoderate appetites.¹

The overall affect that the properly performed prayers should have upon humans is described in other verses in the Quran:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا ﴿١٠١﴾ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ

“Verily, man was created impatient, irritable when evil touches him and niggardly when good touches him. Except for those devoted to prayer, those who remain constant in their prayers...” (*al-Maarij* 19-23).

As for the Hereafter, Allah’s forgiveness and pleasure is closely related to the prayers. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

خَمْسُ صَلَوَاتٍ افْتَرَضَهُنَّ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مِنْ أَحْسَنَ وَضُوعَهُنَّ وَصَلَاهُنَّ لِوَقْتِهِنَّ وَأَتَمَّ رُكُوعَهُنَّ وَخُشُوعَهُنَّ كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ إِنْ شَاءَ غَفَرَ لَهُ وَإِنْ شَاءَ عَذَّبَهُ

“Allah has obligated five prayers. Whoever excellently performs their ablutions, prays them in their proper times, completes their bows and *khushoo*² has a promise from Allah that He will forgive him. And whoever

¹ Nadwi, p. 24.

² *Khushoo*’ in the prayer is where the person’s heart is attuned to the prayer. This feeling in the heart is then reflected on the body. The person remains still and calm. His gaze is also lowered. Even his voice is affected by this feeling in the heart. For more details on this concept (as well as the difference between it and *khudhoo*’), see Muhammad al-Shaayi, *Al-Furooq al-Laughawiyah*

does not do that has no promise from Allah. He may either forgive him or He may punish him.”¹

The prayers are a type of purification for a human being. He turns and meets with his Lord five times a day. As alluded to above, this repeated standing in front of Allah should keep the person from performing sins during the day. Furthermore, it should also be a time of remorse and repentance, such that he earnestly asks Allah for forgiveness for those sins that he committed. In addition, the prayer in itself is a good deed that wipes away some of the evil deeds that he performed. These points can be noted in the following hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ أَنَّ نَهْرًا بِيَابِ أَحَدِكُمْ يَغْتَسِلُ فِيهِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ خَمْسًا مَا تَقُولُ ذَلِكَ يُتَّقِي مِنْ
 دَرَنِهِ قَالُوا لَا يُتَّقِي مِنْ دَرَنِهِ شَيْئًا قَالَ فَذَلِكَ مِثْلُ الصَّلَوَاتِ الْخَمْسِ يَمْحُو اللَّهُ بِهِ
 الْخَطَايَا

“If a person had a stream outside his door and he bathed in it five times a day, do you think he would have any filth left on him?” The people said, “No filth would remain on him whatsoever.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, “That is like the five daily prayers: Allah wipes away the sins by them.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

الصَّلَوَاتُ الْخَمْسُ وَالْجُمُعَةُ إِلَى الْجُمُعَةِ كَفَّارَاتٌ لِمَا بَيْنَهُنَّ

“The five daily prayers and the Friday Prayer until the Friday Prayer act as expiation for what is between them.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

Finally, al-Saadi points out that prayer is the greatest assistant in achieving one’s good in both this life and the Hereafter. He quotes Allah’s saying,

وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ

“Seek help in patience and prayer” (*al-Baqara* 45). He says that this verse implies, “Seek help concerning any matter in patience and prayer.” With respect to one’s religion, if a person is constant and regular in his prayers, it makes it easy for him to perform the good deeds, as his soul feels at rest with them and he looks for their reward from Allah. At the same time, the prayer

wa Atharahaah fi Tafseer al-Quran al-Kareem (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ubaikaaan, 1993), pp. 249-254.

¹ Recorded by Malik, Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Nasaai and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 616.

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lessens his desire and craving to perform the evil deeds. As for matters of this world, the prayer makes the difficulties and hardships easier for him to bear. Allah will reward him due to his prayers by making his matters easier for him and by blessing him in his wealth and deeds.¹

The Ruling Concerning One Who Does not Pray

There is a difference of opinion among the scholars concerning the one who fails to perform this ever important pillar of Islam. The question is whether or not one who does not perform the prayer still remains in the fold of Islam. That is, does one become a disbeliever by the fact that he does not pray? In general, one may break down those who do not pray into the following categories:²

(1) Those who, by agreement, are not disbelievers. This includes those people who may have missed a prayer due to forgetfulness or sleep. Obviously, such people are not considered disbelievers.

(2) Those who, by agreement of all scholars, are disbelievers. This category includes the following groups of people:

(i) The one who does not perform the prayer and rejects the idea that it is obligatory to pray. This person is a disbeliever by consensus as he is going against numerous and definitive evidences from the Quran and sunnah.

(ii) The one who refuses to pray out of pride or envy. This is the person who recognizes the truth of Islam yet he does not want to submit to Islam or perform the prayer out of hatred for the religion, out of pride that he does not feel that he must perform such an act and so forth.

(iii) The one who does not pray out of disdain and ridicule for the prayer. This person is disdainful or ridiculing one of the foundations of Islam and, for that reason, this takes him out of the fold of Islam.

(iv) The one who refuses to pray even though he is being threatened by the proper authorities with being killed as a punishment for not praying. This person is considered a disbeliever since he refuses to submit even with a threat of death.

(v) The one who simply disregards the prayer completely, without recognizing that it is obligatory or rejecting it as an obligation.

(3) Concerning the third category, there is a difference of opinion whether or not these people fall outside of the fold of Islam. These are the people who accept the obligation of prayer and do not deny its importance. They recognize that they are committing a sin by not praying. Yet, still, out of

¹ Abdul Rahman al-Saadi, *al-Riyaadh al-Naadhirah wa al-Hadaaiq al-Nayyarah al-Zaahirah fi al-Aqaaid wa al-Funoon al-Mutanawaah al-Faakhirah* (Riyadh: Ramaadi li-l-Nashr, 1996), pp. 26-27.

² Cf., al-Abdul Lateef, pp. 452-455.

laziness, remiss or such, they do not perform the prayer. Some scholars say that such a person falls completely out of the fold of Islam, he shall be in the Hell-fire forever and, in fact, Muslims cannot perform the funeral prayer for him in this world. Other scholars state that such a person is truly an evildoer, he is committing a lesser form of *kufir* and is at the doorstep of falling out of the fold of Islam. However, he does stay within the overall fold of Islam and is not to be treated like or considered a disbeliever.

This is not the proper place for a detailed discussion of this very important question.¹ One of the strongest pieces of evidence for those who say that such a person does become a disbeliever is the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him),

إِنَّ بَيْنَ الرَّجُلِ وَبَيْنَ الشِّرْكِ وَالْكَفْرِ تَرَكَ الصَّلَاةَ

“Between a man and polytheism (*al-shirk*) and disbelief (*al-kufr*) is the abandoning of the prayer.” (Recorded by Muslim.) In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) used the definitive *al-shirk* and *al-kufr*, which is a reference to something known and understood. This is understood to refer to the *kufir* that takes one out of the fold of Islam. Furthermore, both the words *shirk* and *kufir* have been used, and this is another sign that the act must take one out of the fold of Islam.

In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

الْعَهْدُ الَّذِي بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمُ الصَّلَاةُ فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ

“The covenant that is between us and them [the disbelievers] is the prayer. Whoever abandons it has committed an act of unbelief.”² In yet another hadith, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) stated,

¹ An excellent discussion of this point may be found in al-Abdul Lateef, pp. 456-498. For numerous hadith, statements of Companions and others' statements that clearly state that abandoning the prayer is tantamount to disbelief, see Ubaidullah ibn Battah, *Al-Ibaanah an Shareeah al-Firq al-Naa'ijyah wa Mujaanibah al-Firq al-Madhmoomah* (Riyadh: Daar al-Raayah, 1988), vol. 2, pp. 669-684. Ibn Uthaimen is a scholar who believes that one who does not pray becomes an unbeliever. His arguments may be found in Muhammad ibn Uthaimen, *Hukum Taarik al-Salaat* (Fairfax, VA: IIASA, n.d.), *passim*. Al-Albaani says that such a person is not a disbeliever. His arguments may be found in a book by the same name, Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Hukum Taarik al-Salat* (Riyadh: Daar al-Jalalain, 1992), *passim*. In English, a brief discussion with a partial discussion of some related evidences may be found As-Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 77-80. This author is of the definite conclusion that if a person abandons the prayer, he is committing an act of *kufir* that takes him out of the fold of Islam if he is aware of that fact.

² Recorded by al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasaai, ibn Maajah and Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 760.

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لَا تَتْرُكُ صَلَاةً مَكْتُوبَةً مُتَعَمِّدًا فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَقَدْ بَرَّتَ مِنْهُ الذِّمَّةُ

“Do not abandon an obligatory prayer intentionally for the one who fails to perform it intentionally has made himself free of the protection of Allah and His messenger.”¹

One of the strongest pieces of evidence for those who say that such a person does not leave the fold of Islam is a hadith mentioned earlier:

خَمْسُ صَلَوَاتٍ افْتَرَضَهُنَّ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مَنْ أَحْسَنَ وَضُوعَهُنَّ وَصَلَّاهُنَّ لَوَقْتِهِنَّ وَأَتَمَّ
رُكُوعَهُنَّ وَخُشُوعَهُنَّ كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ عَلَى
اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ إِنْ شَاءَ غَفَرَ لَهُ وَإِنْ شَاءَ عَذَّبَهُ

“Allah has obligated five prayers. Whoever excellently performs their ablutions, prays them in their proper times, completes their bows, and *khushoo*’ has a promise from Allah that He will forgive him. And whoever does not do that has no promise from Allah. He may either forgive him or He may punish him.”²

However, it is important to note the conclusion that both sets of scholars come to. Those who say that the person falls out of the fold of Islam state that the person is to be killed as an apostate, if he does not repent. Most of those scholars who say that he does not fall outside of the fold of Islam state that he must be commanded to pray and if he refuses to pray, then he should be killed as a punishment for his refusal to pray.³ Hence, the conclusion of the majority of the scholars is the same. Abandoning the prayer, this pillar of Islam, is such a heinous act that these scholars agree that such a person is not deserving to live. So regardless of whether one follows the scholars that say that such a person is a disbeliever or not, both sides definitely agree that the importance of the prayer is extremely great and no Muslim who is true to his claim to Islam should ever consider abandoning the prayer.

Siddiqi’s words showing the importance of prayer are a good summary to this whole discussion. He wrote,

Prayer is the soul of religion. Where there is no prayer, there can be no purification of the soul. The non-praying man is rightly considered to be a soulless man. Take prayer out of the world, and it is all over with religion because it is with prayer that man has the consciousness of God and selfless love for

¹ With this wording, the hadith was recorded by ibn Maajah and Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Targheeb*, vol. 1, p. 299.

² Recorded by Malik, Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Nasaai and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 616.

³ Some Hanafis state that he should be imprisoned and advised to repent.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

humanity and inner sense of piety. Prayer is, therefore, the first, the highest, and the most solemn phenomenon and manifestation of religion.¹

The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated its place in Islam when he said,

رَأْسُ الْأَمْرِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَعَمُودُهُ الصَّلَاةُ وَذِرْوَةُ سَنَامِهِ الْجِهَادُ

“The head of the matter is Islam. Its pillar is prayer. And its apex is jihad.”²

“giving the zakat”

The Meaning of Zakat

Linguistically, the root of the word zakat implies purification, blessing and growth. Allah has stated in the Quran,

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى

“Indeed whosoever purifies himself (*tazakkaa*) shall achieve success” (*al-Ala* 14). Another word used in the Quran and hadith for the zakat is *sadaqa*. This word is derived from *sidq* (the truth). Siddiqi explains the significance of these two terms as they are used here,

Both these words are highly meaningful. The spending of wealth for the sake of Allah purifies the heart of man of the love of material wealth. The man who spends it offers that as a humble gift before the Lord and thus affirms the truth that nothing is dearer to him in life than the love of Allah and that he is fully prepared to sacrifice everything for His sake.³

In the *shareeah*, its technical meaning is in reference to a specific portion of one’s varied wealth that one must give yearly to a specific group of recipients.

The Importance of Zakat

There is no question that among the pillars of Islam, zakat ranks very close to that of prayer. They are often mentioned together in the Quran—in eighty two instances to be exact.

¹ Siddiqi, vol. 1, p. 206.

² An authentic hadith recorded by Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi and others.

³ Siddiqi, vol. 2, p. 465.

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The importance of zakat can also be seen in the following verse of the Quran where Allah orders the Companions to fight the *mushrikeen* (polytheists) wherever they can:

فَإِذَا أَنْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرَ الْحُرُمَ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ
وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَحْصُرُوهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Then when the sacred months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and prepare for them each and every ambush. But if they repent and offer prayer and give zakat, then leave their way free. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (*al-Taubah* 5). In this verse, Allah orders the Companions to fight them until they repent, establish the prayer and pay the zakat.

Shortly afterwards in the same *surah*, following the same line of discussion, Allah says,

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَنُفَصِّلُ
الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

“But if they repent, offer prayer and give the zakat, then they are your brethren in religion. And We expound the signs for a people who know” (*al-Taubah* 11).

These two verses clearly prove the importance of zakat in Allah’s sight. The disbelievers will become a part of this religion when they repent, pray and give the zakat. Hence, the payment of zakat is a true sign that a person is a Muslim and submitting himself to Allah.

One can also see from the Quran, that one of the keys to receiving Allah’s mercy in the Hereafter is the payment of zakat. In *surah al-Taubah*, verse 71, Allah states,

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

“The believers, men and women, are helpers and supporters of one another, they enjoin what is right and forbid what is evil, they offer their prayers perfectly, they give the zakat and they obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah will bestow His mercy on them. Surely, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.”

The payment of zakat should purify a person. It also purifies his wealth. Allah said to the Prophet (peace be upon him),

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا

“Take (O Muhammad) alms from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it” (*al-Taubah* 103). Beyond that, it can purify a believer’s soul by cleansing him of the diseases of stinginess and miserliness.

It also purifies the wealth of the person by removing any evil effect from it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once said,

مَنْ أَدَّى زَكَاةَ مَالِهِ فَقَدْ ذَهَبَ عَنْهُ شَرُّهُ

“Whoever pays the zakat on his wealth will have its evil removed from him.”¹

Zakat also has a very important role to play for society as a whole. There are some obvious factors that may be stated here. For example, zakat helps the poor of society as they receive wealth that they need. This should also help to strengthen the ties of brotherhood within a Muslim society, as the poor know that the rich will come to their aid through zakat and other means of charity. Even for those who are not very rich, it makes them realize that they can afford to give for the sake of Allah. They may realize that they will starve or die if they give some of their wealth for the sake of Allah. Furthermore, it can make those who possess wealth realize that such wealth has actually come as a blessing from Allah. Hence, the person must use it in the way that is pleasing to Allah. One of the most pleasing aspects is to fulfill one’s responsibility of paying zakat upon such wealth.

There are other important social aspects that can be deduced from the Quran and sunnah. For example, one of the keys to the establishment of a Muslim community and Muslim state is the giving of zakat. Allah says in the Quran,

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

“Those who, if We give them power in the land, (they) order for the establishment of the prayer, to pay the zakat, and they enjoin the good and forbid the evil. And with Allah rests the end of all matters” (*al-Hajj* 41).

Muslims who do not pay their zakat are not only harming themselves but they can actually harm the entire Muslim *ummah*. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

¹ Recorded by ibn Khuzaima and al-Tabaraani. According to al-Albaani, it is *hasan*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Targheeb wa al-Tarheeb*, vol. 1, p. 312.

وَلَمْ يَمْنَعُوا زَكَاةَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ إِلَّا مُنِعُوا الْقَطْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَلَوْ لَا الْبَهَائِمُ لَمْ يُمْطَرُوا

“A people do not keep from giving the zakat on their wealth except that they will be kept from having rain falling from the sky. If it were not for the animals, it would not rain at all.”¹

Allah and His prophet have made it clear that not paying zakat is an act that is displeasing to Allah. Indeed, Allah has threatened a great punishment for such behavior. For example, the following verse of the Quran is a reference to those who do not pay the zakat on their wealth:

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا ءَاتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخَلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

“And let not those who covetously withhold of that which Allah has bestowed on them of His Bounty (wealth) think that it is good for them. Nay, it will be worse for them. The things which they covetously withheld shall be tied to their necks like a collar on the Day of Resurrection. And to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is Well-Acquainted with all that you do” (*ali-Imraan* 180).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) described the punishment that will come to those who do not pay the proper zakat on their wealth. In one hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

تَأْتِي الْإِبِلُ عَلَى صَاحِبِهَا عَلَى خَيْرِ مَا كَانَتْ إِذَا هُوَ لَمْ يُعْطِ فِيهَا حَقَّهَا تَطَوُّهُ بِأَخْفَافِهَا وَتَأْتِي الْعَنَمُ عَلَى صَاحِبِهَا عَلَى خَيْرِ مَا كَانَتْ إِذَا لَمْ يُعْطِ فِيهَا حَقَّهَا تَطَوُّهُ بِأَظْلَافِهَا وَتَنْطَحُهُ بِقُرُونِهَا... وَلَا يَأْتِي أَحَدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِشَاةٍ يَحْمِلُهَا عَلَى رَقَبَتِهِ لَهَا يُعَارُ فَيَقُولُ يَا مُحَمَّدُ فَأَقُولُ لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ شَيْئًا قَدْ بَلَغْتُ وَلَا يَأْتِي بَبَعِيرٍ يَحْمِلُهُ عَلَى رَقَبَتِهِ لَهُ رُغَاءٌ فَيَقُولُ يَا مُحَمَّدُ فَأَقُولُ لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا قَدْ بَلَغْتُ

“[On the Day of Resurrection] camels will come to their owner in the best state of health they have ever had (in the world), and if he had not paid their zakat

¹ Recorded by ibn Maajah. According to al-Albaani it is authentic. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahadeeth al-Saheeha* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1979), vol. 1, hadith no. 106.

on them, they would tread him with their feet; similarly, sheep will come to their owner in the best state of health they ever had in this world and, if he had not paid their zakat, would tread him with their hooves and would butt him with their horns... I do not want anyone of you to come to me on the Day of Resurrection carrying over his neck a sheep that will be bleating. Then he says, ‘O Muhammad (please intercede for me).’ I will say, ‘I can’t help you for I conveyed Allah’s message to you.’ Similarly, I do not want anyone of you to come to me carrying over his neck a camel that will be grunting. Such a person will say, ‘O Muhammad (intercede for me).’ I will say to him, ‘I cannot help you for I conveyed Allah’s Message to you.’”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) warned of the consequences of not paying such zakat. Note the following hadith from *Sahih al-Bukhari*:

مَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا فَلَمْ يُؤَدِّ زَكَاتَهُ مُثِّلَ لَهُ مَالُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ شُجَاعًا أَقْرَعَ لَهُ زَبِيَّتَانِ يُطَوَّقُهُ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ يَأْخُذُ بِلَهْزِمَتَيْهِ يَعْنِي بِشِدْقَيْهِ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ أَنَا مَالِكٌ أَنَا كَنْزُكَ

“Whoever is made wealthy by Allah and does not pay zakat on his wealth, then on Day of Resurrection his wealth will be made like a bald-headed poisonous snake with two poisonous glands. It will encircle his neck and bite his cheeks and say, ‘I am your wealth, I am your treasure.’” After stating that, the Prophet (peace be upon him) then recited the above verse from *surah ali-Imraan*.

In another verse that also includes those who do not pay zakat, Allah has said,

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ يَوْمَ يُحْمَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَى بِهَا
جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنْزْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كَنْتُمْ
تَكْنِزُونَ

“[There are] those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah— announce unto them a painful torment. On the Day when that wealth will be heated in the fire of hell and it will brand their foreheads, flanks and backs. [It will be said to them], ‘This is the treasure which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what you used to hoard’” (*al-Taubah* 34-35).

Ruling Concerning One who Does not Give Zakat

Zakat is one of the pillars of Islam, as is clear from this hadith under discussion. If a person denies the obligation of zakat or says that it is not a part

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of Islam, then such a person is a disbeliever according to the consensus of the scholars.¹

The question once again is: What is the status of a person who accepts zakat as an obligation but due to laziness, stinginess or remiss he does not give zakat? Does he remain a Muslim? For the majority of the scholars, the person does still remain a Muslim.² The zakat is to be taken from him by force by the authorities and he is punished according to judicial discretion.³

However, there are reports from the Companion Abdullah ibn Masood that he did not consider a person who abandons the zakat to be a Muslim. He said, "The one who leaves paying the zakat is not a Muslim." He also said, "The one who establishes the prayer but does not give the zakat actually has no prayer for him."⁴ Ibn Uthaimen stated that one narration from Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal is that the one who does not pay the zakat out of stinginess becomes an unbeliever in the same way that the one who does not pray out of laziness becomes an unbeliever. He says that this opinion is supported by some of Ahmad's followers.⁵

If a group of people believe in zakat yet they refuse to pay it, they can be fought. This is exactly what happened during the time of the Companions. After the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him), some of the tribes became apostates and others refused to pay the zakat. Abu Bakr, the first *khaleefah*, fought them and declared, "By Allah, I will fight anyone who distinguishes between prayer and zakat. Zakat is the compulsory right to be taken from the property. By Allah! If they refuse to pay me even a she-kid which they used to pay at the time of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him), I would fight them for withholding it." (Recorded by Muslim.)

That incident was very important for many reasons. It demonstrates the attitude of the Companions toward a group of people who refused to pay the zakat. It is not reported that the Companions asked them whether they still

¹ Of course, there is always the exception of a new Muslim who has not heard of the obligation of zakat.

² Ahmad, for example, stated in his creed, "Whoever leaves the prayer has committed *kufr*. And there is no deed whose abandonment is *kufr* except the prayer. Whoever leaves it becomes a disbeliever and Allah permits the taking of his life." Quoted in al-Laalakai, vol. 1, p. 159.

³ There is a hadith in *Sunan Abu Dawood* which states, "He who pays zakat with the intention of getting rewarded will get rewarded. If anyone evades zakat, we shall take half the property from him as a due from the dues of our Lord, the Exalted." According to al-Albaani, this hadith is *hasan*. [Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh Sunan Abi Dawood* (Riyadh: Maktab al-Tarbiyah al-Arabiya li-Duwal al-Khaleej, 1991), vol. 1, p. 296.] This seems to be Ahmad ibn Hanbal's opinion. However, Ahmad Hasan wrote, "But this injunction was valid in the early days of Islam. Later on it was repealed." [Ahmad Hasan, trans., *Sunan Abu Dawud* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1984), vol. 2, 412.] Allah knows best.

⁴ These quotes may be found in ibn Battah, vol. 2, p. 681; ibn Abu Shaiba, *al-Musannaf*, vol. 3, pp. 7-9. According to al-Haitami, these narrations are authentic from ibn Masood. Cf., Ahmad ibn Hajr al-Haitami, *al-Zawaaqir an Iqtiraaf al-Kaba'ir* (Beirut: Daar al-Marifah, 1987), vol. 1, p. 170.

⁵ Muhammad ibn Uthaimen, *al-Sharh al-Mumti ala Zaad al-Mustaqni* (Riyadh: Muassasat Aasaam, 1996), vol. 6, p. 7.

believed in zakat. Instead, they fought them and treated them in the same manner as those who had openly apostatized. In other words, they considered them outside of the fold of Islam due to their actions.¹

“making the pilgrimage to the House”

The Meaning of *Hajj*

The next pillar of Islam mentioned in this narration of this hadith is making the pilgrimage to the House of Allah, or the Kaaba. Linguistically, *hajj* means, “He repaired, or betook himself, to, or towards a person... or towards an object of reverence, veneration, respect or honour.”² In the *shareeah*, it means a particular going or traveling at a particular time to a particular place for the purpose of worshipping Allah. In other words, it is the journeying to Makkah during the months designated for the performance of Hajj as an act of worship for the sake of Allah.

The Importance of Hajj

The performance of *Hajj* is an obligation upon every Muslim who has the means to perform it. This can be clearly proven from the Quran and sunnah. However, it is much more than an obligation. It is one of the foundations or pillars of Islam itself.

The reward for the performance of the *Hajj* is great. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ حَجَّ لِلَّهِ فَلَمْ يَرُفْثْ وَلَمْ يَفْسُقْ رَجَعَ كَيَوْمٍ وُلِدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ

“Whoever performs the Hajj for the sake of Allah and does not commit any lewdness or sins returns like the day in which his mother gave him birth,” that is, without any sins. (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

الْعُمْرَةُ إِلَى الْعُمْرَةِ كَفَّارَةٌ لِمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَالْحَجُّ الْمَبْرُورُ لَيْسَ لَهُ جَزَاءٌ إِلَّا الْجَنَّةُ

¹ Cf., al-Hawaali, vol. 2, pp. 650-652.

² E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, England: The Islamic Texts Society, 1984), vol. 1, p. 513.

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“One *Umrah*¹ until the next *Umrah* is an expiation for what is between them. And the Hajj that is accepted by Allah and performed properly has no reward other than Paradise.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Another hadith reads:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سُئِلَ أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَفْضَلُ فَقَالَ إِيمَانٌ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ قِيلَ
تُمَّ مَاذَا قَالَ الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قِيلَ تُمَّ مَاذَا قَالَ حَجٌّ مَبْرُورٌ

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was asked, “What is the best deed?” He stated, “Belief in Allah and His Messenger.” He was then asked, “What next?” He said, “Jihad in the way of Allah.” He was again asked, “What next?” He replied, “The Hajj which is performed correctly and accepted by Allah.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Furthermore, Hajj is equivalent to jihad for women and people who are not capable of jihad. In one hadith, the Prophet was asked whether or not women are required to take part in jihad. He answered,

نَعَمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ جِهَادٌ لَا قِتَالَ فِيهِ الْحَجُّ وَالْعُمْرَةُ

“Yes, upon them is the jihad which does not contain fighting: Hajj and Umrah.”²

Hajj has numerous benefits to it. Besides those mentioned in the hadith, one can note that it is a place for Muslims from all around the world to come and worship Allah together. This is an excellent opportunity for Muslims to meet each other, understand each other and get closer to each other. Furthermore, all differences between them are swept away as they all dress in a similar fashion and perform the same rituals. The poor, the rich and all others are all standing in the same manner in front of Allah.

Siddiqi describes the significance of Hajj in the following manner,

It is rightly said that it [the Hajj] is the perfection of faith since it combines in itself all the distinctive qualities of other obligatory acts. It represents the quality of *salat* [prayer] since a pilgrim offers prayers in the Kaba, the House of the Lord. It encourages spending of material wealth for the sake of the Lord, the chief characteristic of Zakat. When a pilgrim sets out for Hajj, he dissociates himself from his hearth and home, from his dear and near ones to please the Lord. He suffers privation

¹ *Umrah* is sometimes called the “lesser pilgrimage”. It contains less rites and may be done throughout the year.

² Recorded by Ahmad and ibn Maajah. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Irwa al-Ghaleel fi Takhreej Ahadeeth Manaar al-Sabeel* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1979), vol. 4, p. 151.

and undertakes the hardship of journey—the lessons we learn from fasting and *itikaaf*.¹ In Hajj one is trained to be completely forgetful of the material comforts and pomp and show of worldly life. One has to sleep on stony ground,² circumambulate the Kaba, run between Safa and Marwa and spend his night and day wearing only two pieces of unsewn cloth. He is required to avoid the use of oil or scent or any other perfume. He is not even allowed to get his hair cut or trim his beard. In short, he is commanded to abandon everything for the sake of Allah and submit himself before his Lord, the ultimate aim of the life of a Muslim. In fact, physical pilgrimage is a prelude to spiritual pilgrimage to God, when man would bid goodbye to everything of the world and present himself before Him as His humble servant saying: “Here I am before Thee, my Lord, as a slave of Thine.”³

Hajj is Obligatory on One who Has the Means

Allah says in the Quran,

وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

“And Hajj to the House is a duty that mankind owes to Allah, those who can afford the expenses. And whoever disbelieves, then Allah stands not in need of any of the worlds” (*ali-Imraan* 97). Similarly, when responding to the question of Islam in the hadith of Gabriel, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also specifically pointed out that Hajj is obligatory upon the one who has the means to perform it.

Scholars differ as to exactly how this condition is to be met.⁴ In general, though, it shows that Hajj is not meant to be a hardship. It is a great act of worship that people should do their best to perform but only if it is feasible for them. In general, this feasibility includes having the physical health, financial well-being and the provisions needed to undertake the Hajj. Some scholars also add that the journey should not be so treacherous that the pilgrim’s life is put at risk. In addition, women must have a *mahram* [male relative or husband] to travel with them as they are not allowed to travel alone,

¹ *Itikaaf* is where one secludes himself in the mosque for personal worship and devotion. Most commonly, this is done at the end of the month of Ramadhaan.

² This is not a must but it is how many pilgrims spend their nights.

³ Siddiqi, vol. 2, p. 577. The last statement he made is very close to what the pilgrims chant during the pilgrimage.

⁴ Further details may be found in as-Sayed Sabiq, *Fiqh*, vol. 5, pp. 7-9.

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although some scholars allow them to travel in “trustworthy” groups made up of men and women.

If one does not meet these conditions, one is not obliged to perform the Hajj. He must wait until he has the ability to perform it. When he does have the ability to perform it, there is a difference of opinion over whether he must perform it immediately at that time or if he may delay it until a future year. That is the next topic of discussion.

The Question of Delaying the Performance of Hajj

There is a difference of opinion over whether or not the performance of Hajj may be delayed. That is, suppose there is a person who has not fulfilled the obligation of Hajj and he has the means and ability to make Hajj this year. If he decides to delay its performance until some later year, is he considered sinful or not? Is it permissible for him to delay it or must he perform it the first time that he has the opportunity to perform it?

Malik, Abu Hanifah, Ahmad and some Shafi’ees state that one must perform Hajj at its first feasible opportunity. Otherwise, one is being sinful. Evidence for this position includes:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ كُسِرَ أَوْ عَرِجَ فَقَدْ حَلَّ وَعَلَيْهِ الْحَجُّ مِنْ قَابِلٍ

“If anyone breaks [a bone] or becomes lame, he comes out of the sacred state and he must perform the Hajj the following year.”¹ The deduction from this hadith is that if one can perform the Hajj whenever he wishes, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would not have explicitly mentioned that the person should perform the Hajj in the following year.

Another hadith states,

تَعَجَّلُوا إِلَى الْحَجِّ يَعْنِي الْفَرِيضَةَ فَإِنْ أَحَدَكُمْ لَا يَدْرِي مَا يَعْزُضُ لَهُ

“Hurry to perform the Hajj, that is, the obligatory one, as none of you knows what may happen to him.”²

It is also narrated that Umar ibn al-Khattaab once said, “I considered sending men to those lands to see who had the means but did not perform the

¹ Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Nasaai and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1112.

² Recorded by Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 569.

Hajj. They should have the *jizya*¹ applied to them as they are not Muslims, they are not Muslims.²

One of the strongest pieces of evidence presented for saying that one is allowed to delay his performance of Hajj, even though he has the ability to perform it, is the fact that Hajj was made obligatory in the 6th year after the Hijrah and the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) himself did not perform the Hajj until the tenth year. However, Al-Shaukaani has offered the following response to this argument,

[First,] there is a difference of opinion concerning when Hajj became an obligation. One of the opinions is that it became obligatory in the 10th year. Hence, there was no delay [on the part of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)]. If it is accepted that it was obligatory before the 10th year, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) delayed his performance because of his dislike to perform the Hajj in the company of the polytheists, as they would perform the Hajj and circumambulate the Kaaba in the nude. When Allah purified the House of those people, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) made Hajj. Hence, he delayed his Hajj due to an excuse. [That is acceptable,] the dispute is only concerning one who delays his Hajj without any valid excuse.³

The Ruling Concerning One who Does not Perform Hajj until He Dies Although He had the Means

The one who denies the obligation of the Hajj is a disbeliever. The person who intentionally delays his performance of Hajj, although he had the means, until he dies is a *faasiq* or evildoer. He has left himself open to the punishment and displeasure of Allah in the Hereafter.

“fasting the month of Ramadhaan”

The Meaning of *Siyaam*

Linguistically, *siyaam* means to abstain from something, such as abstaining from speaking. In the *shareeah*, it is a direct reference to abstaining

¹ *Jizya* is a tax paid to the state by the non-Muslim citizens in lieu of military service.

² This narration was recorded by Saeed ibn Mansoor and al-Baihaqi. According to al-Haitami, this is an authentic narration. Al-Haitami, *al-Zawaajir*, vol. 1, p. 198.

³ Muhammad ibn Ali al-Shaukaani, *Nail al-Autaar*, (Riyadh: Dar Zamaam, 1993), vol. 4, pp. 337-338. Ibn Uthaimeen states that the Hajj was made obligatory in the ninth year and the number of delegations coming to meet with the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Madinah is one of the reasons that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was not able to perform the Hajj. See ibn Uthaimeen, *Al-Sharh al-Mumti*, vol. 7, pp. 17-18.

Hadith #3: Islam Has Been Built Upon Five [Pillars]

from food, drink and sexual intercourse during the days of the month of Ramadhaan. This practice is one of the pillars of Islam, as noted in this hadith.

The Importance of *Siyaam*

Fasting is a source of self-restraint, piety and God-consciousness. It was prescribed by Allah for the prophets before Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the verses obligating the fast of the month of Ramadhaan, Allah has pointed out its goal or purpose:

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كِتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن
قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may attain *taqwa* [self-restraint, piety and God-consciousness]” (*al-Baqara* 183).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that fasting is a protection from the Hell-fire:

الصِّيَامُ جُنَّةٌ مِنَ النَّارِ كَجُنَّةِ أَحَدِكُمْ مِنَ الْقِتَالِ

“Fasting is a shield from the Hell-fire like one of your shields shielding you while fighting.”¹ Furthermore, it will also come as an intercessor on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said,

الصِّيَامُ وَالْقُرْآنُ يَشْفَعَانِ لِلْعَبْدِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَقُولُ الصِّيَامُ أَيْ رَبِّ مَنَعْتُهُ الطَّعَامَ
وَالشَّهَوَاتِ بِالنَّهَارِ فَشَفَعْنِي فِيهِ وَيَقُولُ الْقُرْآنُ مَنَعْتُهُ النَّوْمَ بِاللَّيْلِ فَشَفَعْنِي فِيهِ قَالَ
فَيُشَفَّعَانِ

“The fast and the Quran shall come as intercessors on the Day of Resurrection. The fast shall say, ‘O Lord, I prevented him from his food and drink during the day, so let me intercede for him.’ The Quran will say, ‘I kept him from sleep during the night, so let me intercede for him.’ Then they will be allowed to intercede.”²

It is an act that demonstrates one’s sincerity to Allah. Only Allah is aware if a person truly fasted or not. No one can know if he secretly broke his

¹ Recorded by Ahmad, al-Nasaai and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 720.

² Recorded by Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 720.

fast. Therefore, Allah has a special reward for those who fast. This is stated in the following hadith *qudsi*,

يَتْرُكُ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ وَشَهْوَتَهُ مِنْ أَجْلِي الصَّيَامِ لِي وَأَنَا أُجْزِي بِهِ وَالْحَسَنَةُ بِعَشْرِ أَمْثَالِهَا

Allah has said, “He leaves his food, drink and desires because of Me. Fasting is for My sake and I shall reward it. And every good deed shall be rewarded ten-fold.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

By Allah’s grace and mercy, if a person fasts the month of Ramadhaan with faith in Allah and hoping for its reward, Allah will forgive all of his previous minor sins. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

“Whoever fasts the month of Ramadhaan with faith and hoping for its reward shall have all of his previous sins forgiven for him.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Ibn al-Qayyim noted some of the beneficial and important aspects of fasting when he wrote,

The purpose of fasting is that the spirit of man was released from the clutches of desires and moderation prevailed in his carnal self, and, through it, he realized the goal of purification and everlasting felicity. It is aimed at curtailing the intensity of desire and lust by means of hunger and thirst, at inducing man to realize how many were there in the world like him who had to go even without a small quantity of food, at making it difficult for the Devil to deceive him, and at restraining his organs from turning towards things in which there was the loss of both worlds. Fasting, thus, is the bridle of the God-fearing, the shield of the crusaders and the discipline of the virtuous.¹

There is also a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that warns of the punishment for one who breaks his fast improperly. In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

بَيْنَا أَنَا نَائِمٌ إِذْ أَتَانِي رَجُلَانِ فَأَخَذَا بِضَبْعِي فَأَتَيْتَا بِي جَبَلًا وَعَرًّا فَقَالَا لِي اصْعَدْ حَتَّى إِذَا كُنْتُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَبَلِ فَإِذَا أَنَا بِصَوْتِ شَدِيدٍ فَقُلْتُ مَا هَذِهِ

¹ Quoted in Nadwi, p. 173.

الأَصْوَاتُ قَالَ هَذَا عَوَاءُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ بِي فَإِذَا بِقَوْمٍ مُعَلَّقِينَ
بِعَرَاقِبِهِمْ مُشَقَّقَةً أَشَدَّاقُهُمْ تَسِيلُ أَشَدَّاقُهُمْ دَمًا فَقُلْتُ مَنْ هَؤُلَاءِ فَقِيلَ
هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ يُفْطِرُونَ قَبْلَ تَحِلَّةِ صَوْمِهِمْ

“While I was sleeping, two men came to me and took hold of my arms. They brought me to a steep mountain and said, ‘Climb.’ I said, ‘I am not able to.’ They said, ‘We will make it easy for you.’ So I climbed until I came to the summit of the mountain where I heard terrible cries. I said, ‘What are these cries?’ They said, ‘Those are the cries of the inhabitants of the Fire.’ Then they took me further until I came to a people who were strung up by their hamstrings, and their jawbones were torn and flowing with blood. I said, ‘Who are these people?’ He said, ‘Those are the people who break their fast before the time it was permissible to do so.’”¹

The Ruling Concerning One who Does Not Fast

If a person denies the obligation of the fast, he becomes a disbeliever. Its obligatory status is confirmed in the Quran and numerous hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

As for the one who believes in the fast but does not fast, there is a hadith which states,

عُرِيَ الْإِسْلَامَ وَقَوَاعِدُ الدِّينِ ثَلَاثَةً عَلَيْهِنَّ أُسِّسَ الْإِسْلَامُ مَنْ تَرَكَ مِنْهُنَّ
وَاحِدَةً فَهُوَ بِهَا كَافِرٌ حَلَالُ الدَّمِ شَهَادَةٌ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالصَّلَاةُ
الْمَكْتُوبَةُ وَصَوْمُ رَمَضَانَ

“The bare essence of Islam and the basics, upon which Islam has been established, are three. Whoever leaves one of them becomes an unbeliever and his blood may legally be spilled. [These acts are:] Testifying that there is no God except Allah, the obligatory prayers and the fast of Ramadhaan.” This hadith was recorded by Abu Yala and al-Dailami. Some scholars have called it *hasan*. However, the correct view seems to be that of al-Albani, that the hadith is weak. But, most likely, it seems that it is a statement of the Companion ibn Abbaas and not that of the Prophet (peace be upon him).² Therefore, it cannot

¹ Recorded by ibn Hibbaan and ibn Khuzaima. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Targheeb wa al-Tarheeb*, vol. 1, p. 420.

² See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahadeeth al-Dhaeefah* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1398 A. H.), vol. 1, pp. 131-2.

be considered an overriding proof in this matter, especially if there is no record that the other Companions agreed with him on this point.

However, a Companion coming to such a conclusion demonstrates the importance of this act of fasting. No scholar would make such a statement, not to speak of a Companion, unless that act was of great importance in Islam. Although the majority and the strongest opinion is that such a person does not become a disbeliever, those Muslims who refuse to fast the month of Ramadhaan should consider ibn Abbaas' statement very carefully as there is a likelihood that what he said is correct.

Furthermore, al-Dhahabi once wrote,

According to the established believers, anyone who leaves the fast of Ramadhaan without being sick is worse than a fornicator or an alcoholic. In fact, they doubt his Islam and they suspect that he might be a *zandiqah* (renegade against Islam) and one of those who destroy Islam.¹

What About Jihad?

In a variation of this hadith in *Musnad Ahmad*, the narrator, ibn Umar, was asked about jihad after he mentioned these pillars of Islam. Ibn Umar answered, "Jihad is very good but this is what the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) narrated to us." The importance of jihad in Islam is clearly established in the Quran and sunnah. The Prophet (peace be upon him), for example, once said,

رَأْسُ الْأَمْرِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَعَمُودُهُ الصَّلَاةُ وَذِرْوَةٌ سَنَامِهِ الْجِهَادُ

"The head of the matter is Islam. Its pillar is the prayer. And its apex is jihad."²

The Prophet (peace be upon him), however, did not mention jihad in this hadith mentioning the pillars of Islam. There are people today who stress jihad a great deal—there is even a book entitled *Jihad: The Sixth Obligation*. Unfortunately, sometimes these same people are not very careful about their performance of the pillars of Islam. They are like someone who beautifies the third floor of his house while he has not taken the time to make sure that his foundation is solid and firm. Allah knows best, but this is probably a major reason why many of the people who talk about or participate in jihad do not live a full Islamic life. Some of them may even be willing to lie and cheat their own Muslim brothers. After a jihad is finished, they may just look after their own best interests instead of the interests of Islam and the Muslims. These are all facets of stressing one aspect of Islam while ignoring its foundations and its

¹ Quoted in Sabiq, vol. 3, p. 111.

² Recorded by al-Tirmidhi.

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pillars. This simply cannot be done. Success cannot possibly come about when one ignores the foundations of an entire structure and pays close attention to a lesser important aspect.

Recognizing the importance of jihad, different scholars have stated why it is not mentioned as one of the pillars of Islam. For example, there are those who claimed that this hadith was stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) before the obligation of jihad took place. However, this view is not tenable. This is because jihad was made an obligation before the fast and Hajj were made obligations and they are mentioned in this hadith.¹

According to ibn Rajab and ibn Hajr, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not mention jihad because, in general, it is a communal obligation (*fardh kifaayah*) and not an individual obligation (*fardh ain*).² Ibn Rajab adds that jihad is not something that will exist until the Day of Judgment. After Jesus descends, there will be only one religion left and, hence, jihad will cease. However, the other pillars will still be valid and obligatory upon all Muslims until the Day of Judgment.³

Allah knows best, but neither of these explanations seem satisfactory. Jihad is the apex of Islam but it is not a foundation or pillar. The pillars or foundations imply that the other acts rest upon these pillars. There is a direct relationship between one's overall practice of Islam and how well one fulfills these pillars. If these pillars are performed correctly and properly, they lead to the other acts, such as jihad, being performed correctly and properly—otherwise those other acts may not be done for the correct purpose or one may easily stray while participating in those acts. That is why these acts are the foundations and the others are not.

Summary of the Hadith

- One can derive the following from the five pillars: Acts of worship are either acts of performance or acts of avoidance. Fasting is from the latter category while the other pillars are from the former. In addition, the acts of worship are acts of the tongue (like the testimony of faith and parts of the prayer), acts of the body (like prayer), acts related to one's wealth (like *zakat*) and acts that are of the body and wealth (like *Hajj*).⁴
- This hadith states what Islam is built upon. These are the foundations of one's Islam. If these foundations or pillars are strong, Allah willing, the rest of one's faith and religion will also be sound, correct and strong. However, if these pillars are weak or not sound, it is not surprising that there may be some problems further on down the line. In fact, one should

¹ Cf., ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 73.

² Cf., ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 73.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 152.

⁴ Cf., al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 68.

expect that there will be some problems or weaknesses in the person's submission to Allah and his faith.

- If anyone denies the obligation of any of the pillars of Islam, he becomes a disbeliever. These pillars are firmly established in this particular hadith as well as in numerous verses of the Quran and other hadith.
- There is a consensus that if one nullifies the first pillar mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him), one negates his Islam and becomes a disbeliever.
- There is a disagreement concerning the second pillar. Many scholars are of the opinion that one who does not pray also leaves the fold of Islam. The majority say that he is an evil doer who deserves to be killed as a punishment for his sin.¹
- Concerning zakat, Hajj and fasting, there is at least one statement from at least one Companion that implies that the person who willingly does not perform any of these acts falls outside of the fold of Islam. Again, the majority opinion is that such people do not become disbelievers although their sins are heinous. In any case, the statements of those Companions should be taken seriously and the Muslim should not take abandoning these actions lightly at all.

¹ Such legal punishments are only to be meted out by legal authorities. In other words, outside of the Islamic state, such punishments are not enacted. However, that does not lessen the gravity of the crime that the person has committed.

Hadith #4:
Creation in the Mother's Womb

عن أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ
قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَهُوَ الصَّادِقُ
الْمُصَدِّقُ قَالَ إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ يُجْمَعُ خَلْقُهُ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ
نُطْفَةً ثُمَّ يَكُونُ عَلَقَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ يَكُونُ مُضْغَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ
ثُمَّ يُرْسَلُ إِلَيْهِ الْمَلَكُ فَيَنْفُخُ فِيهِ الرُّوحَ وَيُؤَمِّرُ بِأَرْبَعِ
كَلِمَاتٍ بَكْتَبِ رِزْقِهِ وَأَجَلِهِ وَعَمَلِهِ وَشَقِيٍّ أَوْ سَعِيدٍ فَوَاللَّهِ
الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُهُ إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ لَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى
مَا يَكُونُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهَا إِلَّا ذِرَاعٌ فَيَسْبِقُ عَلَيْهِ الْكِتَابُ فَيَعْمَلُ
بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ فَيَدْخُلُهَا وَإِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ لَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ
النَّارِ حَتَّى مَا يَكُونُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهَا إِلَّا ذِرَاعٌ فَيَسْبِقُ عَلَيْهِ
الْكِتَابُ فَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَيَدْخُلُهَا

رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ وَمُسْلِمٌ

On the authority of Abu Abdul Rahmaan Abdullah ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and he is the truthful, the believed, narrated to us: Verily, each of you is brought together in his mother's abdomen for forty days in the form of a drop of fluid. Then it is a clinging object for a similar [period]. Thereafter, it is a lump looking like it has been chewed for a similar [period]. The angel is then sent to him and he breathes into him the spirit. He is also commanded to issue four decrees: to record his sustenance, his life span, his deeds and [whether he will be] unhappy [by entering Hell] or happy [by entering Paradise]. I swear

by Allah, other than Whom there is no God, certainly, one of you will definitely perform the deeds of the people of Paradise until there is not between him and Paradise except an arm's length and then what has been recorded will overtake him and he shall perform the deeds of the people of Hell and enter it. And, certainly, one of you will definitely perform the acts of the people of Hell until there is not between him and Hell except an arm's length and then what has been recorded will overtake him and he shall perform the deeds of the people of Paradise and enter it.”
Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary

- الصادق - “the truthful”
المصدق - “the believed”
إنَّ - “verily, surely, certainly”
يجمع - “collected and preserved”
خلقه - “his creation, his being”; the ة at the end is the singular, masculine pronoun, “his”.
بطن - “abdomen, stomach”;
أمه - “his mother”, أم is mother.
أربعين - “forty”
يوماً - “days”
نطفة - “a drop of fluid”
ثم - “then”
يكون - “will be”, it can also mean, “becomes”
علقة - “something that clings and adheres”
مثل - “similar to”
مضغة - “a lump that looks like it has been chewed”
يرسل - “is sent”
الملك - “the angel”, here it is in reference to the angel that is responsible for the wombs.
الروح - “the spirit, soul, breath of life”
كلمات - in the language of the Prophet (peace be upon him), this usually meant complete statements or complete sentences. It can also be used to refer to “matters”. Nowadays, it is almost exclusively for “words” as opposed to sentences.
رزقه - “his sustenance, provisions”
أجله - “his life span”
عمله - “his deeds”
شقي - “unhappy”
سعيد - “happy”
أهل - “people”
الجنة - “the Paradise”
حتى - “until”

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- بينه - "between him or it," the • is in reference to a male, singular object.
بينها - "between her or it," the ها is in reference to a female, singular object. In this case, it is in reference to Paradise which is a feminine noun.
ذراع - "arm's length," can also mean, "forearm's length"
النار - "the Fire"

A Mistake in the Text of the 40 Hadith

One will note that the above text states, "Surely, each of you is brought together in his mother's abdomen for forty days in the form of a drop of fluid (*nutfah*)." This last word, *nutfah*, is a mistake and is not part of the hadith. Al-Qadhaah wrote,

The word *nutfah* has been [incorrectly] added to the text. It is not mentioned in any of the existing sources of the sunnah. However, it is found in some of the books of the later writers, such as hadith number 4 of al-Nawawi's 40 *Hadith*. It seems that it was mentioned to make the sentence clearer and, then, afterwards the people thought it was part of the hadith and included it as such. In reality, the existence of that word in the hadith changes in some way the meaning of the hadith. While the original text of the hadith makes it clear that the fetus goes through all three stages (*nutfah*, *alaqah* and *mudhghah*) in the first forty days. The added word gives a different meaning. According to the wrong narration, the stages take place in the first four months. It is clear from modern day science that such is not correct. This hadith also demonstrates one of the many scientific "miracles" that one finds in the hadith with authentic narrations.¹

It is surprising that the scholars who wrote commentaries and footnotes to al-Nawawi's 40 *Hadith* never mentioned that this word is incorrectly placed. Even ibn Muhammad, whose work is solely a study of the narrations of the hadith of the *Forty Hadith*, failed to note that point. This author personally checked all the references to different locations in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Musnad Ahmad* and other works that are given in Shuaib al-Arnaoot's footnote to ibn Rajab's *Jaami al-Uloom wa al-Hikm*. These do not mention the word *nutfah*.² To some readers this might seem like a slight oversight.

¹ Al-Qadhaah, pp. 25-26.

² See Arnaoot and Baajis' footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 153. Saleem al-Hilaali in *Eeqaadh al-Himam al-Muntaqa min Jaami al-Uloom wa al-Hikm* (al-Dammam: Dar ibn al-Jauzi, 1992), p.83 also simply referred to al-Bukhari and Muslim without making note of this discrepancy. Similarly, in al-Albaani's *Saheeh al-Jaami al-Sagheer* (vol. 1, p. 321) the text is incorrect without any note to it. Ibn Hajr in *Fath al-Baari* (vol. 13, p. 313) states that the presence of the word *nutfah* is only in a narration recorded by Abu Awaana from Wahb ibn Jareer on the authority of Shuba. Most likely, this was an explanation offered by one of the narrators but did not form part of the hadith, as is clear in all of the authentic narrations.

However, to anyone familiar with hadith works, even more insignificant differences in narrations, that do not change the meaning of the hadith, are regularly pointed out. In this case, the oversight may substantially change the meaning of the hadith.

With this word missing, the hadith can be understood in the following manner: “Surely, each of you is brought together in his mother’s abdomen for forty days. It is then a clinging object during that same period. Then it is a lump looking like it has been chewed during that same period.” Hence, all of these stages take place in the first forty days. This way of understanding the hadith is not only consistent with what is considered today “scientific fact” but, more importantly, it is exactly consistent with other narrations related to this topic.¹

The vast majority of scholars and commentators of hadith understand this hadith to mean that the three stages of the fetus take place over a period of one hundred and twenty days. This leads them to the conclusion that the soul is breathed into the womb after that period. This conclusion, in turn, led to other important fiqh conclusions that shall be noted later. In the following discussion, this majority opinion shall not be followed. However, it shall be referred to later. A problem with this interpretation is that one has to do some intricate reasoning to make it confirm to other narrations on this topic, as shall be noted below.

Takhreej

This hadith from Abdullah ibn Masood was recorded, some with only slightly different wordings but all without the word *nutfah*, by al-Bukhari, in a number of places in his *Sahih*, Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah and numerous others. The hadith also has supporting evidences in narrations from Anas ibn Maalik (recorded by Muslim), Jaabir (recorded by Ahmad), ibn Umar (recorded by Abu Yala), Aisha (recorded by al-Bazaar) and Hudhaifa ibn Aseed (recorded by Muslim).²

This commentary is based on the authentic wording of this hadith as found in *Sahih al-Bukhari*. The difference in the wording occurs in the beginning portion of the hadith. The version in *al-Bukhari* reads,

Incidentally, Siddiqi’s translation of this hadith (vol. 4, p. 1391) is strange and, most importantly, is not consistent with any version of *Sahih Muslim* that this author has seen. Allah knows best.

¹ Note that there are some narrations that explicitly state that these three stages, as well as the next, do take forty days each. However, weak narrations cannot be used as evidence and are, therefore, irrelevant. This may be quoted as a further argument against al-Khudair’s conclusion that weak narrations may be used to support one possibility meaning over another.

² See ibn Muhammad, pp. 60-64.

Hadith #4: Creation in the Mother's Womb

عن أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ
قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَهُوَ الصَّادِقُ
الْمُصَدِّقُ قَالَ إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ يُجْمَعُ خَلْقُهُ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ
يَوْمًا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ عَلَقَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ
مُضْغَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ يُرْسَلُ الْمَلَكُ..

On the authority of Abu Abdul Rahmaan Abdullah ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and he is the truthful, the believed, narrated to us: “Verily, each of you is brought together in his mother’s abdomen for forty days. Then it is therein a clinging object during this period. Thereafter, it is therein a lump looking like it has been chewed in this period. The angel is then sent to him...”

General Comments On This Hadith

This hadith is an important and meaningful hadith that describes the creation of human beings. As shall be pointed out in the commentary, there are many lessons to be learned from the birth of human beings. Secondly, this hadith also points to the belief in *Qadar* and that Allah has foreknowledge of what everyone will do in this world.

About The Narrator: Abdullah ibn Masood

Abu Abdul Rahman Abdullah ibn Masood (d. 32 A.H./652 C.E.), known as ibn Umm Abd, was from a very poor family. He was the sixth person to embrace Islam. His mother was also a very early convert to Islam. He was the first to publicly recite the Quran in Makkah. He migrated to Abyssinia and then to Madinah. He participated in all of the battles of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He had the advantage of being very close to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and, therefore, was aware of some of his personal aspects unknown to others. He died in Madinah at about the age of 60.

He related 848 hadith but he was best known for his knowledge of the Quran. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, “Take the Quran from four: Abdullah (i.e., ibn Masood), Salim the client of Abu Hudhaifa, Muaadh ibn Jabal and Ubayy ibn Kaab.” If ever there is mention of the name Abdullah only, it is a reference to Abdullah ibn Masood. He was given a post in Kufa

and he laid down the groundwork for the Kufan school of fiqh. When he related hadith he would often tremble and perspire out of fear of making any mistakes in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) words.¹

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and he is the truthful, the believed, narrated to us:

Al-Saadiq (الصادق) is the one who is truthful in everything he says. This characteristic of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was something well-known before he received his first revelation. Indeed, the disbelievers of Quraish continued to refuse to believe in him although they could not explain how a person who would not lie to or about mankind would lie about Allah or lie about receiving revelations from Allah.

Al-Masdoq (المصدوق) means that he is the person to be believed in. In fact, what he says and what is revealed to him is to be believed in as Allah fulfills what he has received as revelation. Ibn Masood has mentioned both of them as a kind of emphasis as, obviously, the first characteristic should lead directly to the second characteristic.

The question arises as to why Abdullah ibn Masood began this hadith with such a description of the Prophet (peace be upon him). One of the reasons given is that this hadith contains some information and startling facts that those who claimed knowledge of medicine at that time may try to refute or reject. It deals with something concerning which they did not have full knowledge. Indeed, all they could follow was conjecture. So, in essence, ibn Masood is saying, "Regardless of whether such people may accept what the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said, he is the truthful and he is the one who must be believed."²

In particular, this hadith is describing the formation of the fetus in stages. From the time of Aristotle it was thought that the baby was already fully formed at the earliest moment and simply grows in the womb. The idea of stages is a fairly new concept. Albar wrote,

The concept of the human embryo being formed in stages from the simple to the more complex is a completely new

¹ The reader may have noted that Abdullah ibn Masood was not one of the "four Abdullahs" mentioned under the discussion of Abdullah ibn Umar. This was because Abdullah ibn Masood died much earlier than the other four and, hence, he had passed away by the time this term began to be used in reference to a group of Abdullahs.

² Ibn Hajr is not impressed with this explanation. He says that there are other hadith from other Companions that do not contain such startling information and they also began their hadith with this expression. (See ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 313.) That certainly may be true but, at the same time, it does not contradict the fact that ibn Masood explicitly mentioned it at the beginning of this hadith while he did not mention it while narrating numerous other hadith. Although it is mere conjecture, the above explanation fits very well and there is no strong reason to reject it. Allah knows best.

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development in human knowledge, which was first put down by Wolff in 1839.¹

Therefore, this kind of opening statement is very pertinent to this hadith. This attitude, as a whole, is also something very important. The Prophet (peace be upon him) received revelation from and was guided by Allah. There is no room to doubt anything that he said, regardless of the topic. Allah would not leave him to make mistakes and misguide people. This is an insult to Allah Himself. Unfortunately, due to modern-day advancements in science, people have a tendency to forget that there is a great difference between scientific theory and established fact. Much of what people believe in and accept today is nothing more than theory and hypothesis that cannot be established with certainty. Indeed, in one hundred years or so, these theories may be discarded in favor of stronger theories. In fact, this process occurs everyday today in the realm of science.

If the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said something or if a verse in the Quran states something, then that must be true. If it does not seem to mix with one's perception of reality and "scientific fact", then either one has misunderstood the hadith or verse or one's perception of reality is incorrect. In any case, there is no room to doubt the Prophet (peace be upon him) for he is, as ibn Masood stated, the truthful, the one to be believed. Otherwise, there cannot be anything that exists in this world that contradicts what has been revealed from Allah. This is because this creation and the revelation the Prophet (peace be upon him) received both come from the same source: Allah. Allah is All-Knowledgeable and is most Truthful in His Speech. Hence, there will never be any contradiction between something that is a reality in the physical world and what Allah has revealed to any of His prophets.

"Surely, each of you is brought together in his mother's abdomen for forty days. It is then therein a clinging object during this period. Thereafter it is therein a lump looking like it has been chewed during this period."

The Stages of Human Development

This hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) describes some of the different stages of human development. As shall be noted later, many lessons may be derived from these different stages. This is, Allah knows best, why Allah has mentioned them at different places in the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him) also mentioned them in different hadith. In fact, in one

¹ Muhammad Ali Albar, *Human Development as Revealed in the Holy Quran and Hadith* (Jeddah: Saudi Publishing and Distributing House, 1989), p. 12. Anyone interested in this topic would be well served to read this small yet informative book.

place in the Quran, *al-Hajj* verse 5, Allah mentions the first three stages of development of the fetus that this hadith is referring to:

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ
مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَعَيْرِ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ

“O mankind! If you are in doubt concerning the Resurrection, then, verily, We have created you from dust [that is, Adam], then from a *nutfah*, then from an *alaqah*, then from a *mudhghah*, some formed and some unformed (miscarriage), that We make it clear for you [that Allah has the ability to create and resurrect]” (*al-Hajj* 5).

At another place in the Quran, Allah has mentioned the seven different levels of creation and development that mankind has gone through:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ
مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا
الْمُضْغَةَ عِظْمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظْمَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ
اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

“And indeed We created man (Adam) out of an extract of clay (water and earth). Then We made him [the offspring of Adam] as a *nutfah* (mixture of male and female sexual fluid) in a safe lodging [womb of the woman]. Then We made the *nutfah* into an object that clings. Then We made the clinging object into a chewed-up looking lump. Then We made out of that chewed-up lump bones. Then We clothed the bones with flesh. Then We brought it forth as another creation. So blessed be Allah, the best of Creators” (*al-Muminoon* 12-14).

“brought together”

After the male sperm enters the woman’s body, it then joins with the egg in the womb of the mother. Al-Qurtubi states that this might be referring to the sperm which enters the body of the woman with force and drive and then must travel sometime before it reaches the place where the egg is. Hence, the two are brought together at that place and time.

The commentators on this hadith state that this expression implies both being brought together and guarded or preserved.¹ This is also a significant implication of the hadith.

¹ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 95.

Hadith #4: Creation in the Mother's Womb

Albar has described the entire process after the male sperm enters the female body. One will note how the two, the one egg and the one sperm, are brought together by the will of Allah and how Allah has made them such that they are protected and guarded. Albar wrote,

The sperm and ovum are both capacitated in the Fallopian tube, i.e., they acquire the ability for fertilization. About 400 sperms each reach the ovum, but only one of them is chosen by God to fertilize it. Once the sperm unites with the ovum and discharges its genetic material stored in its head, the ovum builds a thick wall that will not allow further sperms to penetrate. It is clear that one sperm out of millions and probably billions is chosen for the fertilization of the ovum. Similarly, one egg is chosen to mature out of thousands that will eventually die monthly in every cycle.¹

“in his mother’s abdomen”

The word that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used in this hadith is *batn* (بطن). This means stomach or abdominal region. Of course, it is known that the place wherein the fetus lies is not what would be called the stomach. In Arabic, it is known as the *rahim* or womb. But the womb is part of the overall area that may be referred to as “the stomach”. Hence, in this case, it is an example of stating something while meaning only part of it. That is, the abdomen is mentioned but it is actually the womb that is meant. This is common in Arabic. Furthermore, in other narrations of this hadith, the word *rahim* (الرحم) is explicitly used.²

The origin of man and ties of kinship are very important and every human has responsibilities toward those people to whom he is related. The word for womb, *rahim*, itself is related to the word *rahmah*, meaning mercy. This is because people have mercy towards one another due to their relationships through the womb or blood relations. It is also related to Allah’s name *al-Rahman* (the All-Merciful). In fact, a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) states,

إِنَّ الرَّحِمَ شَحْنَةٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَقَالَ اللَّهُ مَنْ وَصَلَكَ وَصَلْتُهُ وَمَنْ قَطَعَكَ قَطَعْتُهُ

“Verily, the womb (*al-rahim*) has taken its name from *al-Rahman* (the All-Merciful). Allah has said, ‘Whoever keeps your ties, I shall keep his ties. Whoever cuts you off, I shall cut him off.’” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

¹ Albar, p. 45.

² See ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 316.

“for forty days”

The first stage of the development of a human being, as is clear from the Quran, is the stage of being a *nutfah*. Literally, this word means “a drop of fluid.” However, as Albar points out, it has been used in different senses in the Quran and hadith. These different connotations are three¹:

First, there is the male *nutfah* or male gamete. This is referred to in the following verse of the Quran,

أَلَيْسَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى ﴿٣٦﴾ أَلَمْ يَكُنْ نُطْفَةً مِنْ مَنِيِّ يُمْنَى ﴿٣٧﴾ ثُمَّ
كَانَ عُلُقَةً فَخَلَقَ فَسَوَّى ﴿٣٨﴾ فَجَعَلَ مِنْهُ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَى ﴿٣٩﴾
أَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ بِقَدِيرٍ عَلَيَّ أَنْ يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَى

“Does man think that he will be left neglected? Was he not a *nutfah* (drop of fluid, male sperm) poured forth? Then he became an *alaqa*, then (Allah) shaped and fashioned him in due proportion. And [We] made from [the semen] both the sexes, male and female. Is He [who does that] able to give life to the dead? [Yes, indeed]” (*al-Qiyaamah* 36-40).

Another verse states,

وَأَنَّهُ خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَى ﴿٥١﴾ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ إِذَا تُمْنَى

“And He creates the pairs— male and female— from *nutfah* [male sperm] when it is emitted” (*al-Najm* 45-46). Again, Allah says,

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تُمْنُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ أَأَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ

“Then tell Me about the human semen that you emit. Is it you who creates it or are We the Creator?” (*al-Waaqiah* 58-59).

Commenting on these verses, Albar wrote,

The sex of the new born is determined by the male. It is definitely stated that the male and the female are fashioned from a drop of fluid from the semen that has been ejaculated... We know now that the sex of the new born is determined by the sperm which will fertilize the ovum. If the sperm carrying the X chromosome, fertilizes an ovum (which always contains an X chromosome), the offspring will be a girl, while if the fertilizing sperm contains a Y chromosome, the offspring will be a boy...

The second important point, which is clearly stated in the Holy Quran is that only a small portion of the seminal fluid

¹ See Albar, pp. 57ff.

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participates in forming the embryo... [For example, Allah says above], "Was he not a mere 'drop of fluid' out of semen that has been ejaculated?"... We know now that the sperms constitute only 0.5 percent of the total semen ejaculated... The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Not from the whole fluid (ejaculated) man is made, but only from a small portion of it." (Narrated by Muslim.)¹

Second comes the female *nutfah*. In *surah al-Insaan*, verse 2, it mentions *nutfat amshaaaj* or mixed sexual fluid. This implies the existence of a female source of *nutfah*. In fact, this has been interpreted by ibn Abbaas to mean both the male and female *nutfah*.² Albar states that this is not explicitly mentioned in the Quran but it is stated in a hadith in *Musnad Ahmad*, wherein the Prophet (peace be upon him) tells a Jew that man is created from both male and female *nutfah*. Albar then states, "This is a very astonishing revelation, as it is only recently that we [in the medical field] came to know that both male and female participate equally to the formation of the human (or animal) zygote."³

It is this third usage for the word *nutfah* that is of interest here, where the male and female *nutfah* are intermixed in the womb of the mother. This is what scientists are now calling the "performatonal" stage.⁴ According to ibn Atheer, this portion of the hadith can be understood in one of two ways: Either the *nutfah* remains as it is in the womb for forty days or the *nutfah* is growing and developing during that period until it becomes ready for the next period.⁵ The latter interpretation is more consistent with what appears to be scientific fact.

"Then it is a clinging object (*alaaqah*) during that same period."

The next stage of human development mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) is the *alaaqah*. Albar defines *alaaqah* (or *alakah* as he writes it) in the following manner,

The Arabic word *Alakah*⁶ literally means something that clings or attaches to something else. The word also means a leech. The medical leech has been notorious for its clinging property to the skin whereby it sucks blood, a phenomenon that was often used in medicine as a remedy (blood letting). It also has a

¹ Albar, pp. 58-59.

² Albar, p. 59.

³ Albar, p. 59.

⁴ Albar, pp. 60-61, quotes some authorities on this topic. However, this is where the borderline between scientific fact and theory begins to get cloudy for many people.

⁵ Ibn al-Atheer was quoted in ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 315.

⁶ In Albar's book, he spelled *alaaqah* "Alakah".

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meaning seldom used in Arabic and that is a clot or congealed blood.

Albar then describes the different types of clinging that takes place after the period of *nutfah*. He sums up his lengthy discussion by saying,

To sum up— we find from the 7th to 21st day three consecutive processes in which clinging is the most dominant feature.

(1) From day 7, implantation of the blastocyst¹ occurs. It becomes completely embedded by the 10th day.

(2) The chorionic villi² appear for the first time by day 13 and 14, and soon cover the whole blastocyst attaching the ball like structure to the uterus (womb) by the anchoring villi.

(3) The connecting stalk connects the embryo proper (the embryonic disc) with its true coverings, the amniotic sac and yolk sac to the outer ball, the chorion.

Thus we find 3 different ways of clinging and attachment of the developing fertilized ovum to the womb of the mother. There is no better word for this stage, which describes it eloquently, than the Quranic word *Alakah*.³

“Then it is a lump looking like it has been chewed during that similar period.”

The next stage is that of the *mudhghah*. It has been mentioned in both the Quran and this hadith. About this stage, Albar wrote,

¹ The blastocyst is “the hollow ball of cells which is an early stage in the development of the embryo, roughly equivalent to the blastula of other animal groups.” See *The Hutchinson Dictionary of Science* on The Learning Company for Greater Knowledge, *Digital Library* [Computer Software] (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

² The chorion is the “outermost of the three membranes enclosing the embryo of reptiles, birds, and mammals; the amnion is the innermost membrane” [*The Hutchinson Dictionary of Science*]. Villus (pl., villi) are “(a): one of the minute fingerlike processes which more or less thickly cover and give a velvety appearance to the surface of the mucous membrane of the small intestine and serve in the absorption of nutriment and of which each has a central blindly ending lacteal surrounded by blood capillaries and covered with epithelium. (b): one of the branching processes of the surface of the chorion of the developing egg or blastocyst of most mammals that are restricted to particular areas or diffusely arranged and over parts of the surface become vascular and help to form the placenta.” See *Webster’s Medical Desk Dictionary* on The Learning Company for Greater Knowledge, *Digital Library* [Computer Software](Cambridge, MA, 1997).

³ Albar, pp. 67-68.

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The Modgha¹ in Arabic means a chewed lump, something that has been masticated. Yusuf Ali in his translation of the Quran chose the word morsel of flesh which does not exactly translate the word Modgha. Mohammed Assad [*sic*], Maurice Bucaille and others have chosen the correct translation, i.e., a chewed like lump.²

Once again, Albar goes on to discuss this development of the fetus in some detail, complete with illustrations. During this period, there develops what are known as somites.³ It is from these that much of the axial skeleton and musculature will develop. Hence, they look like a large number of fairly equally distributed indentations or bumps. In other words, they look exactly like a piece of flesh that has been bitten into and has the teeth marks remaining in them. All of this process takes place and is finished by the sixth week or 42 days after conception.

Different hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) stress the first forty-odd days of conception. This includes this particular hadith when understood without the additional word found in the text of al-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith*. Ebrahim points out the importance of this period of the first 40-odd days that is referred to in this hadith. He stated,

The stage of the embryo begins two weeks after conception. At this time there is organ differentiation. All the internal organs one will ever have are present in rudimentary form by the end of six weeks [42 days]. The precreated being is termed a fetus in the period from eight weeks to birth, during which stage there is continuous growth or development but nothing "new is added". This is the period of bringing to readiness for birth what has already begun.⁴

"The angel is then sent to him"

Here, the Prophet (peace be upon him) used the word, "the angel," rather than "an angel". This implies that this role of looking after or taking care of the fetus is that of a specific angel. It is certain some angels have specific roles, such as the task of delivering Allah's decree to the fetus.

¹ In Albar's book, he spelled *mudhghah*, "Modgha".

² Albar, p. 71.

³ Somites are "any of a linear series of primitively similar segments into which the body of a higher invertebrate or vertebrate is divisible and which are usu. clearly distinguishable in the embryo, identifiable in somewhat modified form in various invertebrates (as annelid worms), and detectable in the adult higher vertebrate only in specialized segmentally arranged structures (as cranial and spinal nerves or vertebrae)" (*Webster's Medical Desk Dictionary*).

⁴ Abul Fadl Mohsin Ebrahim, *Abortion, Birth Control & Surrogate Parenting: An Islamic Perspective* (American Trust Publications, 1989), p. 74.

The angel is sent after the embryo has gone through the stages described above. This point shall be discussed in more detail shortly.

“and he breathes into him the spirit.”

Surrounding this part of the hadith there are many important questions that need to be addressed. The first question is: When exactly does this occur? That is, when is the angel sent to the womb to breathe the spirit into the creation and to record the matters stated in this hadith? The second question is: What exactly is the spirit or *rooh*? The second question shall be dealt with first.

What exactly is the spirit or *rooh*? The *rooh* or “spirit” is the “life” of the individual. Allah says in the Quran,

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا
 قَلِيلًا

“And they ask you [O Muhammad] concerning the *rooh* (the spirit). Say, ‘As for the *rooh*, its knowledge is with my Lord.’ And of knowledge, you [mankind] have been given but only a little” (*al-Israa* 85).¹ This is truly an amazing aspect that mankind has to admit. Even with all of its advancements in science, mankind still has very little knowledge. Even concerning its own self

¹ It should be noted that there is a difference of opinion as to what the *rooh* (“spirit”) refers to in this verse. The Quranic commentators have mentioned six different opinions, including: (1) the spirit that is breathed into humans; (2) a special angel; (3) a special creation of Allah that has angel like characteristics but human like appearance; (4) the angel Gabriel; (5) the Quran itself; and (6) the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). The second opinion was narrated in the form of a hadith and as a statement of Ali ibn Abu Taalib. Ibn Katheer rejects both the hadith and statement as strange and objectionable. Ibn al-Qayyim claims that the majority of the early scholars stated that this *rooh* mentioned is not the spirit of human beings. Instead, it is in reference to the angel that will come with Allah on the Day of Judgment, as referred to in *al-Naba* 38. He supports his contention by stating that the verse is in reference to something unknown except through revelation. However, the “spirit” of humans is not something unseen and it is something that has been talked about by many people throughout the generations. Al-Qaasimi concluded from the context of the verse that the *rooh* here is in reference to the Quran, the fifth opinion expressed above. The majority of the scholars of *tafseer* support the view that the *rooh* is in reference to the “spirit” of humans. This is the conclusion of al-Tabari, al-Baghawi, ibn al-Jauzi, ibn Atiyya, Abu Hayaan, ibn Katheer, ibn Hajr (as quoted by Abdul Raheem) and al-Aloosi. This seems to be the correct interpretation, Allah knows best. Cf., Muhammad ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Rooh fi al-Kalaam ala Arwaah al-Amwaat wa al-Ahyaa* (Riyadh: Daar ibn Taimiyya, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 517-518; al-Qaasimi, *Mahaasin*, vol. 10, p. 3994; al-Tabari, vol. 9, p. 15, pp. 156-157; al-Baghawi, *Tafseer*, vol. 5, pp. 125-126; ibn al-Jauzi, *Zaad*, vol. 5, p. 58; Abdul Haqq ibn Atiyyah, *al-Muharrar al-Wajeez fi Tafseer al-Kitaab al-Azeez* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1993), vol. 3, pp. 481-482; Muhammad ibn Yoosuf Abu Hayaan, *Al-Bahr al-Muheet fi al-Tafseer* (Makkah: al-Maktabah al-Tijaariyyah, n.d.), vol. 7, p. 106; ibn Katheer, *Tafseer* (Jameeah), vol. 3, pp. 68-69; Al-Sayyid Abdul Raheem, footnotes to al-Maawardi, vol. 3, p. 270; Mahmood al-Aloosi, *Rooh al-Maani fi Tafseer al-Quran wa al-Saba al-Mathaani* (Cairo: Maktabah Daar al-Turaath, n.d.), vol. 15, p. 151.

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and what makes it tick, mankind is in a total loss. Very little is known of the workings of the soul itself. It is recognized that a person is alive when his *rooh* is connected with his physical body and he dies when his *rooh* leaves his physical body.

In his classic work on the correct Islamic beliefs, ibn Abu al-Izz has a lengthy discussion on the concept of *rooh* ("spirit", life-source) and *nafs* (soul). The following is an abridged presentation of his discussion:

People have different views on the nature of the soul (*al-nafs*). Is it a part of the body or one of its accidents¹? Or is it a body placed in another body where it resides? Or is it a pure substance? Again, is it the same as spirit (*rooh*) or different from it?...

Some people say that the spirit is eternal. However, the prophets of Allah are agreed that it is a contingent² being, created, fashioned, controlled and nourished by Allah. One of the basic principles of all prophetic religions is that the world is contingent. This is also the belief of the Companions and their Successors. After them, some people who had little knowledge of the Quran and the Sunnah began to claim that the spirit is eternal. They said that the spirit is an *amr* (command) of Allah and therefore uncreated. They argued from the verses in which Allah has ascribed the spirit to Himself, such as, "Say the spirit is out of my Lord's command" (*al-Israa* 85) and "I breathed into him of My spirit" (*al-Hijr* 29). They say that Allah has ascribed the spirit to Himself just as He has ascribed knowledge, power, hearing, seeing, and hands to Himself. There are others who are not able to form any opinion on the subject.

The *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jama'ah* are all agreed that the spirit is created. Their consensus on this point has been reported by Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Marwazi, ibn Qutaybah and others. Of the proofs that the spirit is created, one is the verse, "Allah is the Creator of all things" (*al-Raad* 16). This is an unqualified general statement that is not particularized in any fashion. It applies to, among other things, the spirit. One cannot counter it by saying that it should then apply to the Divine attributes also. For, the attributes of Allah are part of His Being. Allah is Allah qualified with all the attributes of perfection. His knowledge, His power, His life, His hearing, His seeing, and

¹ Accident in Aristotelian philosophy means, "properties that are not essential to the substances in which they occur." See *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 25, p. 584.

² Contingent is a philosophical term meaning, "not logically necessary," as opposed to the creator or source of all being, which is logically necessary. Cf., *Webster's Dictionary on The Learning Company for Greater Knowledge, Digital Library* [Computer Software] (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

all His attributes are part of His Being. His Essence qualified with His attributes is the Creator; all else is created. It is known with certainty that the spirit is neither Allah nor one of His attributes; it is only one of His created things...

The view that the spirit is uncreated can derive no support from the verse, "The spirit is of My Lord's command." *Amr* here does not mean command but a thing commanded (*al-ma'mur*). This use of a verbal noun in the sense of the object of the verb is quite common in the language. The other argument, which draws upon the fact that Allah has ascribed the spirit to Himself, is also not valid. Things that have been ascribed to Allah are of two kinds: One, attributes that do not exist by themselves such as knowledge, power, speech, hearing, seeing and so on. These things are ascribed to Allah as an attribute is ascribed to its subject. Second are objects that exist in themselves separately from Allah, such as house (*bayt*), she-camel (*naqah*), servant (*'abd*), messenger (*rasul*) and spirit (*rooh*). These things are ascribed to Him as created objects are ascribed to their Creator. The ascription only underscores the importance and honor of the thing ascribed and distinguishes it from other things of its kind...

There is also a difference of opinion about the essential nature of the spirit. Some say it is a body. Some say it is an accident. Others say that they do not know what it is, either a physical entity or an accident. Some say that the spirit is nothing but the four natural components.¹ Some say that it is the pure blood free of any odor or odorous impurities. Some say that it is the natural heat, which is life itself. Some say that it is a non-composite physical entity that is spread throughout the animal world that drives that world and that it is not divided into essence and body, and that all in the animal world possess the same kind of spirit. Others say it is the breath that is breathed in and out. And there are still other opinions.

With respect to the word "human", does it refer to the spirit only, or the spirit and the body, or both of them together or either one of them?... The truth is that the word human applies to both of them and can also apply to one of them depending on the context...

¹In Greek and Arabic medicine, the human body was considered to be composed of four natural components. When they were out of sync, the body did not function properly.

Hadith #4: Creation in the Mother's Womb

What is proven by the Quran, sunnah, consensus of the Companions and rational thought is that the soul is a body of a different essence than the physical body that is seen. It is a body from light and a higher source. It is very light, living and moving. It is implemented through the physical limbs. It spreads through them like the water spreads through a watering place, or the olive oil spreads through an olive tree or like a fire in a coal. As long as the limbs are healthy to accept the effects of that light body (the soul), the soul remains in that body and drives that physical body's feelings, movements and volition. But if it becomes bad, the mixture of the compounds becomes bad, and it no longer accepts that effect, the spirit leaves the body and goes to the world of the spirits.

The evidence for that is Allah's statement, "Allah receives (humans') soul at the time of their death" (*al-Zumar* 42). This states that the souls are given death, kept and sent. Allah also says, "If you could see, when the wrongdoers reach the pangs of death and the angels stretch out their hands, saying: Deliver up your souls" (*al-Anaam* 93). This states that the angels stretch out their hands to grab the souls. It describes the soul as coming out. It also shows that the soul is punished on that day and it goes to its Lord. Furthermore, Allah says, "He it is Who gathers your soul at night and knows that which you commit by day. Then He raises you again to life therein" (*al-Anaam* 60). This states that the souls are taken by night and then returned to their bodies during the day. And the angels take them at death. Allah also says, "But ah! Thou soul at peace! Return unto your Lord, content in His good pleasure. Enter among My bondmen. Enter My garden" (*al-Fajr* 27-30). Here the soul is described as returning, entering and being pleased.

The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When the soul is seized, the eyes watch it."¹ This describes the soul as being seized and the eyesight seeing it. In the hadith of Bilaal, it states, "The souls are seized whenever He wishes and returned to you whenever He wishes."²...

This is what the Pious Forefathers have agreed upon and is also what rational thought leads one to. Those who have differing opinions only follow false suppositions and invalid misconceptions that cannot, in any way, be taken in opposition to what is stated in the texts of revelation and sound reasoning.

¹ Recorded by Muslim.

² Recorded by Al-Bukhari.

As for the question whether soul (*nafs*) and spirit (*rooh*) are two different things or the same thing, the right view is that the words mean different things, some of which are same and some that differ...

As to the question whether the spirit (*al-rooh*) is mortal or not, people have different views. Some say that it is mortal, for it is a soul (*nafs*) and every soul is to die. Allah has said, "All that is on earth will perish, but the Face of your Lord will abide (forever), Full of Majesty, Bounty and Honor" (*al-Rahman* 26-27), and "Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face" (*al-Qasas* 88). These people say that when even angels will perish, the souls of men will certainly also perish. Others say that the spirits do not perish, because they have been created to abide forever; only the bodies perish. In support, they cite those hadith which talk of the pleasure and pain which spirits will suffer after they leave their bodies till Allah gives them new bodies.

The correct view on the issue may be stated like this: One may understand the death of the soul to mean its departure from the body, not its destruction. In this sense, the soul is mortal. But if one means that it perishes and disappears completely, then it is not mortal in that sense. It continues to live after death, and has pleasure or pain...

Allah states about the inhabitants of Paradise, "They taste not death therein, save the first death" (*al-Dukhaan* 56). That death is in reference to the spirit leaving the body. As for the inhabitants of Hell, Allah says, "They say: Our Lord, twice have you made us die and twice have you made us live" (*Ghaafir* 11), and Allah also says, "How do you disbelieve in Allah when you were dead and He gave life to you! Then He will give you death, then life again" (*al-Baqara* 28). These verses are referring to the first death, when the humans were a sperm in the loins of their fathers and in the wombs of their mothers. Allah then gave them life after that and then caused them to die. He then will give them life again on the Day of Resurrection. That it is not in reference to death of their spirits before the Day of Resurrection, as in that case there would be three deaths.¹

When is the spirit (*rooh*) breathed into the embryo? Concerning the other stages of embryonic development discussed above, it is possible with

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, pp. 562-571.

modern-day equipment to actually witness the development of the human in the womb. However, as ibn al-Qayyim pointed out, when exactly is the spirit breathed into the human can only be known through revelation from the Creator.¹ There is no way to tell simply by witnessing what goes on in the womb to know when the spirit has been breathed into the embryo.

A common answer to this question is that the *rooh* is breathed into the new human after 120 days in the womb. Some commentators state that there is agreement on this point.² However, for most scholars, this answer is directly determined by the understanding of this hadith of ibn Masood that the period of the *nutfah* is forty days, followed by a forty-day period of the *alaqah* which is also followed by a forty-day period of the *mudhghah*. But this interpretation seems to be incorrect.

Therefore, in order to answer this question correctly one must study closely the related texts of the Quran and hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In particular, in *Sahih Muslim*, there are a number of hadith that are relevant. In the Book of *Qadar*, Imam Muslim has recorded the following hadith:

يَدْخُلُ الْمَلَكُ عَلَى النُّطْفَةِ بَعْدَ مَا تَسْتَقِرُّ فِي الرَّحِمِ بِأَرْبَعِينَ أَوْ خَمْسَةَ وَأَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً
فَيَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ أَشَقِيٌّ أَوْ سَعِيدٌ فَيَكْتَبَانِ فَيَقُولُ أَيُّ رَبِّ أَذْكَرٌ أَوْ أُنْثَى فَيَكْتَبَانِ وَيَكْتُبُ
عَمَلَهُ وَأَثَرَهُ وَأَجَلَهُ وَرِزْقَهُ ثُمَّ تُطَوَّى الصُّحُفُ فَلَا يُزَادُ فِيهَا وَلَا يُنْقَصُ

“[Narrated Hudhaifah ibn Usaid:] After the *nutfah*³ is in the womb for forty or forty five nights, the angel comes to it and says, ‘O Lord, will it be unfortunate or fortunate?’ And these matters shall be written. Then he says, ‘O Lord, will it be a male or female?’ And such shall be recorded. His actions, deeds, life span and provisions will then be recorded. Then the pages shall be folded up and there is no addition or subtraction from them.”

إِذَا مَرَّ بِالنُّطْفَةِ ثِنْتَانِ وَأَرْبَعُونَ لَيْلَةً بَعَثَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهَا مَلَكًا فَصَوَّرَهَا وَخَلَقَ سَمْعَهَا وَبَصَرَهَا
وَجِلْدَهَا وَلَحْمَهَا وَعِظَامَهَا ثُمَّ قَالَ يَا رَبِّ أَذْكَرٌ أَمْ أُنْثَى فَيَقْضِي رَبُّكَ مَا شَاءَ وَيَكْتُبُ
الْمَلَكُ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ أَجَلُهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبُّكَ مَا شَاءَ وَيَكْتُبُ الْمَلَكُ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ رِزْقَهُ

¹ He says that this is why the scientists and others are so confused on this matter. Shams al-Din ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Tibyaan fi Aqsam al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1982), p. 210. Ibn al-Qayyim himself concludes that this event takes place after 120 days based on his understanding of this particular hadith from ibn Masood.

² Al-Mudaabaghi, p. 98.

³ It may still be referred to as a *nutfah*, since it still keeps part of that characteristic, even though it has passed through other stages.

فَيَقْضِي رَبُّكَ مَا شَاءَ وَيَكْتُبُ الْمَلَكُ ثُمَّ يَخْرُجُ الْمَلَكُ بِالصَّحِيفَةِ فِي يَدِهِ فَلَا يَزِيدُ عَلَى
مَا أَمَرَ وَلَا يَنْقُصُ

“When the *nutfah* passes forty-two nights in the womb, Allah sends to it an angel who shapes it and creates its hearing, seeing, skin, flesh and bones. Then he says, ‘O Lord, is it a male or female?’ Then your Lord decrees whatever He wills and the angel records it. Then he says, ‘O Lord, what is its life span?’ Then your Lord says whatever He wills and it is recorded by the angel. Then he says, ‘O Lord, what will be its provisions?’ Then your Lord decrees what He wills and it is recorded by the angel. Then the angel leaves with the scroll in his hand. Nothing shall be added to what he was ordered nor shall anything be decreased.”¹

إِنَّ النُّطْفَةَ تَقَعُ فِي الرَّحِمِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ يَتَّصَرُّ عَلَيْهَا الْمَلَكُ قَالَ زُهَيْرٌ حَسْبَتْهُ قَالَ
الَّذِي يَخْلُقُهَا يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ أذكرٌ أَوْ أُنْثَى فَيَجْعَلُهُ اللَّهُ ذَكَرًا أَوْ أُنْثَى ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ
أَسْوِيٌّ أَوْ غَيْرُ سَوِيٍّ فَيَجْعَلُهُ اللَّهُ سَوِيًّا أَوْ غَيْرَ سَوِيٍّ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ مَا رِزْقُهُ مَا أَجَلُهُ
مَا خُلُقُهُ ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ اللَّهُ شَقِيًّا أَوْ سَعِيدًا

“The *nutfah* remains in the womb for forty nights. Then the angel appears to it. [Zuhair said, ‘I think that he said, “The one who creates it.”] The angel says, ‘O Lord, is it a male or female?’ Then Allah shall make it a male or female. Then he says, ‘Shall he be complete or incomplete [physically speaking]?’ Then Allah shall decree him complete or incomplete. Then the angel says, ‘O Lord, what shall be his provisions, his life span, his character?’ Then Allah decrees if he shall be fortunate or unfortunate.”

None of these hadith explicitly mention the *rooh* or human spirit and when it is breathed into the embryo. However, they are all explicit that the angel coming to the womb occurs at around forty, forty-two or forty-five days or nights. This further supports the interpretation of this hadith that all of these stages are completed within the first forty days and then the angel is sent to the womb to record these aspects of the human being.

A relevant verse of the Quran which states,

¹ Commenting on this hadith, Albar wrote (p. 74), “It is well known that this period (6th week [42 days]) sees the zenith of organogenesis whereby hearing system, visual system, bones, flesh and skin are laid down. This is rapidly followed by the differentiation of the gonads into testes or ovaries, as the Hadith proclaims.”

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ
 مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا
 الْمُضْغَةَ عِظْمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظْمَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا ءَاخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ
 اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

“And indeed We created man (Adam) out of an extract of clay (water and earth). Then We made him [the offspring of Adam] as a *nutfah* (mixture of male and female sexual fluid) in a safe lodging [womb of the woman]. Then We made the *nutfah* into an object that clings. Then We made the clinging object into a chewed-up looking lump. Then We made out of that chewed-up lump bones. Then We clothed the bones with flesh. Then We brought it forth as another creation. So blessed be Allah, the best of Creators” (*al-Muminoon* 12-14). According to a number of commentators on the Quran, such as al-Tabari, ibn Katheer and al-Raazi, the words, “Then We brought it forth as another creation,” implies the breathing of the soul into the physical body.¹ In this verse, it is clear that this action of breathing the soul into the womb takes place after the *nutfah* turns into an *alqaqah* and then a *mudhghah* and even after the bones have been covered with flesh. Hence, the question of exactly when the *rooh* is breathed into the womb can still not be determined. However, it is definitely clear that it takes place after the first forty some-odd days.

Hence, the question is still perplexing. Albar summarizes some of the views on this question,

The jurists who claim that the stages of Nutfa, Alaka, Modgha are all collected in forty days do not specify when the soul is breathed into the forming body. They note that it is definitely after forty days, and after the formation of the organs of the body, including sex organs.

Ibn al-Qayim puts the following argument: “If it is asked: Does the embryo before the breathing of the soul unto it have perception and movement? It is answered that the movement it possesses is like that of a growing plant. Its movements and perceptions are not voluntary. When the soul is breathed unto the body, the movements and perceptions become voluntary and are added to the vegetative type of life it had prior to the breathing of soul.”

¹ Cf., Albar, p. 136.

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani brings a similar argument when discussing which organs form first. "The liver," he says, "is the site of nutrition, and growth is needed at that stage, not voluntary movement or perception. These are acquired when the soul gets attached to the body."

It is quite interesting to find the eminent ibn al-Qayyim and ibn Hajar al-Asqalani link the soul or spirit being attached to the body by the appearance of voluntary movements.

It will be remembered from previous chapters [of Albar's work] (Modgha and bone formation) that somites differentiate into sclertomoes (or forming the bones) and myotomes (forming the muscles), at the fifth week, and in the sixth week the limb buds appear. The muscles of the head, neck and trunk appear by the eighth week [56 days], while the perineal muscles appear by the tenth week [70 days]. The first voluntary movements appear clearly at the twelfth week [84 days], though it may have started by the eighth week.¹

Ibn Hajar, though, mentions a hadith of ibn Abbaas in which states, "After the *nutfah* is in the womb for four months and ten days, the *rooh* is breathed into it." If this hadith is authentic, then it is a clear and definitive answer to this question. It was the view of Saeed ibn al-Musayyab, Imam Ahmad and other early scholars that the *rooh* is breathed into the fetus after four months and ten days (a total of 130 days). In fact, this is how they explained why the waiting period for the widowed wife is four months and ten days.² However, ibn Hajar does not make it clear whether that is a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) or a statement of ibn Abbaas. Ibn Rajab makes reference to that narration but he presents it in a way that implies, first, that it is a statement of ibn Abbaas and, secondly, that it is not a strong narration.³ Furthermore, this author personally searched for this hadith to the best of his ability and was not able to locate it in any of the known books of hadith.⁴ In addition to that, almost all of the scholars who discuss this issue do not refer to that hadith whatsoever. Allah knows best.

Does the breathing in of the *rooh* imply the beginning of human life? There is nothing explicit in either the Quran or sunnah that states that the breathing in of the *rooh* implies the creation of life as such. In fact, one could

¹ Albar, p. 137.

² Ibn Hajar, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 322.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 163.

⁴ Even al-Suyooti did not mention it in his commentary to *al-Baqara* 234, although he mentioned the others who stated that the *rooh* is breathed into the fetus at that time. See Jallaal al-Deen al-Suyooti, *al-Durr al-Manthoor fi al-Tafseer al-Mathoor* (Beirut: Dar al-Marifah, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 287-288.

Hadith #4: Creation in the Mother's Womb

argue that life already began, as the fetus is growing from one stage to the next in its developmental process, before the angel comes and breathes the *rooh* into fetus. However, it seems to be the opinion of the majority of the scholars— if not a consensus— that the breathing in of the *rooh* implies the creation of a new human being. Muhammad Naeem Yaseen has supported this conclusion through a number of arguments. One important case that he points to is the case of the father of humans, Adam (peace be upon him). Adam was created from clay but the turning point in his creation was when the *rooh* was breathed into him. For example, Allah says,

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ خَلَقْتُ بَشَرًا مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَاِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُۥ
وَنَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِيْ فَقَعُوْا لَهٗ سٰجِدِيْنَ

“[Remember] when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Truly, I am going to create man from clay. So when I fashioned him and breathed into him [his] soul created by Me, then you fall down prostrate to him’” (*Saad* 71-72). Yaseen also states, in support of the idea that it is the breathing in of the soul that constitutes actual life, that there is an agreement that death, the opposite of life, occurs when the soul is completely detached from the body.¹

In conclusion, although there is nothing specific that the breathing in of the *rooh* constitutes the beginning of a new human life, it does seem to be the consensus view and it has weighty arguments to support it.

“He is also commanded to issue four decrees: to record his sustenance, his life span, his deeds and [whether he will be] unhappy [by entering Hell] or happy [by entering Paradise].”

The angels records all of these matters for the human being while it is still a fetus. This is a reference to Allah’s pre-knowledge of everything that will occur in this universe. This knowledge and recording was referred to under the discussion related to belief in *al-Qadar*, in hadith #2.

This hadith states that the amount of a person’s provisions and sustenance is recorded. It is also recorded whether or not that sustenance comes through legal or illegal means.²

Exactly how long the person will live is already known and recorded while he is still in his mother’s womb. The person’s individual deeds will be recorded at that time.

Then the angel records whether he will be among the fortunate or the miserable. According to ibn Hajr, the angel simply records the one word or the other. This status is based on how the person ends his life, as is clear from the

¹ Muhammad Naeem Yaseen, *Abhaath Fiqhiyyah fi Qadhaaya Tibiyyah Muaasirah* (Amman, Jordan: Daar al-Nafaais, 1996), pp. 15-16.

² Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 318.

remainder of the hadith.¹ Of course, this determination is based on Allah's knowledge and justice. He will destine for Heaven those who deserve Heaven because they are going, after birth, to accept the truth and apply it in their lives. He will destine for Hell those who will refuse the truth and do not follow the Straight Path.² Obviously, Allah could have sent the humans to Heaven and Hell without putting them through this life. However, this life is so that they will not have any argument against Allah. They will not be able to claim, for example, when thrown into Hell, that they would have believed and followed the truth. Now, their deeds will be right in front of them on the Day of Judgment and they will not be able to make any false claims on their own behalf.

Who exactly is the happy and the miserable? Allah has further described them in a moving passage of the Quran,

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُّوا فِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ
 * وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سَعِدُوا فِي الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ عَطَاءٌ غَيْرَ مَجْدُودٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾

“As for those who are miserable, they will be in the Fire, sighing in a high and low tone. They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord will. Verily, your Lord is the doer of what He will. And those who are fortunate and happy, they will be in Paradise, abiding therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord will, a gift without end” (*Hood* 106-108).

Other narrations of the hadith mention the angel asking Allah, “Is it a male or a female?” A narration from Abdullah ibn Amr even includes the questions: “Shall it be aborted or not?” “Shall it be just one or twins?”

A narration in *Sahih Muslim* states that this recording is in the scrolls of the angels. After the angel finishes recording the information, the scroll is rolled up and nothing shall be added or deleted from it.

It is possible that there are two separate recordings of this information. One is on the scrolls of the angels and the other is written onto the forehead of the fetus itself or between its two eyes. (The latter has been stated in a hadith recorded by ibn Hibban and elsewhere.³) Someone may therefore ask: How

¹ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 318.

² al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 151.

³ According to Shuaib al-Arnaoot, the chain of this hadith is *sahih*. See Shuaib al-Arnaoot's footnotes to Ameer Alaa al-Deen al-Faarisi, *Al-Ihsaan fi Taqreeb Saheeh ibn Hibbaan* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1991), vol. 14, pp. 54-55.

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could all of this information be written upon the forehead of the fetus? Ibn Uthaimen replies to this question by saying that this is from the matters of the Unseen and one is not supposed to ask about such matters. Instead, one should simply say that he believes in Allah and His Messenger and not ask, "How?" Then he further states that in modern times there are computer chips that contain a great deal of information even though they are very, very tiny in size. If human beings can accomplish something of that nature, what does this say about Allah's ability to accomplish something much greater? The important aspect is that this is something that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated and a human has no knowledge of it because it is something that he does not experience or witness. Hence, he must accept and submit to what the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said about such a matter. That is the way of the true believer who knows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke the truth.¹

Actually, modern scientists have discovered that by the third month the fetus begins to have a pattern on his forehead, which is called the lanugo. Like fingerprints, these scientists claim, this pattern is unique and distinct for every human being.² However, obviously, one cannot claim for certain that this is the writing that is referred to in these hadith.

Finally, according to ibn al-Arabi, the wisdom behind the angel recording this information is because, in that case, it is open to change, deletion or addition. This is different from what Allah has recorded, which is not open to any change at all.³ Some of the early scholars were of the view that this recording could be changed— but, obviously, not what Allah had recorded in the Preserved Tablet. Hence, they would pray, "O Allah, if I am recorded among the miserable, erase it and record me among the fortunate." This supplication is in reference to the recording of the angel while the fetus is in the womb and not the recording in the Preserved Tablet. Allah knows best.

The Problem for Those Who Understand the Process to Take 120 Days

Those scholars who understand that the fetus is a *nutfah* for forty days, followed by a *alaqah* for forty days and then a *mudhghah* for forty days have a very difficult time reconciling this hadith with all of the other hadith that clearly and explicitly state that the angel is sent to the womb after forty some-odd days and records the specific aspects about the fetus. These hadith were mentioned above. Another such hadith is the following:

¹ Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 5, pp. 341-342.

² See Albar, pp. 140-142.

³ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 321.

إِذَا مَرَّ بِالنُّطْفَةِ ثِنْتَانِ وَأَرْبَعُونَ لَيْلَةً بَعَثَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهَا مَلَكًا فَصَوَّرَهَا وَخَلَقَ سَمْعَهَا وَبَصَرَهَا
 وَجَلَدَهَا وَلَحَمَهَا وَعِظَامَهَا ثُمَّ قَالَ يَا رَبِّ أَذَكَرٌ أَمْ أُنْثَىٰ فَيَقْضِي رَبُّكَ مَا شَاءَ وَيَكْتُبُ
 الْمَلَكُ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ أَجَلُهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبُّكَ مَا شَاءَ وَيَكْتُبُ الْمَلَكُ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ رِزْقُهُ
 فَيَقْضِي رَبُّكَ مَا شَاءَ وَيَكْتُبُ الْمَلَكُ ثُمَّ يَخْرُجُ الْمَلَكُ بِالصَّحِيفَةِ فِي يَدِهِ فَلَا يَزِيدُ عَلَىٰ
 مَا أُمِرَ وَلَا يَنْقُصُ

“When the *nutfah* passes forty-two nights in the womb, Allah sends to it an angel who shapes it and creates its hearing, seeing, skin, flesh and bones. Then he says, ‘O Lord, is it a male or a female?’ Then your Lord decrees whatever He wills and the angel records it. Then he says, ‘O Lord, what is its life span?’ Then your Lord says whatever He wills and it is recorded by the angel. Then he says, ‘O Lord, what will be its provisions?’ Then your Lord decrees what He wills and it is recorded by the angel. Then the angel leaves with the scroll in his hand. Nothing shall be added to what he was ordered nor shall anything be decreased.”

Numerous approaches have been made to try to reconcile these different hadith. For example, one approach is to say that after forty days, the angel divides the *nutfah*, when it becomes an *alaqah*, into different portions. Then he later makes these different portions into flesh, bones and so forth. Hence, these are determined before they are actually created. Ibn Rajab states that this interpretation goes against the apparent and clear meaning of the hadith just stated, in which all of this occurs after just forty-two days. Hence, such an interpretation does not seem acceptable. Ibn Rajab further points out that this interpretation contradicts what the doctors of his time had already discovered about the fetus.¹

Ibn al-Salaah has offered the above explanation and has also offered another one. He says that the portion that describes the different stages of *nutfah*, *alaqah* and *mudhghah* are parenthetical or interjectory. Therefore, the translation would run something like this: “Surely, each of you is brought together in his mother’s abdomen for forty days. (Then it is a clinging object for a similar period. Then it is a lump looking like it has been chewed for a similar period.) The angel is then sent to him and he breathes into him the spirit. He is also commanded about four issues...” If they are parenthetical, it means that they may be removed without affecting the overall meaning. Thus,

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 158-159. Also see ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Tibyaan*, p. 216, who argues that there are two times that the angel is sent. One time what is decreed concerning the fetus’ physical body is something hidden and not visible to anyone while at the later time, after 120 days, there is a second decree whose affects are visible on the fetus. Again, this argument does not seem convincing.

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when those sentences are removed, the hadith actually states: "Surely, each of you is brought together in his mother's abdomen for forty days. The angel is then sent to him and he breathes into him the spirit. He is also commanded about four issues..." Since those sentences are parenthetical, it means that the angel is actually sent to the fetus after the first forty days. Hence, there is no contradiction between this hadith and the other relevant hadith. Ibn al-Salaah further states that this kind of speech is common in the Arabic language and may even be found in the Quran.¹

This is probably a stronger argument than the first one presented above. However, the basic ruling concerning speech is that sentences are not parenthetical unless proven to be so. Furthermore, when such parenthetical statements are used in the Quran, it is very clear by their meanings that they must be parenthetical. The Prophet's speech was also very clear. It is difficult to accept that he would make such a statement that would so easily be misinterpreted. It is also difficult to accept that there is nothing in the speech of the Prophet (peace be upon him), in this particular hadith, that would indicate that such statements are parenthetical. Hence, there is no need to resort to such interpretations if one simply accepts the fact that all of the three stages take place in the first forty days.

Finally, there are other scholars who postulate that the process may take different lengths of time for different fetuses. Allah knows best.²

"I swear by Allah, other than Whom there is no God, certainly, one of you will definitely perform the deeds of the people of Paradise until there is not between him and Paradise except an arm's length and then what has been recorded will overtake him and he shall perform the deeds of the people of Hell and enter it..."

The Controversy Over This Portion of the Hadith

There is some controversy concerning this portion of the hadith. The controversy stems from the fact that some narrators narrated this portion as a statement of Abdullah ibn Masood instead of a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him). According to al-Tahaawi, regardless of whether this is a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) or of ibn Masood, it is a correct and truthful statement. He says that because ibn Masood would not make such a statement from his own judgment. It must be based on something he learned from the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. Hence, the dispute, in al-

¹ Uthmaan ibn al-Salaah, *Fataawa ibn al-Salaah* (Daar al-Shareef li-l-Nashr wa al-Tauzi'), pp. 41-42.

² al-Haitami, p. 97.

Tahaawi's opinion, is moot. In either case, the statement is correct and must be believed in.¹

Actually, there is no need to make such an argument. There are plenty of authentic narrations from ibn Masood that state that this portion of the hadith was a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. It is possible that Abdullah may have mentioned it as his own statement on occasion. This was not uncommon for the Companions, especially if they feared that they may be mistaken in any of the wording of the hadith.

Ibn Hajar points out that it is possible that the swearing by Allah was from Abdullah ibn Masood while the remainder of the words were from the Prophet (peace be upon him).²

“I swear by Allah, other than Whom there is no God”

The following passage has a number of aspects that emphasize its truthfulness. The first is swearing by Allah. The next is the presence of the word *inna* (إِنَّ). The third is the presence of the letter *lam* in the word *layamal* (لَيَعْمَل) or "definitely perform". All of these stress the certainty and truthfulness of what is about to be said. Obviously, one would not speak in this manner unless there was some need to do so. The need to do so in this case is that someone could reject or think quite odd what the rest of the hadith states. The rest of the hadith states that a person could be doing the acts of one apparently destined for Paradise for years and then end up in the Hell-fire. Conversely, a person could be doing acts that could land one in the Hell-fire for years and then end up in Paradise. This is indeed something remarkable and unexpected. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) began with these words and expressions in order to stress that this happens to some people.

“certainly, one of you will definitely perform the deeds of the people of Paradise until there is not between him and Paradise except an arm's length and then what has been recorded will overtake him and he shall perform the deeds of the people of Hell and enter it.”

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is describing someone who has performed the deeds that will lead to Paradise for almost his entire life. A narration in *Musnad Ahmad* from Abu Huraira mentions that he does such deeds for seventy years. Then, just before his time of death as has been recorded for him while he was in the fetus, he changes his acts. He stops doing the deeds of the people of Paradise and, instead, he starts performing the deeds of the people of the Hell-fire. He was very close to entering Paradise, as if the

¹ Ahmad al-Tahaawi, *Sharh Mushkil al-Athaar* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1994), vol. 9, p. 485.

² Ibn Hajar, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 323.

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only thing between him and Paradise would have been his death. But he did not persist in that way. He did not continue to strive and patiently do the acts of the People of Paradise. He changed before his death and due to that reason he will be from the people of Hell.

This hadith points out a very important aspect of judgment. A person will be judged according to his belief and actions at the time of his death. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيَعْمَلُ عَمَلَ أَهْلِ النَّارِ وَإِنَّهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ وَيَعْمَلُ عَمَلَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ وَإِنَّهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ وَإِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنَّوَاتِيمِ

“A person does the deeds of the People of Hell while he is from the People of Paradise. And a person does the deeds of the People of Paradise and he is from the People of Hell. And verily the deeds are based on their final [deeds].” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) In reality, this is a very scary thought. It means that every Muslim must be on guard at all times to make sure that he does not stray from the straight path. He cannot look to his present deeds and feel assured because it could be that he changes his ways and starts performing the deeds of the people of the Hell-fire. Hence, he must always be on his toes. He must always pursue those avenues that strengthen his faith, revive it or keep it strong. And he must always stay away from those avenues that weaken and damage his faith, as he does not know what they may lead him to and he may end up dying in a wretched state.

It is a simple thing for a person's heart to change. The Arabic word for heart, *qalb*, comes from the fact that it can change completely from one direction to another. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّمَا سُمِّيَ الْقَلْبُ مِنْ تَقَلُّبِهِ إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْقَلْبِ كَمَثَلِ رِيْشَةٍ مُعَلَّقَةٍ فِي أَصْلِ شَجَرَةٍ يُقَلِّبُهَا الرِّيحُ ظَهْرًا لِبَطْنِ

“It is only called the *qalb* (heart) because of how it can change. The similitude of the heart is like a leaf hanging by the trunk of a tree that is being blown upside down by the wind.”¹

Another hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) states how the hearts can be turned easily. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself

¹ Recorded by Ahmad. According to al-Iraqi, its chain is *hasan*. [Cf., Ahmad al-Banna, *al-Fath al-Rabbaani li-Tarteeb Musnad al-Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal al-Shaibaani* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadeeth, n.d.), vol. 14, pp. 289-290.] Ahmad and Ibn Maa'jah record another hadith that supports the last portion of the above hadith. Al-Albaani has graded that hadith *sahih*. See al-Albaani, footnotes to al-Tabreezi, vol. 1, p. 37.

used to pray to Allah to make his heart firm. Al-Tirmidhi recorded the following hadith:

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يُكْثِرُ أَنْ يَقُولَ يَا مُقَلَّبَ الْقُلُوبِ نَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى
دِينِكَ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَمَّا بِكَ وَبِمَا جِئْتَ بِهِ فَهَلْ تَخَافُ عَلَيْنَا قَالَ نَعَمْ إِنَّ
الْقُلُوبَ بَيْنَ أَصْبَعَيْنِ مِنْ أَصَابِعِ اللَّهِ يُقَلِّبُهَا كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ

The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say often, “O changer of the hearts, make my heart firm upon Your religion.” The Companion said, “O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), we have believed in you and what you have brought. Do you fear for us?” He answered, “Yes. Verily, the hearts are between two of Allah’s fingers and he turns them any way He wills.”¹

Note that in this hadith concerning the creation in the womb, the Prophet (peace be upon him) only described two cases, where one changes from good to evil and vice-versa. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not mention the most common cases of one doing good his whole life or one doing evil his entire life. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was not intending to describe everyone in this hadith. He was simply making a point about what has been recorded about a person. No matter what the person’s deeds may be, before he dies, he will do the acts that correspond to what has been recorded for him, that is, whether he was from the fortunate or the miserable.

Note also that the good deeds that he performed may have been recorded on his behalf. However, such deeds will only be accepted and rewarded by Allah if a person does not follow them up with a deed that may negate them completely. There are many acts that wipe away one’s good deeds. The greatest or worst of them is committing apostasy. This act wipes away all of one’s good deeds.

Apparently, some commentators believe that this portion of the hadith is only in reference to the one who practices Islam for some time and then turns apostate. According to ibn Hajr, there is no need for such an assumption. The entering into the Hell-fire described does not necessarily mean that he will be in the Hell-fire forever. In other words, the hadith could be referring to a Muslim who practiced his faith well for many years and then changed his ways and committed many sins. But he stayed within the fold of Islam. Therefore, he will be one of the inhabitants of Hell but he will not remain therein forever by the grace of Allah. Hence, the hadith is a warning concerning committing sins as well as leaving Islam completely.²

¹ Recorded by al-Tirmidhi. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1323. *Sahih Muslim* has something very similar to the last portion of the hadith.

² Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, pp. 326-327.

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An Incorrect Understanding of This Portion of the Hadith

According to ibn Uthameen, the meaning of this hadith is that a person does the acts of Paradise “as it is viewed by the people”. That is, he is saying that the person is performing those deeds and the people think he is pious while in fact there is evil in his heart and he is from the People of Hell. He bases this understanding on a different hadith found in *Sahih al-Bukhari* in which a person was fighting valiantly on the side of the Muslims and the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that he was from the people of Hell. A person followed that man and found him committing suicide afterwards. So the Prophet, on that particular occasion, stated, “A man may perform the acts of the People of Paradise as it appears to the people.”¹

However, that hadith is completely irrelevant to the hadith being discussed here. This particular hadith is concerned with the topic of *al-Qadar* and the fact that what has been written for a person will come about. There are people who have been written to be among the miserable. They spend almost all of their lives doing good deeds— truly good deeds, not for show or out of hypocrisy. But Allah knows that they will be from the miserable. Hence, they change their ways and begin to do the deeds of the People of Hell. Therefore, this hadith is not talking about people who are outwardly showing good deeds while in their heart there is some wicked intention. It is talking about those who change their behavior before their life is over.

Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also spoke about the opposite case in this hadith. (He did not do so in the hadith that ibn Uthameen referred to.) Obviously, there is no such thing as a person doing the deeds of the People of Hell in the sight of the people while in his heart he is some kind of pious person who is from the People of Paradise.

It is important to understand this hadith correctly as the ramifications of ibn Uthameen's misunderstanding are very different.

“And, certainly, one of you will definitely perform the acts of the people of Hell until there is not between him and Hell except an arm's length and then what has been recorded will overtake him and he shall perform the deeds of the people of Paradise and enter it.”

This is the opposite of the first case described above. Ibn Daqeeq al-Eid points out that it is part of Allah's great mercy that the first case mentioned above is very rare while the second case mentioned here is not uncommon.² That is, by Allah's mercy, He guides those who turn to Him. If someone does good deeds, Allah continues to guide him, help him and overlook his faults.

¹ See ibn Uthameen, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 5, pp. 342-343.

² Muhammad ibn Daqeeq al-Eid, *Sharh al-Arbaeen Hadeethan al-Nawawiya* (no publication information given), p. 22.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

Only if the person has a complete change in heart does Allah take him all the way to disbelief or the Hell-fire. On the other hand, there are many cases where Allah saves a person from the Hell-fire by guiding him to Islam. He was doing the acts of the people of the Hell-fire and, by Allah's mercy, he is now doing the acts of the people of Paradise. In fact, all of the Companions who embraced Islam some time after the message reached them were of this nature.

This portion of the hadith should also give hope to those who are currently committing sins, realizing that they are wrong but somehow still not being able to pull themselves from them. If such a person continues to strive and correct himself, Allah willing, he will finally some day change his ways. When he does, he will start performing the deeds of the People of Paradise and die in that state. This is, once again, a great bounty, blessing and opportunity from Allah. Those who are committing sins now should realize this fact and change their ways before death comes to them while they are still performing the deeds of the People of Hell.

Related Fiqh Issues

The Question of Abortion

This hadith describes the creation of the human being in the womb of the mother. It makes it clear that the human is in existence, with a soul, not long after conception but long before the actual birth takes place. This has important ramifications for the question of abortion and its legality in Islam. As was noted above, however, the commonly accepted opinion is that the soul is breathed into the fetus after 120 days. This has greatly influenced the jurists' views on abortion. There seems to be complete agreement that abortion after 120 days is absolutely forbidden unless there is a dire necessity. There is some difference of opinion concerning abortion performed before the ending of the first 120 days of pregnancy.

In the *Contemporary Jurisprudence Research Journal*, there was an article entitled, "Rule on Abortion which Takes Place Before Completion of One Hundred and Twenty Days of Pregnancy". Unless otherwise noted, the following information is from that article:¹

Concerning abortion before the soul is breathed into the embryo, in other words, before the completion of one hundred and twenty days of

¹ "Rule on Abortion which Takes Place Before Completion of One Hundred and Twenty Days of Pregnancy," *Contemporary Jurisprudence Research Journal* (Fifteenth Edition, Fourth Year, Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 1992), pp. 57-59. The relevant references may be found in that article. An excellent discussion of abortion may be found in Umm Kulthum al-Khateeb, *Qadhiyah Tahdeed al-Nasl fi al-Shariah al-Islamiya* (Jeddah: al-Dar al-Saudiya, 1984), pp. 149-180. She concludes that at no stage of the pregnancy, even before 40 days, is abortion allowed whatsoever— except in the case of necessity.

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pregnancy, the Hanafi school says that no *ghura* or blood money for killing a baby would be imposed, unless human features are apparent on the embryo. But if no features are apparent, then there is no sin. Another opinion in the same Hanafi school states that the perpetrator of abortion (whether the father or the mother or any other person) is considered sinful. Those who state such an opinion derive evidence from the analogy that if a *muhrim* (one who entered the consecrated state of pilgrimage or *Umrah*) broke an egg of a wild game, then expiation is imposed on him for committing that act, because that egg is the initial state of the wild game. According to this argument, the embryo which has not acquired any human features is also the initial state of creation, which if left to develop would have become a soul. That is the reason why the one who aborts it or causes its abortion is considered sinful even though the crime is not considered murder.

According to Imam Malik, all that a woman aborts in the form of a clot of congealed blood or a morsel of flesh, or what is known to be off-spring, is a future soul and *ghura* is to be imposed upon violating the sanctity of that soul. Al-Ghazzaali, a follower of the Shafi'ee school, thinks that the first stage of creation occurs when the sperm from the man enters the ovary of the woman in preparation to develop into a living thing, and violation and spoiling of that process is a felony.

According to the Hanbali school of thought, if the woman aborted something which does not have human features, then there is no sin. Nevertheless, if some trustworthy midwives witnessed that the aborted embryo consisted of the beginning aspects of initial human creation which if left in the womb would have developed into a human being, then the most correct opinion is that there is no so sin on that act because the basic ruling is innocence which is not to be doubted simply based on suspicion.

If one imagines justifications for abortion before the soul is breathed into the embryo, one would see that there are three suppositions:

First, abortion is carried out due to jeopardy or fear for the pregnant woman's health if the pregnancy were to be continued or for any other *shareeah* legal causes, such as the case when the woman is raped. Abortion in these cases is permissible due to *shareeah* exigency.

Second, abortion is carried out as a precautionary method of birth control, in fear of expenses and financial burden. In such case, abortion is not permitted because it comes under the prohibition of killing children in fear of poverty [either for the child or for the parents]. Allah says, "Kill not your children on a plea of want— We provide sustenance for you and for them" (*al-Anaam* 151). And, "Kill not your children for fear of want— We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin" (*al-Israa* 31).

Third, abortion is carried out for a reason other than those two reasons, such as the desire of the mother to delay giving birth for as long as

possible, as a measure to preserve her youth, or her physical appearance, or perhaps she is elongating the period of living with her husband without giving birth on the suspicion that she might be divorced. Abortion for such reasons is not permissible.

It can be argued that the congealed blood in the womb before the completion of one hundred and twenty days of pregnancy is merely matter with no soul in it, so therefore it should be allowed to abort it. However, that “physical matter” is the beginning of initial creation, and in reality it is a believing soul, in consideration of what it will be in the future. The period of one hundred and twenty days is only a measure for completion of creation and breathing of the soul. Many scholars do not think that there is a big difference between a hundred and ten day embryo and another which is a hundred and twenty days.

Pregnancy is a gift from Almighty Allah to His creatures. Anybody who transgresses against that creation would be like one who rejects that gift from Almighty Allah. However, in reality, he or she is opposing the will and wisdom of Almighty Allah.

In short, the article concludes, deliberate abortion is impermissible even before the completion of one hundred and twenty days period of pregnancy. Anybody who does it deliberately is considered a sinner, except when one has a *shari'ah* legal exigency.

In a separate article, the same journal discussed the question of aborting a pregnancy that was the result of rape.¹ They concluded that such rapes cause a great deal of psychological problems for the woman and also bring about a great deal of complications for her future life. Hence, they argue that a woman in that position should determine if she is pregnant as soon as possible. Then, if abortion is decided upon, it should be done within the first 120 days.² If, for some reason, it is left till after that time, it may still be resorted to as a case of necessity, due to the harm that it may bring to the woman. However, they also stated that if the raped woman could accept that pregnancy and there was no harm on her, either psychologically or physiologically, she would not abort the fetus in that case and, Allah willing, Allah would reward her greatly for bringing up that child and looking after it. Perhaps that child may bring her great good in the future. Allah knows best.

Funeral Prayer for the Aborted Fetus

According to the majority of the scholars, if a fetus is aborted or if there is a miscarriage after the *rooh* is breathed into it, the funeral prayer is to

¹ “Rule on Deliberate Abortion Due to Rape,” *Contemporary Jurisprudence Research Journal* (Seventeenth Edition, Fifth Year, April-May-June 1993), pp. 77-82. Presumably, the same conclusion can be made concerning pregnancy due to incest.

² Preferably as soon as possible based on the conclusions of the discussion of this hadith.

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be performed for it. Of course, the majority of the scholars also say that the *rooh* is breathed into the fetus after 120 days. Hence, if a fetus is aborted after 120 days, any portion of that fetus that comes out of the woman is to be buried properly and is to have a funeral prayer said for it. Ibn Uthaimen says that if the fetus comes before 120 days, it is simply a piece of flesh and it is to be buried in any place, without washing it, shrouding it or performing the prayer for it. It is only a human after 120 days.¹

Presumably, though, if a scholar is of the opinion that the *rooh* is breathed into the fetus after 40 or 45 days, then the funeral prayer should be said for any fetus that is aborted after that time.

There are some scholars that state that the funeral prayer is only to be held if the child is born alive and cries, even if just once. This is sometimes based on the hadith,

إِذَا اسْتَهَلَ الصَّبِيَّ صَلَّى عَلَيْهِ

“If the child cries [even just once], the prayer should be held for him.” This hadith is recorded by al-Nasaai and others. However, it seems that the scholars of hadith agree that this is a weak hadith.² In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, it states that, according to al-Zuhri, one only prays for a deceased child or miscarriage if the child actually cried.

Given the fact that it is difficult to determine when the *rooh* is breathed into the fetus, the strongest opinion, Allah knows best, seems to be that any aborted fetus or miscarriage may have the funeral prayer performed for it. That is, if any solid mass— as opposed to simply some blood— comes from the mother, the funeral prayer may be performed.³ This opinion is firmly based on the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him),

¹ Ibn Uthaimen, *al-Sharh al-Mumti*, vol. 5, pp. 373-374. He also states that after 120 days, according to the scholars, the fetus should be given a name at that time. Elsewhere, ibn Uthaimen also states that the *aqeeqah* should be performed for the fetus so that he will intercede for his parents, as such a fetus will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment. See ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 5, p. 340. Concerning these last two matters, there are no specific hadith in the case of an aborted fetus. Allah knows best. There is also another opinion that says that the *rooh* is breathed into the fetus after four months and ten days. Hence, the fetus will only have the prayer for it if it was a pregnancy of four months and ten days. This view that the *rooh* comes after four months and ten days is also the reason given by some scholars as to why the waiting period for the widow is four months and ten days. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 162.

² Ibn Hajar states that the chain is *sahih* but the strongest opinion is that it is not a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) but a statement of the Companion Jaabir. See ibn Hajar, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 325.

³ This view also avoids the problem of trying to determine if in fact 120 days have passed since conception. Some scholars state that it is not necessary to perform the funeral prayer for children but the prayer may be performed if the people wish to do so. There are conflicting reports regarding whether or not the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed the funeral prayer for his deceased son Ibrahim. Al-Albaani concludes that the strongest narrations state that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not perform the funeral prayer for his son Ibrahim. Allah knows best.

السَّقْتُ يُصَلَّى عَلَيْهِ وَيُدْعَى لَوَالِدَيْهِ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ وَالرَّحْمَةِ

“The aborted fetus [or miscarriage] is to have the prayer performed for it and one is to pray for forgiveness and mercy for its parents.”¹ In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, *al-siqt*, with an *alif lam* in front of it. This implies generality. That is, it applies to every aborted fetus. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not restrict it to any specific age of the fetus nor did he require that it cry first.

Other Points Related to this Hadith

- The process of the creation of humans and birth should lead a thinking person to believe in resurrection and the Hereafter. The one who is able to create humans from a tiny portion of a small amount of fluid certainly is able to recreate such a human after his death. Indeed, the re-creation should be considered much easier a task than the first creation.
- Allah certainly has the ability to create a human without going through the stages that it goes through in the fetus. According to ibn Hajr, Allah creates humans in such a way as a mercy for the mothers. This makes it much easier upon them and much less of a hardship. Allah prepares the womb and takes the fetus slowly, step by step, into its birth.²
- A person should consider how he was created, stage by stage, in a beautiful form. He was created in a beautiful fashion and, on top of that, he was given the blessing of the mind and rational thought. This differentiates him from other animals who have not been blessed with that characteristic. The one who realizes this fact should truly be thankful to the One who created him, blessed him and gave him life. He should thank Him in a proper manner by obeying Him and not disobeying Him.³
- Furthermore, this hadith also should make a person reflect on how he was and is in need of his Lord. When he was a drop of fluid in his mother’s womb, he did not bring himself about. Instead, it was Allah.⁴ The human, in fact, alive today has no conscious remembrance of what occurred to him in those stages. He should think about how Allah cared for him and shaped

See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Ahkaam al-Janaaiz Wa Bidaha* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1986), pp. 79-80.

¹ Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi and al-Haakim. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 661.

² Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 325.

³ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 325.

⁴ The disbelievers of today would call it “mother nature,” but who other than Allah is the One who actually created and made the laws of nature?

Hadith #4: Creation in the Mother's Womb

him in the most beautiful of manners. Once again, this should make the person very thankful to his Creator and Lord.¹

- This hadith is evidence that a person enters Paradise or Hell because of his deeds. This is not in contradiction with another hadith that states, "The actions of any one of you will not enter him into Paradise." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) The meaning of that hadith is that it is only by Allah's grace and mercy that one enters Paradise. His actions alone are not deserving of what Paradise entails.²
- Whatever Allah has decreed and determined will occur, because of His foreknowledge of all events. His decree that a person will be from Heaven or Hell will occur as He has decreed it. This is part of the overall belief in *al-Qadar*. However, no one knows what has been decreed for him. Therefore, he must continue to work for that goal that he is seeking. If he is from the People of Paradise, the proper deeds will be made easy for him and he will be performing them at the time of his death.
- This hadith is also evidence that repentance and good deeds may wipe away the effects of evil deeds that were previously performed.
- Al-Qaari states that this hadith shows that human beings should do things or undertake things gradually, step by step, each step at its appropriate time, without haste. He says that Allah has the most ability to create anything in one moment but such is not the path that Allah has followed. Humans should understand the wisdom behind this and realize that to accomplish things correctly and properly they must be done in the proper manner and stages.³
- A Muslim must not be fooled or deceived by his good deeds. His good acts should not lead him to becoming arrogant and proud. Such behavior and characteristics would never be found in a true believer who understands the reality of this world. Instead, the true believer must always be in a position between hope and fear. He must always be hoping that Allah accepts his deeds and continues to guide him. He must always be fearful that Allah may not accept his deeds or that he may stray from the Straight Path and render all of his works vain.⁴
- No matter what kinds of evil deeds and *kufir* a person may exhibit in this world, no one can be so arrogant to look at him while he is still alive and say, "This person is going to Hell." Allah may guide him to the straight path and change his ways completely and he may be from the people of Heaven. This also implies that one must never despair and give up when it comes to hoping that others will embrace Islam. For example, a person's father or mother may be a non-Muslim and may continue for a long time to

¹ Cf., Muhammad al-Sindi, *Sharh al-Arbaeen al-Nawawiya* (al-Damaam, Saudi Arabia: Ramaadi li-l-Nashr, 1995), p. 39.

² Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 326.

³ Al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 150.

⁴ Cf., al-Qaari, vol. 1, p. 152.

be so. But the person may continue to pray for their guidance and need not despair. It may well be that Allah guides them to the truth just prior to their deaths.

- Every Muslim should seek refuge in Allah from having an evil end, wherein his deeds before his death are those of the people of Hell.
- Provisions are predetermined even before one's birth by Allah. Allah is the sole Provider. Hence, one must turn to Him to seek provisions. One's provisions have already been recorded and decreed. They will come to him. There is, then, no need and no reason for a person to sell his religion for the sake of getting provisions in this world.¹
- According to al-Nawawi, the hadith shows that it is recommended—perhaps it would be better to say permissible—to swear by Allah in order to stress a matter and make the people really pay attention to it.²
- It is clear from this hadith that the soul is not breathed into the womb at the time of conception. This means that the Islamic position on this question is different from the Catholic perception.

Summary of the Hadith

- The word *nutfah* does not occur in this hadith as recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim and numerous others. It is only found in a narration recorded by Abu Awaana. This narration contradicts what all other trustworthy narrators have narrated. Hence, it must be considered a case of *idraaj*, where a word has incorrectly been inserted into the text of a hadith.
- The majority of the scholars have understood this hadith to mean that the fetus passes through three stages of *nutfah*, *alaqah* and *mudhghah*. Each stage takes forty days, for a total of one hundred and twenty days. This author was forced to adopt an opinion that is different from the majority opinion on this question, although it is not unprecedented. It is never an easy proposition to go against what the great scholars of Islam have stated. The author asks Allah to forgive him if he is mistaken and to guide him to what is correct.
- The alternate explanation of this hadith, which is more supported by other narrations from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and what seems to be “medical fact,” is that the entire three stages occur during the first forty some-odd days after conception.
- There is nothing explicit about when the *rooh* is breathed into the fetus. It definitely takes place at least forty days after conception. The majority of the scholars, some say a consensus, state that it takes place after 120 days.

¹ Sultaan, p. 73.

² Yahya al-Nawawi, *Sharh Matin al-Arabaen al-Nawawiya* (Jeddah: Dar al-Mujtama, 1986), p. 50.

Hadith #4: Creation in the Mother's Womb

Others say that it takes place after 130 days. This author has not ventured to make any conclusion on this point.

- While a human is still a fetus, an angel records its provisions, life span, deeds and whether he will be happy or miserable. This is all part of the foreknowledge that Allah possesses about this creation.
- The deeds a person is performing at the time of his death are the deeds that will determine whether he is from the people of Paradise or the people of Hell.
- One cannot rest on his past deeds and think he is going to Paradise. Instead, one must continue to struggle and toil for his most important behavior is his behavior at the time of his death.
- A person may be performing the deeds of the people of Hell and, then, by Allah's mercy, he is guided to perform the deeds of the people of Paradise. Therefore, he will be from the people of Paradise. Unfortunately, the opposite can also be true. Such has already been recorded for each human while he was in the womb of his mother.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

Hadith #5:
"Whoever introduces..."

عَنْ أُمِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أُمِّ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا قَالَتْ قَالَ
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ أَحْدَثَ فِي أَمْرِنَا هَذَا
مَا لَيْسَ مِنْهُ فَهُوَ رَدٌّ

رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ وَمُسْلِمٌ وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ لِمُسْلِمٍ:
مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرُنَا فَهُوَ رَدٌّ

On the authority of the Mother of the Faithful, Umm Abdullah, Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not from it shall have it rejected."

Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim. In one version by Muslim, it states, "Whoever does an act that is not in accord with our matter will have it rejected."

Selected Vocabulary

أحدث	- "introduces, innovates"
في	- "in"
أمرنا	- "our affair," the <i>نا</i> corresponds to "our"
ليس	- a type of negation, "is not, not"
منه	- this is a compound word; the <i>من</i> means "from" and the <i>هـ</i> represents "it"
رد	- "rejected"
عملا	- "a deed, an act"

Takhreej

This hadith from Aisha, with the first wording stated above, was recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, ibn Maajah, Ahmad, ibn Hibbaan, al-Daraqutni, Abu Yala and many others. The hadith with the second wording stated above was recorded by Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Dawood,

ibn Abu Aasim, al-Baihaqi and al-Daaraqutni.¹ It was also recorded by al-Bukhari in but in *mualaq* form.²

General Comments On This Hadith

This hadith is also one of the foundations of Islam itself. It is like the judge or scale for the external acts performed by mankind, in the same way that the first hadith concerning intention covers the internal aspects of the acts of mankind. From the first hadith, one can understand that every act that is not done for the sake of Allah is rejected. From this hadith, one can also understand that every act that is not done in accordance with the *Shareeah* is also rejected by Allah. Every act that did not form part of the Prophet's religion cannot, in reality, be considered part of the religion whatsoever.³

Imam al-Nawawi stated that this hadith should be memorized by all Muslims. It is a must in refuting evil practices. And, al-Nawawi noted, it is used commonly as an evidence for a number of issues.⁴ Al-Toofi called it one half of the *shareeah* evidences. This is because evidences are sought to either affirm or deny the permissibility of a specific act, and this hadith is a major premise in that process.⁵ Al-Shaukaani pointed out that one cannot enumerate (because they are so many) all of the rulings that are directly derived from this one hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him).⁶

This hadith is related to the concept of *bidah* or innovations. However, the detailed discussion of that topic will be left for the commentary on hadith #28, Allah willing.

About The Narrator: Aisha bint Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq

The Mother of the Faithful, Umm Abdullah⁷ 'Aisha, daughter of Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq (9 B.H./613-58 A.H./678) was the most beloved wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him). She married the Prophet at a young age and was able to fully mature and develop under his guidance. Hence, she became a great

¹ See ibn Muhammad, pp. 65-67.

² In *mualaq* form means that al-Bukhari did not record the entire chain of the hadith. In such a case, it is not proper to state that al-Bukhari recorded it unless one explicitly states that he recorded it in *mualaq* form. This is why al-Nawawi attributed the second wording only to Muslim and not to al-Bukhari. Al-Bukhari recorded this wording with its entire chain in another one of his books, entitled *Khalq Afaal al-Ibaad*.

³ Cf., ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 176; Mustafa al-Bugha and Muhyi al-Deen Mistu, *al-Waafi fi Sharh al-Arbaeen al-Nawawiya* (Damascus: Muassasat Uloom al-Quran, 1984), p. 26.

⁴ Imam al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih*, vol. 11, p. 160.

⁵ Quoted in Sultaan, p. 75.

⁶ Al-Shaukaani, *Nail*, vol. 2, p. 93.

⁷ Her *kunya* was Umm Abdullah ("the mother of Abdullah"). There is some difference of opinion as to why she received that name. Some say that name was coined due to her nephew, Abdullah ibn al-Zubair. In any case, it is well-known that she never had a child.

Hadith #5: “Whoever Introduces...”

narrator of hadith and a distinguished jurist.¹ She was also very knowledgeable of Arabic history and literature.

She married the Prophet (peace be on him) in the second year after the Hijrah. She was not happy with the latter part of ‘Uthmaan’s rule, but when he was killed she led the campaign calling for justice against his murderers. This led to the Battle of the Camel against ‘Ali. The last years of her life she passed quietly and she died in 58/678.

The number of hadith attributed to her authority reaches 2210.

“the Mother of the Faithful”

Before mentioning Aisha’s name, al-Nawawi stated, “the Mother of the Faithful.” This is a term that is used for all of the Prophet’s wives. Allah says in the Quran,

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

“The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are their [the believers’] mothers [as regards respect and marriage]” (*al-Ahzaab* 6).

This verse shows how the relationship should be between the believers and the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his wives. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is closer to the true believers than their own souls. If there is a conflict in interest between one’s wants or aspirations and what the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said, then what the Prophet (peace be upon him) says take precedence. Some of the Companions even wrote in their copies of the Quran, “He [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] is their father.” He is the one who cares for them and has brought them up in the guidance of Islam. Hence, he is to be loved, respected and treated better than one treats his own father or his own soul.²

One must show similar respect and courtesy to the Prophet’s wives as one would show to one’s own mother. Furthermore, it was not allowed for anyone to marry any of the Prophet’s wives after his death. This is part of their status as being the “mothers of the believers”.³ This is true for all of the Prophet’s wives, of which Aisha was one.⁴

¹ In fact, recently Saeed al-Dakheel has compiled an encyclopedic work on her *fiqh* or juristic views. The work covers some 767 pages. See Saeed al-Dakheel, *Mausooh Fiqh Aisha Umm al-Mummineen: Hayaatuha wa Fiqhuha* (Beirut: Daar al-Nafaais, 1989), *passim*.

² Abdul Rahmaan al-Saadi, *Taiseer al-Kareem al-Rahman fi Tafseer Kalaam al-Mannaan* (Beirut: Muasaasat al-Risaalah, 1995), vol. 2, p. 376.

³ Obviously, this does not apply to other aspects, such as being alone with them, and so forth.

⁴ As is well-known, the Shiah do not like the Prophet’s wife Aisha. Hence, they had to find some way to get around this verse and command to show her due respect. For this end, they have a fabricated hadith that states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) told Ali that he has the right to divorce, for the Prophet (peace be upon him), any of the Prophet’s wives after his death if they behave in an uncomely fashion. Hence, Ali divorced Aisha from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and she is no longer to be treated with such respect. This is the lengths that some people go to in

“Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not from it shall have it rejected.”

“Introduces”

This word implies anything new, created or not previously established or practiced.¹ The religion of Islam is complete. There is no need for any additions or deletions. Hence, to introduce something new into the religion is an affront to Allah and the Prophet (peace be upon him). Anything new introduced into the religion cannot be better or equal to what has already been established by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Allah has said in the Quran,

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ
الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

“This day I have perfected and completed your religion for you, completed my favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion” (*al-Maaidah* 3).

“this”

In English, there does not seem to be any real significance to this word. However, in Arabic, it does have some significance. The Prophet (peace be upon him) pointed to the religion by using the word *haadha* (هَذَا) or “this”. This was done to emphasize or give importance to the matter that is being referred to. It is similar to the opening verses of *surah al-Baqara* where Allah refers to “this Book” with the word *dhaalika* (ذَلِكَ).

“Matter of ours”

This “matter of ours” is in reference to the religion of Islam. The Prophet (peace be upon him) referred to it as an *amr* or matter to demonstrate that this religion is the affair of the Muslims, it is the thing that is of concern to them and it is the thing that they are busy with. All of the Muslims’ deeds and actions are concerned with and related to this “matter,” the religion of Islam.²

order to substantiate their beliefs and desires that clearly contradict the Quran and sunnah. For more on this belief and hadith of theirs, see Abul Ala Maudoodi, *The Meaning of the Quran*, (Lahore, Pakistan: Islamic Publications, Ltd., 1986), vol. 10, p. 86.

¹ Abdul Raouf al-Munaawi, *Faidh al-Qadeer Sharh al-Jaami al-Sagheer* (Beirut: Daar al-Marifah, 1972), vol. 6, p. 36.

² Al-Munaawi, vol. 6, p. 36.

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Furthermore, as al-Shaukaani points out, what is meant by "matter" here is the way of life and beliefs that were being followed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions. That is the "matter" by which all later acts are to be judged.¹ If an act is not consistent with the way of the Prophet and his Companions, then it is one of those introduced matters that is rejected.

"that is not from it"

That is, any opinion or view that is not found in the Quran or sunnah or that is not derived from the Quran and sunnah, either directly or indirectly, has no place in Islam.

"shall have it rejected."

If the introduced action was supposedly an act of worship, it will not be accepted by Allah. The person will not be rewarded for it and the deed will be rejected. If the action was related to worldly matters or worldly transactions, then that action is null and void as it goes against the principles of the *Shareeah*.

Al-Haitami points out that the act will be rejected if it has not been sanctioned in totality by the *shareeah* or if it is missing an essential characteristic that the *shareeah* requires.² For example, worshipping Allah by intentionally standing in the sun as a means for reward is not sanctioned by the *shareeah*. Hence, it is a rejected act. Similarly, intentionally performing the *salaat* (ritual prayer) without being in a state of ablution is also rejected because it is missing an essential component that the *shareeah* requires.

"Whoever does an act that is not in accord with our matter will have it rejected."

Al-Nawawi points out the very important difference between this narration of the hadith and the previous narration. A person could be following a deed that is not found in the Quran and sunnah. However, he may argue that he was not the one who invented it and he is just following what others have done. In that case, he may claim, this hadith does not apply to him and his deed, even if it is wrong, may still be accepted by Allah. This second narration does not leave any room for such an argument. This narration makes it clear that if anyone follows any act that is not in accord with the way of the Prophet

¹ Al-Shaukaani, *Nail*, vol. 2, p. 93.

² Al-Haitami, *Fath*, pp. 106-107.

(peace be upon him), it will be rejected regardless of whether that person himself or somebody else introduced that act.¹

Islam is Following and Not Innovating

The essential message of this hadith is that Islam is about following and not innovating. Islam is following what Allah has stated in the Quran and what the Prophet (peace be upon him) has taught. It is not inventing new ways of worship and new customs or practices that have no justification in the Quran and sunnah. Hence, every deed, statement or practice must be judged in the light of the Quran and sunnah. If it is acceptable or correct according to these two standards, then one may follow it. If it is not correct according to these standards, then it is to be rejected.

There are many paths that one could follow. But there is only one straight path. There is only one true Islam. That is the Islam of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions. Any other way or path must be rejected. Allah has stated in the Quran,

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن
سَبِيلِهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّوْنَاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“And verily, this is My Straight Path, so follow it. And follow not [other] paths, for they will separate you away from His path. This He has ordained for you that you may become pious” (*al-Anaam* 153).

Two Types of Actions: Rites of Worship and Worldly Transactions and Dealings

The jurists have distinguished between two types of actions. The first type of action is what could be called “rites of worship” or *ibadaat*. These are the deeds that are done solely for the purpose of worshipping Allah and getting closer to Him. Allah is the only One who knows how He is to be worshipped. Hence, acts of worship must strictly follow the pattern and practice laid down by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The other types of acts are “worldly transactions and dealings” (*muamalaat*). In general, these acts involve others and are usually done with a certain worldly purpose in mind, for example, to meet some need. Here, the interest of humans is taken into consideration. There is much more leeway in these acts. However, at the same time, they must still be within the guidelines that have been laid down in the *shareeah*.

¹ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh* (Daar al-Fikr), vol. 12, p. 16.

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Each type shall be discussed separately below. However, first, the general principle regarding these two types of acts is the following: If an act is supposedly an act of worship, then there must be direct and clear evidence for it. In this case, the burden of proof is to show that the act is sanctioned by the *shareeah*. If there is no such clear proof, the act is not considered proper or acceptable. On the other hand, with respect to worldly dealings, an act is considered legal and valid as long as there is no specific violation of any principle of the *shareeah*. Hence, here one does not have to show that an act is specifically sanctioned. One needs only show that an act does not violate any specific prohibition of the *shareeah*.

Rites of Worship

Any act of worship that is not consistent with the *Shareeah* is rejected and has no place in Islam. This would include, for examples, those people who listen to songs and music or dance and claim that they are getting closer to Allah by such practices. In reality, these people are only getting closer to Satan. Such deeds are rejected by Allah.

These innovations have not been sanctioned by Allah. Therefore, it must originate with some false partner to Allah's authority. Allah says in the Quran,

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنُ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ
الْفَصْلِ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

"Or have they partners with Allah who have instituted for them a religion which Allah has not allowed? Had it not been for a decisive Word [already gone forth], the matter would have been judged between them. And, verily, for the wrongdoers there is a painful punishment" (*al-Shoora* 21).

One time the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw a man standing in the sun. When he asked about him, he was told that the man had made an oath to stand, not to sit, not to seek shade and to fast. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then ordered him to sit and seek shade and told him to complete his fast. (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) The actions he made for himself of standing and not seeking shade are not acts of worship that Allah has sanctioned. There was no sign that such deeds could get one closer to Allah. Hence, they are rejected acts and the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered him to stop performing them. Such is true for any other "act of worship" that has not been established in the Quran and sunnah. Such acts do not take one closer to Allah, as was stated above.

The scholars have derived the basic principles that help determine whether or not a particular "act of worship" is one that is sanctioned by the *shareeah* or not. Ibn Uthaimen states that the act must be in accord with the

shareeah with respect to its cause, type, amount, manner, time and place. Each one of these conditions deserves to be discussed separately:¹

The act must be in accord with the *shareeah* with respect to its reason: If someone performs a supposed act of worship due to a reason for which there is no sanction in the *shareeah*, that act is rejected. For example, gathering for the birthday of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is something that the Prophet (peace be upon him) never did, his companions never did and there is nothing in the *shareeah* to sanction it. Therefore, gathering as “an act of worship” on that occasion is not an act that is pleasing to Allah. Allah knows how He is to be worshipped and He has not sanctioned that act whatsoever. The same is true for having a gathering on the twentieth of Rajab in celebration of the Prophet’s ascension into heaven. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not celebrate it and he never even suggested that any of his followers do so. Hence, gathering for such a cause is not acceptable.

The act must be in accord with the *shareeah* with respect to the type of act being performed: For example, if someone wanted to make a sacrifice for *Eid*, if he were to sacrifice a horse, such a sacrifice would be rejected because there is no sanction for sacrificing a horse under any circumstances.

The act must be in accord with the *shareeah* with respect to its amount: For example, if someone performed six *rakats* for the *Dhuhr* (Noon) Prayer, this would not be an acceptable act of worship for it contradicts what the *shareeah* has laid down as the proper amount for that act of worship.

Suppose someone says *Allaahu akbar* thirty-seven times— instead of the different amounts stated in different hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him)— after each obligatory prayer. If this person is doing that act claiming that it is an act of worship that one should perform at that time, he would be mistaken. That is not the correct number of times to say it. However, if a person says it that many times on his own, recognizing that such is not the sunnah or a recognized act of worship but it is just to increase his number of voluntary acts, then there is no harm in it.

The act must be in accord with the *shareeah* with respect to its manner or modality: If a person performs the right type of act, with the right amount and the right cause, yet if he does not perform it in the correct manner, it would be rejected. Ibn Uthaimen gives the example of a person who makes ablution by intentionally washing his feet, then wiping his head, then washing his hands and then washing his face. Obviously, his ablution would not be acceptable because he did not perform it in the manner that the *shareeah* prescribes.

The act must be in accord with the *shareeah* with respect to its timing: If a person fasts the month of Ramadhaan during Shabaan or specifically during December, then that act is rejected. It is not sanctioned by Allah

¹ Cf., Muhammad ibn Uthaimen, *al-Tauheed wa Mana al-Shahaadatain wa Hukm al-Mutaabiah* (Riyadh: Dar al-Muslim, 1413 A.H.), pp. 25-31.

Hadith #5: "Whoever Introduces..."

because it is not done at its proper time. Similarly, if people perform the Friday Prayer on Friday evening or on Sunday, that act is also a rejected act.

The same is the case with a person who delays his prayer after its stated time. He is not praying properly according to the *shareeah* and, unless he had a valid excuse for his behavior, his prayer would not be considered acceptable. Ibn Uthaimen said, "For this reason we say that if a person intentionally does not perform the prayer until its time is finished, without any valid excuse, then his prayer will not be accepted from him even if he performs it one thousand times." Then he states a very important principle, "For every act of worship that is required at a specific time, if the time elapses without any excuse, then the act is not accepted but will be rejected."¹

If a person, for example, goes to Muzdalifah instead of Arafah on the Day of Arafah, then his staying in Muzdalifah is not correct and will be rejected. Another example is fasting. Fasting is definitely sanctioned by the *shareeah*. However, if a person fasts on the Day of Eid, that fasting is incorrect according to the *shareeah* and it is not a means of worshipping Allah.

There are many acts that constitute worship; however, they must be done at specific times as stated by the *shareeah*. Otherwise, they are not acts of worship. For example, during the pilgrimage, as an act of worship, men do not cover their heads. However, this is something specific for that time and place. If a person, outside of the pilgrimage, goes around with his head uncovered and claims to be doing that as an act of worship of Allah, he is wrong and misapplying this important principle.

In general, performing acts at times other than when they are prescribed, performing new acts that have not been prescribed or encouraged at all, adding anything to the acts of the *shareeah*, deleting anything from the acts of the *shareeah* are all causes to have one's act rejected.² Such acts cannot be considered acts of worship of Allah.

¹ Ibn Uthaimen, *al-Tauheed*, p. 30.

² Ibn Rajab points out that the act may become totally void depending on what has been left out. For example, if a person does not make ablution when he has the ability to do so or if a person does not perform prostrations in the prayer when he has the ability to do so, his entire act of prayer will be void. However, if he does not pray in congregation, then his act is lacking but is not totally void. Similarly, with respect to additions to *Shareeah* acts, if a person adds something like a fifth *rakah* to a prayer [by mistake], the entire prayer will be valid. But if someone makes ablution by washing every part of his body four times, he still has made ablution but his additional time of washing would be considered a rejected act. He also discusses a tricky case wherein the scholars have differed. Suppose a person performs a proper act but mixes it with something that is not allowed. For example, suppose a person prays yet covers his body with clothing that is forbidden for him, such as stolen clothing. Or, suppose a person prays in a mosque on land that has not been rightfully purchased. In those cases, is his deed completely rejected or has he fulfilled the deed while committing a sin? Ibn Rajab states that most of the jurists say that the deed is not completely rejected. He states that the principle is that if the prohibited act is directly and specifically related to the act of worship, then the act will be completely void. If the prohibited act is something external to the act of worship, the act will not be considered completely void. So, for example, prayer without ablution is completely void as opposed to praying in forbidden clothing. Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 178-180.

Worldly Transactions and Dealings (*Muamalaat*)

As noted above, the view of worldly transactions and dealings is different. There is much more flexibility and leeway here. In the case of acts of worship, only Allah knows how He is to be worshipped. However, when it comes to worldly transactions, mankind is free to meet their needs in any way they wish as long as they do not violate certain principles laid down by the *shareeah*.

Therefore, with respect to worldly matters, this hadith is invoked in the following ways:

One, if the *shareeah* lays down a specific principle or law and then someone implements a new principle or law in place of it, that new principle or law shall be rejected. For example, the punishment for fornication is stoning to death for the married adulterers and lashing for the “unmarried fornicators”.¹ It happened during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that some people tried to circumvent that law. After a case of fornication, two parties decided that the man should pay the woman’s family one hundred sheep and a servant. When this was brought to the Prophet’s attention, he told the fornicator’s father,

وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَأَقْضِيَنَّ بَيْنَكُمَا بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ حَلَّ ذِكْرُهُ الْمِائَةَ شَاةٍ وَالْخَادِمُ رُدُّ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى ابْنِكَ جَلْدُ مِائَةٍ وَتَغْرِيْبُ عَامٍ وَأَعْدُ يَا أُتَيْسُ عَلَى امْرَأَةٍ هَذَا فَإِنْ اعْتَرَفَتْ فَارْجُمْهَا

“By the One in whose hand is my soul, I shall decide between you according to the Book of Allah. The hundred sheep and servant are to be returned to you. Your son is to be lashed one hundred times and banished for one year. And, go, O Unais, to the woman and if she confesses, stone her.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

Similarly, if the worldly transaction is one that the *shareeah* has explicitly prohibited, it shall also be rejected. For example, a marriage contract between a woman and man who were suckled by the same foster mother would be null and void. This is because such a contract is explicitly prohibited by the *shareeah*.

Sometimes one of the essential conditions of a contract is not met and, therefore, that act is rejected. For example, if a woman gets married without the consent of her guardian, her marriage is null and void. If a person buys something from somebody without the owner’s consent, such a purchase is null and void.

An explicit example that ibn Rajab presents is the case of buying something through an interest transaction. He says that the person who has

¹ More details of this law are given in the commentary to Hadith #14.

Hadith #5: "Whoever Introduces..."

purchased such does not become the rightful owner and he must return what he purchased. This is based on the hadith in *Sahih Muslim* in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) noticed some dates that were not from his dates. He inquired about them and he was told that they bought those dates by trading two *sas* (a physical quantity) of their dates for one *sa* of the other dates, which were of a better quality. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said,

هَذَا الرِّبَا فَرُدُّوهُ ثُمَّ بَاعُوا تَمْرَنَا وَاشْتَرُوا لَنَا مِنْ هَذَا

"This is the [forbidden] interest. So return it. Then sell our dates and buy for us those dates."¹

All of these types of transactions fall under the general meaning of this hadith. If an act is not according to the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions, it is rejected.²

Other Points Related to this Hadith

- This hadith demonstrates that every deed a person performs must be in accord with the *shareeah*, regardless of the type of deed. If it is not consistent with the *shareeah*, it is rejected.
- It can be understood from this hadith that if an act is consistent with the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions, it will be an accepted act and the person will be rewarded for it. (As long as the intention behind it was also sound.)
- This hadith demonstrates the importance of knowledge. Al-Sindi stated that distinguishing innovations from what is permissible and the sunnah is very important and sometimes very difficult. It requires good knowledge of the Quran, sunnah, consensus and what they point to. Many innovations, he states, due to ignorance, are taken as sunnah and many sunnah acts are considered innovations.³ The only way this can be rectified is through knowledge and study of the Quran and sunnah.
- This hadith can be used to void and reject any prohibited transaction and to deny any ramifications from that transaction. That is, if two people agree

¹ Cf., ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 183.

² The scholars divide rights into what are known as "the rights of Allah" and "the rights of humans." In general, the rights of Allah have to do with laws that are meant to safeguard society as a whole and there can be no compromise when it comes to those laws. For example, if a person married a woman who was still in her waiting period of being a widow, even if the two agreed and all were happy with the marriage, the marriage still would be invalid. However, if an individual's right is harmed by a transaction, such as his agent selling something he did not have the right to sell, then if that individual gives up his right and accepts the transaction, then that transaction will not be null and void but will be acceptable. However, if he does not accept it, then it will be null and void. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 181-182.

³ Al-Sindi, *Sharh*, p. 43.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

on an interest-bearing contract, for example, such a contract is not consistent with the principles of Islam and, hence, it is null and void.

- This hadith is one of the evidences used to prove that any prohibited act is, in essence, incorrect, iniquity and immoral.
- Whoever introduces a heretical act into Islam shall bear the weight of its sin. The act shall be rejected and he will be responsible for all of those whom he caused to follow in that heresy.¹
- Actions not done during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) may still be performed and are not rejected as long as they are supported by some evidences in the Quran and sunnah. An example of that nature is the writing of books and giving of lectures. These acts are supported by the general command to get, convey and preserve knowledge.
- According to ibn Uthaimen, if it is not clear that an act should be considered an act of worship or a worldly act (an act of custom), then the basic ruling is that it shall be considered a worldly act unless proven otherwise. He says, for example, if one person says to another who had just successfully passed through a crisis, “*Ma shaa Allah* (what Allah has willed), congratulations!” This statement could not be considered an innovation because it is related to the customary speech among people and carries no religious significance to it.²

Summary of the Hadith

- An act is clearly part of the religion of Islam if it has acceptable evidence for it in the Quran, sunnah, consensus and what can be derived from those sources.
- If an act is inconsistent with the Quran and sunnah, it is void and worthless. The act will be rejected by Allah. It will bear no reward and have no legal effect.
- The one who introduces such an innovation and the one who practices it later are all equal in having their innovation rejected.

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 30.

² Ibn Uthaimen, *Majmoo*, vol. 5, p. 260.

Hadith #6:
"That which is Lawful is Clear"

عن أبي عبد الله التُّعْمَانِ بْنِ بَشِيرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ:
سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ إِنَّ الْحَلَالَ
بَيْنَ وَإِنَّ الْحَرَامَ بَيْنَ وَبَيْنَهُمَا أُمُورٌ مُشْتَبِهَاتٌ لَا يَعْلَمُهُنَّ
كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَمَنْ اتَّقَى الشُّبُهَاتِ فَقَدْ اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ
وَعَرَضِهِ وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ وَقَعَ فِي الْحَرَامِ كَالرَّاعِي
يُرْعَى حَوْلَ الْحِمَى يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَرْتَعَ فِيهِ أَلَا وَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَلِكٍ
حِمَى أَلَا وَإِنَّ حِمَى اللَّهِ مَحَارِمُهُ أَلَا وَإِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً
إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ
كُلُّهُ أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ

رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ وَمُسْلِمٌ

On the authority of Abu Abdullah al-Nu'maan ibn Basheer (may Allah be pleased with them both) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say, "That which is lawful is clear and that which is unlawful is clear and between the two of them are doubtful [or ambiguous] matters about which not many people are knowledgeable. Thus, he who avoids these doubtful matters certainly clears himself in regard to his religion and his honor. But he who falls into the doubtful matters falls into that which is unlawful like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Verily every king has a sanctuary and Allah's sanctuary is His prohibitions. In the body there is a morsel of flesh which, if it be sound, all the body is sound and which, if it be diseased, all of the body is diseased. This part of the body is the heart."

Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary

- الحلال - “the permissible”
 بَيِّن - “plain, clear”
 الحرام - “the forbidden”
 بينهما - “between the two of them”
 أمور - “matters”
 -مشتبهات- “doubtful, ambiguous”, مشتبهات and related words all come from the root شبه which means doubtful, dubious, uncertain.
 كثير - “many”
 الناس - “the people”
 فمن - this is a compound word; the ف here means “thus, then, therefore,” and من means “who”
 اتقي - “avoids”
 استبرأ - “clears himself”
 لدينه - “for his religion”
 عرضه - “his honor”
 وقع - “falls into”
 كالراعي - this is a compound word; the ك means, “like,” while the الراعي is a shepherd. The origin of the word الراعي is one who guards or protects someone or something else. Over time, it customarily began to be used for shepherd.¹
 حول - “around”
 الحمى - “private pasture”
 يُوشِكُ - this refers to a deed that is close to happening. In this hadith, it means something close to, “soon”.
 لكل - this is a compound word; the ل means, “for,” and كلّ means “every”.
 ملك - “king”
 ألا - this is an exclamatory expression. It is meant to make sure that the speaker has the listener’s attention. Hence, it is a sign of the importance of the upcoming statement.
 الجسد - “body”
 صلح - “wholesome”
 القلب - “the heart”

Takhreej

This hadith is *sahih*. It was recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah, al-Nasaai and numerous others. Hadith with very similar meaning have been narrated by the Companions Abdullah ibn Umar, Ammaar ibn Yaasir, Jaabir, ibn Masood and ibn Abbaas. Many of those narrations from other Companions, however, have weak chains to them.²

¹ Al-Haitami, p. 118. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated in another hadith, using this word, that everybody is a “guardian” and he shall be asked about that which he is to guard.

² Ibn Muhammad, pp. 68-72.

Hadith #6: "The Permissible is Clear..."

General Comments On This Hadith

This hadith lays down some of the most important principles of Islam. As was noted earlier, Abu Dawood, the scholar of hadith, once stated that Islam is built upon four hadith, this being one of them. Indeed, this hadith covers all of the possible acts: the permissible, forbidden and doubtful. It also shows how to protect one's religion and honor. Finally, at the end, it points out the key to following the permissible and remaining away from what will harm a person.

The Narrator: al-Nu'maan ibn Basheer

Abu Abdullah al-Nu'maan ibn Basheer al-Ansaari al-Khazraji was one of the first Muslims born to the Ansaar of Madinah. He was quite young, probably around ten years of age, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) died.¹

During the time of Muawiya, he held different governmental posts in Kufah and Hims. He was well-known for his speaking ability and poetry. He was killed in Hims around the year 64 A.H.

In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, there are six hadith narrated from al-Nu'maan. In the other works, the total of his hadith comes to about 116. Many of these hadith he may not have heard directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him) but from the older Companions. However, there is a clear narration that al-Nu'man heard this particular hadith directly from the Prophet "with his own ears."

"That which is lawful is plain and that which is unlawful is plain and
between the two of them are doubtful matters."

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has divided all acts into three categories: those clearly permissible, those clearly forbidden and those between the first two. Each one of these categories shall be discussed separately.²

¹ According to the scholars of hadith, hadith cannot be taken from a child. However, if a child had heard and memorized something while he was a child and then later narrated it to others, that is acceptable. Such was the case with this hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

² Imam Ahmad was of the opinion that there are three categories: the purely permissible, the purely forbidden and the purely doubtful. However, that does not seem to be correct according to the remainder of this hadith. On another occasion, he said that the doubtful is that wherein legal aspects are mixed with forbidden aspects. This is probably closer to the definition given here. Based on this point, he stated that if a person's wealth was mostly from forbidden sources, then other Muslims should not take part in his food and hospitality. However, if it were mostly from permissible sources, then one may take part in his food. (Cf., Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 199-200.) Makhool and al-Zuhri were of the opinion that one could eat or partake of another person's wealth as long as he knew that the particular food he was eating or wealth he was using was not from the forbidden sources. Cf., ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 201.

At the outset, though, it should be noted that, especially for the scholars and knowledgeable people, the vast majority of acts fall into one of the first two categories. The minority of acts are from the doubtful matters. Furthermore, the more important a matter, the more in number and the clearer the evidences are regarding it. For example, committing *shirk* is a greatly forbidden act. Hence, the proofs regarding it are numerous and unequivocal. Similarly, heinous crimes like adultery and alcohol consumption have been forbidden in no unclear terms. This is part of the grace and mercy of Allah that He has sent this religion and message in a way that is very clear and easy to understand.

The Clearly Permissible

There are innumerable acts that are clearly permissible and sanctioned by the *Shariah*. In some cases, they are explicitly mentioned as being permissible while in other cases it is clear that they fall under the general guidelines of the Quran and sunnah. For example, Allah has said in the Quran,

أَلْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ
حِلٌّ لَهُمْ

“This day are (all) good things made lawful for you. The food of those who have received the Scripture is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them” (*al-Maidah* 5). In other cases, different expressions make it quite clear that the act is permissible. For example, “there is no sin upon...” is an expression that means that the act is, at the very least, permissible.

The permissibility of such acts, therefore, is unquestionably clear.

The Clearly Forbidden

In the same way that some acts are very clearly stated to be permissible, other acts are very clearly stated to be forbidden. The clarity of the proofs concerning such acts is very clear. An example of this nature is in the following verse,

عَلَيْكُمْ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالْدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنزِيرِ وَمَا أَهَلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ
وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبْعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ
عَلَى النَّصَبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَمِ ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ

“Forbidden for you are only carrion and blood and swine-flesh and that which has been slaughtered in the name of any other than Allah and that which has

been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow or by a headlong fall or by the goring of horns and that which has been [partly] eaten by a wild animal, unless you are able to slaughter it [before its death], and that which is sacrificed on altars. [Forbidden] also is to use arrows for seeking luck. All that is disobedience to Allah and sin" (*al-Maa'idah* 3). Included in this category of clearly forbidden acts is every act for which Allah or His Messenger (peace be upon him) has prescribed a punishment or concerning which He or His Messenger (peace be upon him) has made a threat of punishment.

Identification of the Doubtful Matters

The first question to be addressed here is: What exactly are the doubtful matters? Al-Shaukaani has the most detailed discussion concerning this question and his categories need to be dealt with here.¹ He stated that the doubtful matters are of six varieties. They are:

(1) Those acts concerning which the relevant evidence, such as verses of the Quran or hadith, are conflicting and there is no apparent way to resolve the conflict. These matters would fall into this gray or doubtful area with respect to the scholars only.

(2) For the non-scholar who is adhering to a school of fiqh or following the opinions of specific scholars, a matter in which there is a difference of opinion among the scholars is a doubtful or questionable matter. This is not how some everyday people currently view the matter. They say that if one scholar says something is permissible, it is then permissible for them to follow that scholar and do that act. On the contrary, argues al-Shaukaani, if one scholar says the act is permissible while another says it is forbidden, then the non-scholar who is following those scholars should refrain from that deed because it has now definitely fallen into the realm of doubtful matters.²

(3) Some permissible matters lead a person to do what is forbidden or lead him to fail to perform what is obligatory, those permissible matters then fall under the category of doubtful matters. An example al-Shaukaani gives is the permissibility of "enjoying one's wife" without sexual intercourse while she is menstruating. He states that if a person is one who cannot control his desires and he may easily do what is not permissible under such circumstances, that permissible act of "enjoying his wife" now becomes doubtful for him as it may lead him to what is forbidden. Therefore, it is best for him to avoid it.³

¹ Muhammad ibn Ali al-Shaukaani, *Kashf al-Shubuhaat an al-Mushtabihaat*, in Muhammad ibn Ali al-Shaukaani, *al-Rasaail al-Salafiyyah fi Ihyaa Sunnah Khair al-Bariyyah*, (Maktabah ibn Taimiya, 1930), *passim*.

² What this also means, as al-Shaukaani pointed out, if one scholar says an act is obligatory and the other says it is recommended, then the follower must perform that act as that is the safest approach. To not perform that act, arguing that it is only recommended, would be the same as falling into the doubtful matters.

³ Al-Shaukaani also states that he does not like for men to get married to more than one wife, unless there is a real need to do so, if that act will then make him have to rely on others for help

(4) The disapproved of matters (*makroohaat*) are considered by al-Shaukaani to be from the doubtful matters. They are doubtful because, he argues, there is nothing explicitly showing them to be permissible or to be forbidden. Furthermore, he quotes many scholars who noted that if a person involves himself often in disapproved matters, it will lead him to forbidden matters. One reason for this is that the disapproved acts darken a person's heart and he loses the strong light of faith. Hence, it becomes easier for him to fall into the forbidden.

(5) The matters concerning which there is doubt whether they are permissible or not due to circumstances surrounding them. An example of this nature, concerning the sone of the slave-girl of Zama and the Prophet's wife, shall be given later.

(6) Those matters for which the proof for their unlawfulness is only to be found in weak hadith (albeit not very weak or fabricated hadith). Al-Shaukaani argued that, if the weakness is slight, then one cannot say for certain the hadith is not correct. Hence, the matter becomes a doubtful matter.

Al-Shaukaani states that the evidence that the first two categories are from the doubtful matters is the narration that states about the doubtful matters, "About which not many people are knowledgeable."

The other categories are supported by the hadith which states,

اجْعَلُوا بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْحَرَامِ سُتْرَةً مِنَ الْحَلَالِ مَنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ اسْتَبْرَأَ
لِعَرْضِهِ وَدِينِهِ

"Place between you and the forbidden a barrier of permissible acts. Whoever does that keeps his honor and religion free of any guilt."¹ Although this hadith may be *hasan*, the weakness in al-Shaukaani's argument here is that this is a completely separate hadith and is not a hadith which is explicitly giving a definition for what is doubtful.

Furthermore, al-Shaukaani argues that based on that hadith, all matters are divided into three categories: (1) those matters that the *shareeah* orders one to perform and threatens those who do not perform with punishment; (2) those matters that the *shareeah* orders one to refrain from and threatens the one who performs them with punishment; (3) those that are in between. The matters in (1) are clearly permissible, those in (2) are clearly forbidden and those in (3) are the doubtful matters. He then says that the matters in (3) should be avoided

or if it makes him give up some recommended deeds (such as gaining knowledge) because now he will have to spend his time making more money to support his bigger family. He says that there is no question that having a larger family is one of the greatest causes driving people to spend all of their time seeking after the needs of this world. Cf., Al-Shaukaani, *Kashf*, pp. 17-18.

¹ Recorded by ibn Hibbaan. According to al-Arnaoot, its chain is *hasan*. See al-Arnaoot's footnotes to al-Faarisi, vol. 12, p. 380.

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to preserve one's religion. This argument also does not seem strong. There is a difference between saying something is obligatory (*wajib*, which is category 1) and saying something is permissible (*halaal*), which is what this hadith under discussion is referring to. The term permissible applies to obligatory, recommended, permissible and even, according to many scholars, disapproved acts.

Concerning weak hadith, Allah has promised to preserve the *dhikr* (the revelation, both the Quran and sunnah). This preservation must be something clear to the nation as a whole, in particular those specialized in a relevant field. Therefore, when the scholars of hadith are agreed that a hadith does not meet the standards for acceptability, it means that the hadith has not been preserved and it cannot form part of the *dhikr*. Hence, there is no need to consider those acts only prohibited by weak hadith as doubtful matters.

In conclusion, the doubtful matters are made up of the following categories, some of which will be discussed in detail later:

(1) Those acts concerning which the relevant evidence are conflicting and there is no apparent way to resolve the conflict.

(2) For the non-scholar who is adhering to a school of fiqh or following the opinions of specific scholars, a matter in which there is a difference of opinion among the scholars is a doubtful or questionable matter.

(3) Some permissible matters lead a person to do what is forbidden or lead him to fail to perform what is obligatory, those permissible matters then fall under the category of doubtful matters.

(4) The disapproved of matters (*makroohaat*) are considered by al-Shaukaani to be from the doubtful matters. This author is personally not completely convinced that the disapproved matters are from the doubtful matters, but al-Shaukaani does have some good arguments to support his claim.

(5) The matters concerning which there is doubt whether they are permissible or not due to circumstances surrounding them.

The Legality of The Doubtful Matters

The first two categories of the permissible and the forbidden are very clear, both with respect to what they are referring to and the acts themselves. Then comes the doubtful, ambiguous or unclear matters. These are the matters about which there is some difference of opinion concerning their legality. However, the Prophet (peace be upon him) showed that staying away from these acts is piety.

There is a difference of opinion about the legality or participation in the doubtful matters being referred to in this hadith. Some scholars say that such acts are forbidden due to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) words later in the hadith, "Thus, he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion." Whoever does not make himself clear in regard to his religion,

these scholars argue, must be involved in forbidden acts. Ibn Hajr, however, unequivocally rejects this view.¹

Some say that these acts are permissible due to the words later in the hadith, “like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein.” To these scholars, this shows that such acts are permissible but avoiding them is piety. The meaning of “permissible” in this statement basically means anything that is not forbidden. Hence, this view still implies that the doubtful matters are disliked, as some scholars have explicitly said. This argument is supported by the fact that if the acts were truly permissible (*mubaah*), then there would be no piety in avoiding them as a general principle.²

Another group of scholars say that it cannot be said that such acts are either permissible or forbidden. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated it to be somewhere between lawful and unlawful, and, therefore, the Muslims must also treat them in the same manner.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) set the sample for all Muslims when it comes to avoiding doubtful matters. For example, a hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* from Aisha states that Saad ibn Abu Waqqaas and Abd ibn Zama disputed about the custody of a young boy. Utba ibn Abu Waqqaas entrusted his son to his brother Saad ibn Abu Waqqaas saying, “The son of the slave girl of Zama is my son, take him into your custody.” During the year of the Conquest of Makkah, Saad took the boy and said, “This is my brother’s son whom my brother had asked me to look after.” Abd ibn Zama stood and said, “He is my brother and the son of the slave girl of my father and was born on my father’s bed.” Then both of them came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and Saad said, “O Messenger of Allah, this is my brother’s son whom he had asked me to look after.” Abd ibn Zama stood and said, “This is my brother and the son of the slavegirl of my father.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Abd ibn Zama, this boy is to be in your custody as the boy belongs to the bed in which he was born and the stone is for the adulterer.” Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) told his wife Sauda ibn Zama, “Observe the veil before this boy,” when he saw the boy’s resemblance to Utba. After that, the boy did not see Sauda until she died. The relevance of this hadith is that although the Prophet (peace be upon him) rewarded the boy to Abd ibn Zama, he ordered his wife Sauda, the brother of Abd and therefore the sister of the boy also, to observe the *hijab* or veil in front of that boy, since there was still some ambiguity concerning the matter. This is the safest and the more pious manner in which to handle such a problem.

In another hadith, Adi ibn Thaabit asked about when he is hunting and sends his dog after the prey. Upon finding the prey, he finds another dog there

¹ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 173.

² al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 115.

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and he does not know which dog actually killed the prey. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him,

لَا تَأْكُلْ فِإِنَّكَ إِتْمَا سَمَيْتَ عَلَى كَلْبِكَ وَلَمْ تُسَمِّ عَلَى آخَرَ

"Do not eat [that prey], for you have mentioned the name of Allah over your dog but you did not mention it in the case of the other dog." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) Again, the Prophet (peace be upon him) decided the matter due to the doubt that was present and told Adi not to eat the prey as he feared that the animal had been killed by the other dog and would have been a type of meat that is not permissible to eat.

These examples, and others, show that the Prophet (peace be upon him) decided cases according to this principle of avoiding the doubtful matters. This, of course, is perfectly consistent with a statement of Abdullah ibn Masood that is recorded by al-Nasaai. In that statement, Abdullah said, "Verily, the permissible things are clear and the forbidden things are clear. And between them are some matters that are doubtful. Therefore, leave what makes you doubt for what does not make you doubt." The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said in a hadith that comes later in this collection, "Leave what makes you doubt for what does not make you doubt." (Recorded by al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasaai.)

The Causes for Uncertainty and Doubt

As noted earlier, there are many factors that may lead to people being uncertain about a certain act, whether it is permissible or not. One of those reasons is that the evidence related to a particular point may seem to be contradicting. One hadith, for example, may show an act to be permissible while another one shows the same act to be forbidden. Even scholars sometimes have difficulty reconciling conflicting hadith. An example of this nature is the hadith that prohibit drinking while standing and the hadith that states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) drank while standing. Both of these hadith are authentic and the scholars have come to different conclusions concerning how to reconcile them.

For non-scholars, it is sometimes very confusing when scholars hold differing and conflicting opinions about one act. This causes a great deal of confusion for many but, in many cases, when one studies the different opinions of the scholars, the reasons the scholars differed are quite obvious and need not be confusing. For example, one scholar may have made a decision concerning an act based on his own personal reasoning and not based directly on a verse of the Quran or hadith. Another scholar may hold the opposite opinion because he knows of a specific hadith related to that point. This aspect has been a common cause for differences of opinions among the scholars.

Another example is where one scholar is following a particular hadith yet he does not realize that the hadith he is applying is not an authentic hadith. Another scholar may have rejected that hadith, knowing that it is not authentic, and he therefore holds a different opinion about the question at hand.

The possible causes for confusion and difference of opinion are many. However, as this hadith demonstrates, the correct view on a particular question is one and not many. Unfortunately, though, many people may be unaware of the correct opinion.

Different Cases of Doubt and How to Deal with Them

In some cases, an act may be clearly forbidden or permissible. However, some things might arise that cause a person to be confused. He is now no longer certain of what he was certain of before. The scholars have also discussed what should be done in such cases. In general, confusing cases may be divided into three types.¹

The first type is where there is something that the person knows is forbidden but then he has some doubt about whether the forbidden aspect has been removed. An example is the meat of animals. It is forbidden for the Muslim to eat meat unless it has been slaughtered in the proper manner. If he does not know or has no reason to believe that it has been slaughtered properly and by acceptable people, then he should not eat it as it then becomes like the doubtful matters that he should avoid. Actually, in this case one can say that it is forbidden to eat as the original ruling is such meat is forbidden unless one has reason to believe otherwise.² This principle is based on the hadith under discussion here and the hadith of Adi just mentioned above. (There is one exception to this and that is the case where a trustworthy Muslim offers another some food. It is sufficient, in that case, to assume that the food is *halaal* and one need not ask about the food.)

The second category is the opposite of the first: something is definitely permissible for someone and then he has some doubt about whether or not its permissible nature has been removed. For example, a man is married to a certain woman yet he has some doubt in his mind whether or not he

¹ Obviously, there can be other types of cases that may lead to uncertainty. However, for the general purposes of the discussion here, the above categories are considered sufficient.

² Some people are under the misconception that the basic or original ruling concerning meat is that it is permissible unless proven otherwise. It can be demonstrated from many hadith, including the one from Adi above, that this is incorrect. Al-Nawawi once wrote, "[This is an] important principle that if a person has a doubt about the proper slaughtering of an animal to make it legal to eat, then such meat is not allowed. This is because the original ruling (*al-asl*) is that of prohibition. And there is no difference of opinion on this point." Al-Nawawi, *Sharh*, vol. 13, p. 78. Ibn Rajab also makes the same statement that meat is not permissible unless one is certain that it meets the qualifications for permissibility. Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 198. For more on this point, see Abdullah al-Tiraiqi, *Ahkaam al-Dhabaa'ih wa al-Luhoom al-Mustawaradah fi al-Shareeah al-Islamiyya* (Riyadh: Published by its author 1983), pp. 432-433.

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pronounced a divorce for her. In a case like this, the person should consider the matter permissible until he is certain that it has become forbidden. The basis for this category is the hadith of Abdullah ibn Zaid who had some doubt about whether he had invalidated his ablution and he was told to consider his ablution valid unless he was certain that he had invalidated it. There is a very important legal maxim that states, "What is known for certain cannot be removed by something doubtful."

The third category is where the person has some doubt about something and he has no idea if it is permissible or forbidden as both are possible and there is no overwhelming evidence for either conclusion. In this case it is better for the person to avoid the matter completely. This is based on the action of the Prophet (peace be upon him) who, when he found a date on the ground, said,

لَوْلَا أَنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الصَّدَقَةِ لَأَكَلْتُهَا

"If I did not fear that it was from what has been given in charity, I would have eaten it." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) This is because it was not allowed for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to accept charity or *sadaqa*.

But this does not mean that the person should avoid those things concerning which there is no sound evidence that he should avoid them. For example, if someone finds some water that looks pure, that is, its color, smell or taste has not changed, then he should not avoid it simply because he fears that there might be some impurities in it. Or, someone should not avoid praying in a certain area that has no marks of impurities simply because he fears that there may be impurities present. These types of doubts are called whisperings from Satan and they should not be acted upon. In Islam, the person should act according to what is certain and, if that is not possible, then what is apparent by the preponderance of the evidence. Suspicions that have no basis are not to be acted upon.

"About which not many people are knowledgeable."

This phrase means that not many people are able to figure out whether the individual doubtful matters are actually permissible or forbidden. This is very clear in the narration in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* which states,

لَا يَدْرِي كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ أَمِنَ الْحَلَالِ هِيَ أَمْ مِنَ الْحَرَامِ

"Not many people know whether they are permissible or if they are forbidden."

Some scholars are able to look at the root of the matter and discover if these acts are actually forbidden or permissible. This proves that there is a specific ruling for all of these doubtful matters that may be ascertained from

enough study, but only a very few are able to discover the rulings for these actions.

In general, it can be said that Allah and His Messenger did not leave anything that is to be permissible except that they showed it to be permissible and did not leave anything that is to be forbidden except that they showed it to be forbidden. However, in some cases the exposition is much clearer than in other cases. What has been made clear, well-known and a necessary part of the religion, there is no doubt about and no one may be excused for being ignorant of such laws if they live in an Islamic environment. Concerning those laws that have not been so clearly explained, some of them are well known among the people of the religion and the scholars are in agreement concerning the conclusions about such laws although these conclusions may not be known to those Muslims who are not students of the religion. Then there are some laws that are not that clear even to the scholars and about which they differ for a number of reasons. But definitely there is at least one scholar who knows the correct conclusion. For him, the matter is clear although it will be considered a “doubtful” matter for others. It is impossible that no scholar, throughout the whole Muslim world, should come to the correct conclusion. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that this nation would not agree on an error¹ and, in this hadith, he also said, “about which not many people are knowledgeable,” but did not say that no one would be knowledgeable about it. Therefore, the ruling is not doubtful in itself but it is doubtful or ambiguous only to those who cannot find the correct conclusion.

The words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) show that some people know the conclusions concerning the doubtful matters while others do not. Those that do not may be divided into two groups. One group does not make any pronouncement concerning the doubtful matter and will, perhaps, say upon being questioned, “Allah knows best.” Another group will think that they have understood the problem and will make an incorrect conclusion concerning it. This hadith, though, proves that the correct position is only one position in Allah’s sight and it does not mean that more than one conclusion may be correct concerning the doubtful matters. Of course, those scholars who made the incorrect conclusion or *ijtihaad* will still get a reward from Allah for their efforts but this does not mean that their conclusion is necessarily to be followed.

¹ This statement is found in many different hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Its details may be found in Muhammad al-Sakhaawi, *al-Maqaasid al-Hasanah fi Bayaan Katheer min al-Ahaadeeth al-Mushtarah ala al-Asinah* (Beirut: Daar al-Kitaab al-Arabi, 1985), pp. 716-717. Al-Albaani considers the hadith to be authentic. See, for example, al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 378.

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"Thus, he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honor."

The one who avoids the doubtful matters will be free of any criticism with respect to his religion or honor. This also means that the person who takes part in these doubtful matters leaves himself open to criticism and blame. Some or one of the early scholars said that if someone, by his acts, causes others to have suspicious thoughts about him, he should not blame them if they have a bad opinion about him.¹ The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself, while walking with a woman, showed two people who saw him that it was Safiyah, one of his wives. (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) He did so in order to make sure that no one should have an incorrect idea about his actions.

Another hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) echoes the meaning of this phrase. In another narration of this hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

فَمَنْ تَرَكَ مَا شُبِّهَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ كَانَ لِمَا اسْتَبَانَ أَتْرَكَ وَمَنْ اجْتَرَأَ عَلَى مَا يَشْكُ فِيهِ مِنَ
الْإِثْمِ أَوْشَكَ أَنْ يُوَاقِعَ مَا اسْتَبَانَ وَالْمَعْاصِي حِمَى اللَّهِ مَنْ يَرْتَعِ حَوْلَ الْحِمَى يُوشِكُ
أَنْ يُوَاقِعَهُ

"If one leaves that concerning which he has only doubt [and not certainty] that it is sinful, then he is [going to be] more avoiding of what is clear to him [as being a sin]. The one who is bold enough to take part in what is doubtful to him as sinful, soon he may fall into what is clearly [a sin to him]. The sinful acts are Allah's private pasture. Whoever grazes around the private pasture is soon to fall into it."

"But he who falls into the doubtful matters falls into that which is unlawful."

This is true for two reasons. First, whoever does not fear Allah and delves into the doubtful matters will eventually fall into the forbidden matters. Actually, it will make it very easy for him to fall into the forbidden matters. Abul Qasim Qabari once said,

The detestable is a check-post between a person and unlawful matters. Whoever indulges frequently in detestable things will become victim to unlawful matters also. Similarly, allowable acts are a check-point between a person and detestable matters.

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 204.

Whoever crosses the check-post often will commit detestable acts as well.¹

Second, if someone delves often into the doubtful matters, his heart will be affected and he will lose the light of guidance and piety. He will then be involved in forbidden acts without even knowing it and he will be blamed for this because he was not cautious in the first place.²

Furthermore, the hadith also implies that if a Muslim involves himself in the ambiguous matters, he does not really know if he is involving himself in forbidden acts or not. Therefore, if he actually does end up doing something forbidden, he is deserving to be punished because he was not certain if that act was forbidden or not.³

“Like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Verily every king has a sanctuary and Allah’s sanctuary is His prohibitions.”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated a parable concerning the acts forbidden by Allah. It was the custom of the Arabs that the noble among them would have a specific land for only their animals to graze on, that is, a private grazing land. If another shepherd would bring his sheep too close to this private grazing land, it would be very easy for some of his sheep to cross over the boundary and to start to eat from the private grazing land. Therefore, the shepherd would always set some distance between his sheep and the private grazing land, in order to make sure that his animals did not unintentionally eat from the private grazing land. In this parable, the private grazing land of Allah refers to the acts that Allah has forbidden. The Muslim must be very careful not to tread close to these acts as he may accidentally take part in them. He must set some distance between him and these forbidden acts. In other words, the person must avoid everything that leads to these forbidden acts as, otherwise, he may be caught in a tide and swept into the forbidden acts. This may be one reason why Allah says in the Quran,

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا

“Those are the limits of Allah and do not come near to them” (*al-Baqara* 187). In the case of fornication or adultery, Allah says,

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّوْجَىٰ

¹ Quoted from *Fath al-Baari* by Uthmani, vol. 1, p. 551.

² Ibn Daqqeq al-Eid, p. 30.

³ What should one do if his parents order him to do an act which is from the doubtful matters? According to Imam Ahmad, he should not obey his parents in that matter. Some of the early scholars said he should obey them. Yet others did not express an opinion one way or the other. Cf., al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 117.

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"Do not come near adultery [or fornication]" (*al-Israa* 32).

There are many sayings from some of the early scholars similar to the following from Abu al-Darda who said, "The complete *taqwa* occurs when a person has *taqwa* of Allah even in the smallest manners and when he leaves something that he believes is permissible out of fear that it may be forbidden in order to set up a barrier between him and what is forbidden."¹

This portion of the hadith is a basis for many of the important principles of Islam. There is, for example, the concept of *sadd al-dharaai* ("blocking the means") in which something is prohibited simply because it may lead to something more harmful. Examples related to this principle include the prohibition of drinking a small amount of alcohol, prohibition of a male and a female being alone in private and so on. Indeed, an act may be prohibited although there is no real harm in the act itself. However, it is an act that can easily or commonly lead to something evil.

The Beauty of this Parable

Notice how beautifully the Prophet (peace be upon him) described this situation. One can imagine having some animals and setting them out to graze. They are grazing in lands that are used by many other animals. The land may be trampled upon and the vegetation eaten up. Then the animal sees a portion of land close by that is very green because not many animals are allowed to feed there. How tempting this must be for those animals. How will the shepherd keep all of his animals from straying over to that land that looks so inviting. He has two choices. He can either avoid getting close to that private land in the first place. In that case, he does not have to fear that his animals may stray into that inviting land. Second, he can keep a constant watch on all of his animals to make sure that none of them stray. Which option is easier and more productive? Suppose he loses sight of just one of his animals. Suppose he needs to rest just for a little or break for food. Who will be watching the animals then?

The Prophet (peace be upon him), in a very beautiful and moving way, has shown that the wise person will not take such a risk. He will realize that his only sure way of success is to stay far away from that private pasture. When he does so, he will protect his religion and his honor, as is stated in this hadith.

¹There is a weak hadith that states, "The slave does not attain *taqwa* until he leaves something that there is no fault with only out of fear that there may be some fault with it."

“In the body there is a morsel of flesh which, if it be sound, all the body is sound and which, if it be diseased, all of it is diseased. This part of the body is the heart.”

The Arabic word for “heart” is a word implying that it is a piece of flesh that is light in weight. However, it is great in its strength and importance. Allah distinguishes the humans from the rest of the creatures due to the human’s heart and intellect. Allah says in the Quran,

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ
بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

“Have they not traveled in the land, and have they hearts wherewith to feel and ears wherewith to hear? Verily, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts which are in the breasts that grow blind” (*al-Hajj* 46).

The rest of the limbs are subservient to and obey the heart. The heart is the commander and the limbs are the soldiers. Therefore, if the heart is good, the “soldiers” and their acts are good and if the heart is evil, the “soldiers” and their acts are evil.

If the heart is completely pure it will contain only love for Allah, love for the things that Allah loves, fear of Allah and fear of engaging in something that Allah hates. Such a heart will abstain from all of the forbidden acts and will also abstain from the ambiguous matters out of fear that they are forbidden. If the heart is greatly evil it will follow its own desires and it will perform the acts that it loves regardless of whether Allah loves those acts or not.

The only heart that will aid the person in Allah’s sight is the sound, wholesome, submitting heart. Allah says,

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ آتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

“The day when wealth and sons avail not (any man) save him who brings unto Allah a sound heart” (*al-Shuaraa* 88-89). Here, Allah has described the main reason for people being in the Hell-fire as being the lack of use of their heart. Their heart was dead and did not respond to the signs around it. Allah says,

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ
بِهَا

“And surely, We have created many of the jinn and mankind for Hell. They have hearts wherewith they understand not” (*al-Araaf* 179).

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Al-Hasan once said to a man, "Cure your heart for Allah desires that His slaves should purify their hearts."¹ And the heart cannot become purified until the person knows Allah, extols Him, loves Him, fears Him, has hope in Him and trusts Him and his heart is filled with these attributes. This is the true realization of the statement, "There is no God except Allah." The heart will not become pure until it loves, extols, deifies, fears and submits to no one except Allah. And, as was stated above, if the heart is pure, the limbs will follow and make the actions of the person pure as well.

This is supported by Allah's statement,

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

"Say: If you truly love Allah then follow me [i.e., the Prophet] and Allah will love you" (*ali-Imraan* 31). Allah makes it a sign of love for Him that the person follows His commands and the sunnah of His Prophet (peace be upon him). Al-Hasan once said, "You should know that you never truly love Allah until you love obeying Him."²

What is the relationship between this portion of the hadith and the remainder of the hadith? According to al-Mudaabaghi, the relationship is quite clear. If a person takes part in the permissible, does not do the forbidden and avoids the doubtful matters, his heart will become pure.³ There is a special dynamic relationship between deeds and the condition of the heart. In particular, when one falls into the doubtful matters and forbidden aspects, this has a negative effect on his heart. They make the heart weaker and open to more attacks and disease.

Signs of the Heart

This hadith demonstrates the importance of the heart. One must strive to purify his heart as it is the true key to behaving properly in this life and gaining Allah's pleasure and Paradise in the next life. There are signs that one can notice within himself to be able to determine whether or not his heart is pure and wholesome. Many of these signs demonstrate that the pure and healthy heart is not inclined to this world but, instead, it is attached to Allah and the Hereafter.

These signs have been discussed by ibn al-Qayyim and they include the following:

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 211.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 212.

³ al-Mudaabaghi, p. 119.

Commentary on the 40 Hadith of al-Nawawi

(1) The person considers himself to be belonging to the next world and not this world. He is a stranger in this world and cannot wait to reach his abode in the Hereafter.

(2) The person continues to be upset with himself any time he commits a sin until he finally and completely repents to Allah.

(3) If the person misses his daily recitation of the Quran and *dhikr*, he is more upset and unhappy than if he had lost his wealth.

(4) The individual finds a pleasure in worshipping Allah that is much greater than any pleasure he finds in eating or drinking.

(5) When the person begins his prayer, his worries and concerns about this world leave him.

(6) His only concern and worries are concerning Allah and acting for the sake of Allah.

(7) He is more concerned with wasting time and more stingy about wasting his time than a greedy person is with respect to his wealth. Time is one key element that everyone must use for the worship of Allah. Unfortunately, often Allah blesses people with free time and yet they have no idea how to use it, so they simply waste it.

(8) The person is more concerned with the correctness of his deed than he is with the performance of the deed itself.¹

At the same time, there are many signs that a person's heart is impure or diseased. It is important to take note of these signs and cure the heart. Many people are concerned with the physical health of their hearts. If their blood pressure rises, they immediately seek help. However, the more important aspect is not the physical health of the heart but the spiritual health of the heart. This does not mean that one neglects the physical health of his heart. It does, though, mean that if one is only taking care of his heart's physical health, he is neglecting the more important factor, the factor that is more important for his health in this life and the Hereafter.

Ibn al-Qayyim also discussed the signs that indicate that there is an illness in the heart. These signs include the following:

(1) The person does not feel any hurt or pain when he commits evil deeds and sins.

(2) The individual finds both pleasure in committing acts of disobedience to Allah and rest after performing them.

(3) The person looks after the less important matters and does not care about the more important ones. Obviously, if a heart is sound, it will look after the person's best interest. When the heart does not care about essential matters, it is clearly a sign that it is not only sick but perhaps dead.

(4) The person dislikes the truth and has difficulty accepting or submitting to it.

¹ See Muhammad ibn al-Qayyim, *Ighaathah al-Luhfaan min Masayid al-Shaitaan* (Riyadh: Maktaba al-Maarif, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 70-73.

Hadith #6: "The Permissible is Clear..."

(5) The person does not find comfort in being among the righteous people but finds a great deal of solace and peace while among the evildoers and sinful people.

(6) The person is susceptible to be affected by misconceptions and doubts. He is attracted to discussions, debates and arguments that surround such misconceptions rather than to reading the Quran and other such beneficial acts. This aspect can truly be seen nowadays among Muslims, especially over the Internet. Today, a Muslim may spend hours discussing, for example, whether or not *hijab* is part of Islam or if *riba* (interest) is forbidden and so forth. Many times, such discussions begin by quoting non-Muslim authors and then going from there. Those who love this type of discussion and who get affected by it must be aware that this could be a sign of a sickness in their heart.

(7) The person may not be affected by any kind of admonition whatsoever. Some people, for example, can listen to Friday *khutbah* after Friday *khutbah*— even excellent *khutbahs*— and there is never any affect on them. This is another sign that the heart is diseased or truly dead.¹

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- Uthmani wrote,

[A]s *Iman* (belief), *Kufr* (disbelief), *Zulm* (injustice) and *Nifaq* (hypocrisy) have various ranks and degrees so also piety and chastity has. *Taqwa* signifies to fear Allah and to give up evil deeds for the sake of Allah. Its highest position is to abandon disbelief and polytheism, the second is to abstain from major sins, the third is to give up minor sins and the fourth is to avoid all doubtful matters.²

- Al-Baitaar points out that there are some matters that are clearly forbidden and leave no room for doubt. These matters include the prohibition of interest, the prohibition of non-related men and women being alone together and so forth. However, although these matters are clearly forbidden, some people might try to raise doubts or conjectures about them. Such people are clearly misguided and wrong. Indeed, they are from those people who follow their own desires.³ Nowadays, people are questioning the existence of the concept of *hijab*, *jihad* and so forth. All of these people are simply going against something that is very clear in the Quran and sunnah. They are taking matters from the clear to the doubtful. In this way, they are confusing Muslims and making them doubt their own

¹ Ibid.

² Uthmani, vol. 1, p. 548.

³ Khaalid al-Baitaar, *al-Bayaan fi Sharh al-Arbaeen al-Nawawiya* (al-Zarqa, Jordan: Maktab al-Manaar, 1987), p. 55.

religion. Hence, to be frank, they are serving Satan more than they are doing any service to Islam.

- Al-Baitaar also points out that some people go to extremes when it comes to avoiding doubtful matters. Actually, it is not a matter of going to extremes, it is a matter of being incorrect in one's approach. This is where people avoid permissible or even recommended acts because they fear, with no good reason, that some evil results may come in the end. For example, some people do not attend the prayers in the mosque "fearing" that they are doing it out of show. Others do not get married because they fear that they might have children who turn out to be evildoers. These are conjectures that have no bases. This is deception from Satan and not a proper course of piety.¹
- This hadith demonstrates that there is only one correct opinion concerning the permissibility or non-permissibility of a specific act— an act cannot be both permissible and impermissible at the same time. Some people think that if some scholars say an act is permissible and others say it is impermissible that they are both correct and one may follow whichever opinion he wishes. However, such is not the case. The act is either permissible or impermissible. Some scholars will definitely know which is the case while others may not know. That does not change the fact that the correct view is one and only one.²
- In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated,

قَدْ تَرَكْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْبَيِّضَاءِ لَيْلُهَا كَنَهَارُهَا لَا يَزِيغُ عَنْهَا بَعْدِي إِلَّا هَالِكٌ

"Certainly, I have left you upon on a matter that is very clear, such that its night is [as clear] as its day. No one strays from it after me except the one who is destroyed."³ There is no contradiction between these two hadith. By the time the Prophet (peace be upon him) died, he had made all matters clear. However, some matters are clearer than others. Similarly, some matters may be very clear to some but not clear to others. Hence, the problem is not in the clarity but in the person's ability to note and discover that clarity. This latter situation could be due to, for example, lack of knowledge or lack of striving to find that knowledge.

- Al-Shaukaani states that avoiding doubtful matters is not only concerned with deeds but is also concerned with matters of faith and belief. If a matter of belief is not something clearly demonstrated in the Quran or sunnah, then a person should avoid it, not delve to deeply into it and not hold it as a matter of faith. He stated that throughout history many scholars did not

¹ Al-Baitaar, p. 55.

² Cf., Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 203.

³ Recorded by Ahmad. According to Shuaib al-Arnaoot, its chain is *hasan*. See al-Arnaoot and Baajis, footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 195.

Hadith #6: "The Permissible is Clear..."

follow this advice and began to delve into matters of scholastic theology and philosophy. The end result for many of them, indeed the greatest of them, was nothing more than confusion and despair over the time that they had wasted in such matters. Before their deaths, scholars like Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini, al-Raazi and al-Ghazzaali repented and showed remorse for their vain efforts that they spent in such matters.¹ The same argument probably holds true today with respect to many scientific theories, such as those related to the nature of man, that some Muslims believe in with firm faith although they cannot be clearly and explicitly supported by the Quran and sunnah. It is best and safest for the Muslim to believe in what is clearly presented in the Quran and sunnah and avoid all other matters. In this way, he will protect his religion and beliefs.

Summary of the Hadith

- The Prophet (peace be upon him) clarified all matters of the religion. However, some matters are much clearer than others or clearer to some than to others. Hence, with respect to any individual, all acts can be divided into three categories: things that are clearly permissible, things that are clearly forbidden and things that lie in between them concerning which a person cannot determine or know if they are permissible or forbidden.
- There will be some scholars who will know the correct ruling concerning the doubtful matters. However, their number may be quite small.
- A Muslim must decide what to do about doubtful matters. If he decides to take part in them, they may lead him to some acts that are clearly not allowed.
- The pious person will avoid doubtful matters. Hence, his religion or his honor stay above and beyond any kind of suspicion.
- Forbidden acts are Allah's private pasture. Everyone should do his best to make sure that his "flock" remains away from that private pasture. The only way to ensure that is to remain far away from the private pasture.
- Each Muslim must make sure that his heart is pure and wholesome. The heart is the key to all of one's actions and behavior. If the heart is pure and wholesome, the person's deeds will be pure and wholesome. If the heart is ill, then that will be reflected in the deeds.
- Staying away from the forbidden and doubtful matters is one of the best ways to protect the heart from becoming diseased or ill.

¹ Al-Shaukaani, *Kashf*, pp. 18-19.

Commentary on the 40 Hadith of al-Nawawi

Hadith #7:
"The Religion Is *Naseehah*"

عَنْ أَبِي رُقَيْةَ تَمِيمِ بْنِ أَوْسِ الدَّارِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: الدِّينُ النَّصِيحَةُ قُلْنَا لِمَنْ قَالَ لِلَّهِ وَلِكِتَابِهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْأئِمَّةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَعَامَّتِهِمْ

On the authority of Abu Ruqayyah Tameem ibn Aus (may Allah be pleased with him) the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "The religion is *naseehah*." The people said, "To whom?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "To Allah and to His Book and to His Messenger and to the Leaders of the Muslims and to the common folk of the Muslims."

(Recorded by Muslim.)

Selected Vocabulary

- الدين - "the religion"
النصيحة - "sincerity, good advice, well-wishing", see the discussion below
لله - "to Allah," the *kasra* under the first *lam* gives the meaning, "to" or "for"
لأنمة - "to the leaders," the *lam* means "to" or "for", أنمة is the plural of the word *Imam* or leader.
عامتهم - "their general or common people," the هم at the end is a masculine, plural pronoun that is translated as "their"

Takhreej

This hadith was recorded by Muslim, Abu Dawood, al-Nasaai, Ahmad, al-Humaidi, Abu Awaana, ibn Hibbaan, al-Baihaqi and a number of others.

This hadith is in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, but without its chain (*isnaad*). This is because it did not meet al-Bukhari's criteria for his book as he included hadith only of the highest degree of authenticity in his collection. This particular hadith has been narrated through Suhail ibn Abu Saalih. Some scholars criticized him as a narrator, so al-Bukhari avoided him. However, his hadith are recorded in the major works of hadith and many scholars, including

ibn Adi, found him to be trustworthy and without any problem.¹ In any case the hadith is definitely *sahih*.

Similar hadith have been narrated by Abu Huraira, Ibn Umar, Thaubaan and Ibn Abbaas.² Furthermore, there are numerous other hadith that stress the concept of *naseehah* in general.

General Comments About This Hadith

Some of the scholars said that if thousands of hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) would be lost, this hadith would be sufficient to guide the Muslims. Abu Dawood stated that this is one of the hadith around which all of fiqh revolves.³ Some scholars have called this hadith one fourth of the religion but in fact, as shall be seen below, its meaning encompasses the entirety of the religion of Islam.

The Narrator: Tameem al-Daari

Tameem ibn Aus al-Daari is a well-known Companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He embraced Islam in the year 9 A.H. Prior to that, he was a Christian; some say that he was a monk. He participated in a number of the battles of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

He lived in Madinah. But after the death of Uthmaan, he moved to Syria. He was known for his performance of the late-night prayers and his reading of the Quran. He was accredited with being the first person who put lanterns in the mosques. Furthermore, during the time of Umar, he was the first person to narrate “stories” in the mosques. He did that with the permission of Umar— although it was Umar’s policy to prohibit such a practice, he found that Tameem would only say what was truthful. He died in the year 40 A.H. in Palestine.

This is the only hadith narrated by Tameem that is found in *Sahih Muslim*. Overall, one can find 18 hadith narrated by Tameem in the well-known books of hadith.

“The religion is the *naseehah* .”

In this hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated that the religion of Islam is *naseehah*. This is a profound statement. In this one brief sentence the Prophet (peace be upon him) has described the essence of Islam. Its implication is one of all inclusiveness. One of the interpretations of this is

¹ Al-Mudaabaghi, p. 125.

² Ibn Muhammad, pp. 74-77.

³ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 215.

Hadith #7: The Religion is Naseehah

that one's religion cannot be complete unless he fulfills the *naseehah* to Allah, His book and the others mentioned in the hadith.¹

The meaning is not, Allah knows best, that *naseehah* is all there is to Islam. But the meaning is that *naseehah* forms the bulk and the most important pillar of this religion. It encompasses Islam, *imaan* and *ihsaan*. In the same way the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said,

الْحَجُّ عَرَفَةٌ

“The pilgrimage is [the gathering at] Arafah.”² As is known, the pilgrimage involves many actions but the most important of them and the predominate act is that of Arafah. Therefore the Prophet (peace be upon him) called the pilgrimage Arafah. In the same way, this religion is in fact *naseehah*.

If one studies the meaning of *naseehah* closely and looks at all of the meanings of this hadith, he would then be able to understand why the Prophet (peace be upon him) made such a statement. It can be argued that there is truly nothing in the religion of Islam beyond what is encompassed by the *naseehah* to the objects mentioned in this hadith.

The Meaning of *Naseehah*

The commentator on hadith Al-Khattaabi stated that *naseehah* is a comprehensive word that embodies every type of virtue and the wanting or desire for all forms of goodness.³ Both al-Khattaabi and ibn Hajr have stated there is no other word in the Arabic language that is so comprehensive.⁴

Naseehah is very difficult to translate into English. It is usually translated as “sincerity” since one of its essential connotations is the negation of deception or cheating.

That is definitely one of its interpretations. However, here it has been intentionally left in transliterated form. The word seems to have two roots, both of them being explicitly brought out in this hadith as shall be seen in the explanation of the hadith below. The word *naseehah* has two basic linguist meanings: (1) to clean, purify or improve something of all unwanted elements, as in purifying honey from unwanted materials, and (2) to unite or join something together that is scattered or separated, as in sewing a garment.

Related to both the aspects of sincerity or purity and the second basic meaning, Allah has said in the Quran,

¹ Abu Amr ibn al-Salaah, *Siyaanah Saheeh Muslim min al-Ikhlaal wa al-Ghalat wa Hamaayatuhu min al-Isqaat wa al-Saqat* (Beirut: Dar al-Gharab al-Islami, 1984), p. 223.

² Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Nasaai, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 606.

³ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 187.

⁴ In this sense, it is similar to the Arabic word *falaah* which is the most comprehensive word when it comes to describing prosperity in both this life and the Hereafter.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا

“O believers, turn to Allah with a sincere (*nasooaha*) repentance” (*al-Tahreem* 8). It is as if the sins tear one’s religion apart and it is then mended and put back together again by sincere repentance.¹

Based on the linguistic roots and the Quranic usage of the term, al-Raaghib al-Isfahaani has given the *shareeah* definition of the term as, “*Naseehah* is the seeking of an action or statement that contains goodness and improvement for the other person.”² Ibn al-Salaah has stated that the essence of *naseehah* is where the one doing the *naseehah* (sincere well-wishing) truly seeks the best for the one to whom he is making *naseehah*. In both his intention and his actions, he desires what is best for the other person.³ Ibn Uthaimen makes this point in even clearer terms. He says that *naseehah* implies that a person loves for his brother what is good, calls him to it, makes it clear to him and encourages him to do it. This is part and parcel of the true religion of Islam. This is the real way of the believers. It is when the believers fulfill this type of condition that they meet the description given of the true believers in the Quran,

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ

“Verily, the believers are but a brotherhood” (*al-Hujuraat* 10). That brotherhood is the result of the correct and true *naseehah*.⁴

Lane aptly summarized all of the above when he gave the following definition for *naseehah*,

Sincere, honest, or faithful advice, or counsel, and conduct; direction to that which is for the good of the person who is the object, by words, or speech, or good advice or counsel; direction to what is good or sedulousness, or earnestness, in advice or counsel, or sincere or honest conduct; or benevolence, desire for what is good for the person who is the subject.⁵

The Messengers and *Naseehah*

Naseehah implies that one advises and guides others to what is best for them in this life and the Hereafter. This was first and foremost the job of the Messengers. That is why, in the Quran, Allah has described many of them as

¹ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 187.

² Al-Raaghib al-Isfahaani *Mu’jam Mufradaat Alfaadh al-Quran* (Damascus: Daar al-Qalam, 1997), p. 808.,

³ Ibn al-Salaah, *Siyaanah*, p. 223.

⁴ Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 4, p. 463.

⁵ Lane, vol. 2, p. 2802.

Hadith #7: The Religion is Naseehah

fulfilling this role of persons giving *naseehah*. For example, Allah has said about the first messenger, Noah (peace be upon him),

أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رَسُولَ رَبِّي وَأَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ أَمِينٌ

“I convey unto you the messages of my Lord, and I am a trustworthy adviser (*naasih*) to you” (*al-Araaf* 68). Another example is the case of Saalih. Allah has said,

فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَاقَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رَسُولَ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ
وَلَكِنْ لَا تُحِبُّونَ النَّاصِحِينَ

“Then he [Saalih] turned from them, and said, ‘O my people! I have indeed conveyed to you the message of my Lord, and have given you good advice but you do not like good advisers’” (*al-Araaf* 79).

Hence, when a person is fulfilling the obligation of *naseehah* to his fellow Muslims, he is actually fulfilling a role that was also an obligation upon the most noble of creation, the messengers of Allah.¹

Other Hadith Concerning *Naseehah*

The hadith under discussion here gives a clear picture as to the importance of *naseehah* in the religion of Islam. There are other hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that further demonstrate the place of this important concept. Note the following:

Jareer ibn Abdullah narrated that he had made the pledge of allegiance to the Prophet (peace be upon him) upon the condition that he would establish the prayer, give the zakat and have sincere conduct (*naseehah*) toward every Muslim. (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Muslim recorded on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) stated,

حَقُّ الْمُسْلِمِ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِ سِتُّ قِيلَ مَا هُنَّ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ إِذَا لَقِيْتَهُ فَسَلِّمْ عَلَيْهِ وَإِذَا
دَعَاكَ فَأَجِبْهُ وَإِذَا اسْتَصْحَكَ فَانصَحْ لَهُ وَإِذَا عَطَسَ فَحَمِدِ اللَّهَ فَسَمِّتْهُ وَإِذَا مَرِضَ فَعُدَّهُ
وَإِذَا مَاتَ فَاتَّبِعْهُ

“The rights of a Muslim over another Muslim are six.” It was asked, “What are they, O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)?” He replied, “When he meets him, he greets him; when he invites him, he responds; if he seeks his

¹ Sultaan, p. 95.

sincere advice, he advises him; if he sneezes and praises Allah, he asks Allah to have mercy on him; if he is ill, he visits him; and when he dies, he follows him [that is, his funeral procession].”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

فَإِذَا اسْتَنْصَحَ رَجُلٌ أَخَاهُ فَلْيَنْصَحْ لَهُ

“If a man seeks sincere advice (*naseehah*) from his brother, he should give him sincere advice.”¹

“To Allah”

When asked to whom this *naseehah* is due the Prophet (peace be upon him) first said, “To Allah.” Making *naseehah* to Allah requires the fulfilling of the obligatory duties in the best way possible (*ihsaan*). The *naseehah* to Allah cannot be complete or perfect without this. This should be a goal of every Muslim. However, this cannot be done without a love for what He has ordered. This also implies that a Muslim should strive to get as close to Allah as possible by doing voluntary good deeds and by forbidding the forbidden and avoiding disliked acts.

Making *naseehah* to Allah includes all of the following acts of worship: believing in Him, denying any partners to Him, affirming all of His attributes that are stated in the Quran and the sunnah, obeying Him, fulfilling His commands, abstaining from what He has forbidden, doing one’s best to remember Him under all circumstances, loving and hating for His sake, being friends to those who support Him and who work for His cause, and being against those who are against Him and who fight against His cause, having honor for the sake of Allah and being upset when the laws of Allah are ignored and disrespected, recognizing the blessings He has bestowed and properly thanking Him for those blessings, and so on. This is the making of *naseehah* to Allah. (Note that all of the above have some aspect of purifying something, such as one’s beliefs, or of joining something together, such as, one’s relationship to Allah and the believers in Him). This is the complete and desired *naseehah* and this is the religion of Islam as the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated.

It should also be noted that this *naseehah*— implying having the correct intention in one’s heart to fulfill the rights of Allah— to Allah is obligatory under all circumstances, even under those circumstances wherein other duties are no longer obligatory because they are beyond one’s ability to perform them. For example, Allah says in the Quran,

¹ Recorded by Ahmad. According to al-Arnaoot and Baajis, it is *sahih* due to supporting evidence. See al-Arnaoot and Baaji’s footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 217.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ مَا
يُنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ

“Not unto the weak nor unto the sick nor unto those who cannot find anything to spend is any fault (to be imputed though they stay at home and do not participate in the jihad) if they are true to Allah and His Messenger.” (Al-Tauba 91) This is Pickthall’s translation. The word translated by Pickthall as “true to” Allah is from the same root as *naseehah*, *nasahu*.

Obviously, the one who benefits from this *naseehah* is not Allah. Allah is Self-Sufficient and is not in need of any of His creatures. Instead, it is the servant of Allah himself that benefits from this act. When he makes *naseehah* to Allah, he is purifying himself and bringing himself closer to Allah. Hence, Allah has made this act obligatory upon individuals and it is the person himself who alone benefits from this act. Such is the grace and mercy of Allah.

“To His book”

Next the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “To His book.” The word, “His book,” refers to the whole class of revelation. Hence, it includes all of the previously revealed scriptures as well as the Quran revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).¹

Naseehah to the book of Allah requires that one believe that the Quran is from Allah, that it is the speech and uncreated word of Allah, and that it is not like the word of man. In addition, the complete *naseehah* to the book of Allah requires that one, according to one’s ability, reads and recites it properly, applies it, studies its admonitions, lessons and parables. Calling others to believe in the book of Allah is also part of this *naseehah*.

An important aspect of making *naseehah* to the Quran is to defend and protect it from any kind of distortion or misinterpretation. *Naseehah* to the book of Allah includes defending it against the false claims made against it, such as the claim made by some non-Muslims and some Shiites that it has not been precisely preserved since the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Having the proper respected and treating the Quran in the proper manner is also part of this *naseehah*. A Muslim should not touch the Quran while he is in a state of sexual defilement. Indeed, it is preferable that he not touch the Quran unless he has made ablution.² One should also never do any

¹ Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyadh*, vol. 4, p. 468.

² The majority of scholars state that it is prohibited for a person to touch the Quran while he is in a state of either major or minor defilement. They also state that a woman is not allowed to touch the Quran while she is experiencing her menses or post-partum hemorrhaging. However, those majority opinions may not be the strongest according to the relevant evidence. For a detailed discussion of this point, see the author’s, “The Condition of *Tahara* for Reciting/Touching the Quran,” *Al-Basheer* (Vol. 7, No. 6, March-April 1994), pp. 8-22.

act which would be considered an act of disrespect toward the Quran, such as throwing it down to the ground or leaving it on a pile of garbage.¹

Since *naseehah* is such an essential aspect of the religion, every Muslim should consider these points and ask himself if he is truly really make *naseehah* to Allah and to the Book of Allah?

“to His Messenger”

The *naseehah* to the Prophet (peace be upon him) includes the following: believing his message, believing in all that he brought as being divinely inspired, obeying him, helping and defending him, defending his honor and respecting his status. An essential and most important aspect of this *naseehah* is that one accepts the Prophet (peace be upon him) as the true leader and only human final word with respect to the religion. He is the only real human authority and everyone else’s opinions and statements come after his. If any Muslim follows another person’s opinion in opposition to what the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has said, then he is not making the proper *naseehah* to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

Making *naseehah* to the Messenger (peace be upon him) also includes being a friend to those who love him and an enemy to those who are against him. Also important are reviving his sunnah and fighting any innovations, spreading, learning and teaching his message, making supplications for him.

Making *naseehah* to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) includes loving his family and his companions. Ibn Uthaimen notes that it is especially important that one love and respect the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). This is because somebody’s companions are, in essence, his closest friends and confidantes. Among the Companions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) chose to be closest to Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthmaan, Ali and others. This was his choice and he expressed his love for his Companions on a number of occasions. When one insults or denigrates such noble Companions, one is actually insulting the Prophet (peace be upon him) for taking such people as his comrades. Indeed, ibn Uthaimen points out, one is actually insulting Allah when insulting the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It was Allah who chose those noble souls to be the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and to be the people who would carry this religion, preserve the Quran and carry on the sunnah of the

¹ This last aspect is greatly related to the culture in which one is living and such acts may change given different conditions over time. Some Muslims today still believe that it is not allowed to put the Quran on the ground or in any place below one’s waist. Such opinions may have come from a time in which books were not of the same quality as today or the ground may not have been as clean as it is in most places today. Ibn Uthaimen, for example, discussed the question of putting the Quran on a clean portion of ground and said there is no harm in doing so. He said that it is not an act of disrespect toward the Quran and if one is reading the Quran and needs to prostrate, he may put the Quran down and prostrate (ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaaadh*, vol. 4, p. 472).

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Prophet (peace be upon him). Furthermore, when one denigrates the Companions and casts doubt on their piety, one is casting doubt on the religion itself since it was through these people, by the will of Allah, that the religion was spread and passed on to following generations.¹

Finally, making *naseehah* to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) includes loving those who follow, defend and strive to revive his sunnah. They are working for the sake of Allah in supporting the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), hence, there is no room for anyone to have hatred in their heart for them. It is this duty that led many of the early scholars to make statements like, “If you see someone who does not love Imam Malik or Abdullah ibn al-Mubaarak or al-Shabi or Ahmad, then you should know that such a person is a hypocrite or *zindeeq* (i.e., those people who entered Islam with the sole purpose of destroying Islam),” for they were scholars who did their best to defend the sunnah and transmit it accurately. The main reason they are hated by heretics and hypocrites is because of their efforts to defend and spread the sunnah.

“to the Leaders of the Muslims”

There are two kinds of “leaders” among Muslims, the first are the religious leaders or scholars while the second are the worldly leaders or rulers. The wording of this hadith implies both categories of leaders.

The importance of *naseehah* to those in authority can be found in other hadith. For example, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْضَى لَكُمْ ثَلَاثًا وَيَسْخَطُ لَكُمْ ثَلَاثًا يَرْضَى لَكُمْ أَنْ تَعْبُدُوهُ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَأَنْ تَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَأَنْ تُنَاصِحُوا مَنْ وُلَّاهُ اللَّهُ أَمْرَكُمْ ..

“Verily, Allah is pleased with you for three matters and displeased with you concerning three matters. He is pleased with you for worshipping Him and not ascribing any partner to Him, for clinging to the cord of Allah and not dividing, and for being mutually sincere with those whom Allah has put in charge of your affairs...”²

¹ Cf., ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh*, vol. 4, pp. 474-475.

² Recorded by Maalik, ibn Hibbaan and Ahmad. The chain is *sahih* and the same as that of Muslim. Ibn Rajab (*Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 217), al-Albaani (*Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 385) and al-Arnaoot and Baajis (footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 217) all ascribe this hadith to *Sahih Muslim*. However, the hadith is found in *Sahih Muslim* but without the relevant portion, “and for being mutually sincere...” See the text of Muslim in al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, (Daar al-Marifah) vol. 12, pp. 236-237, al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh* (Daar al-Fikr), vol. 12, p. 10, al-Suyoot, *al-Deebaaj*, vol. 4, p. 317 or in al-Ubayy, vol. 5, p. 13. Furthermore, in their commentaries on this hadith in *Sahih Muslim*, al-Nawawi, al-Ubayy, al-Suyooti and al-Sanoosi all did not comment on those words of the hadith. This is an additional sign that those words did

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) also said,

ثَلَاثٌ لَا يُغْلَى عَلَيْهِنَّ صَدْرُ مُسْلِمٍ إِخْلَاصُ الْعَمَلِ لِلَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَمُنَاصِحَةُ أَوْلَى الْأَمْرِ
وَلَزُومُ جَمَاعَةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَإِنَّ دَعْوَتَهُمْ تُحِيطُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ

“There are three things that if a person adheres to them, they purify his heart from any form of treachery or evil: making his deeds purely for the sake of Allah, being sincere with those in authority and sticking to the Muslim community as [its members] supplications encompass each other.”¹

This statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) shows that there is no one above receiving or accepting *naseehah*. Everyone is deserving of sincere conduct and sincere advice. Everyone is in need of *naseehah* and it must be given to everyone, no matter how high ranking or prestigious the person may be. With respect to submitting to Allah and the *shareeah*, all are equal. No one is above the law and no one is above needing advice. Indeed, a ruler or a scholar should be the first to accept sincere advice from others.² At the same time, they are among the first who are deserving of respect and sincere relations.

Making *Naseehah* to the Muslim Rulers

Making *naseehah* to the leaders of the Muslims includes: helping them when they are following the truth, obeying them in what is right³, reminding them if they should err or forget, being patient with them when they do things the person does not like⁴, making jihad with them and not revolting against their proper authority. One should also pray for their guidance and piety, as their guidance and piety will benefit the Muslims as a whole. Abu Uthmaan Saad ibn Ismaeel al-Khairi said, “Sincerely advise the ruler and pray for him that he be righteous and guided in his statements and actions for if he is

not form part of the hadith’s text in the manuscripts of *Sahih Muslim* used by them. Allah knows best.

¹ Recorded by Ahmad, al-Daarimi and ibn Hibbaan. According to al-Arnaoot and Baajis, its chain is strong and acceptable. See al-Arnaoot and Baajis, vol. 1, p. 217.

² Indeed, many of the well-known scholars of Islam were famous for their willingness to be corrected and to change their views when they were shown to be wrong. This is a sign, Allah willing, that their intention was the following of the truth, not pride, personal gain or fame. For examples of this nature, see Zain al-Deen ibn Rajab, *Al-Farq bain al-Naseehah wa al-Tayar* (Amman, Jordan: Daar Ammaar, 1988), pp. 9-13.

³ The importance and limitations of obeying the rulers is discussed in the commentary on Hadith #28.

⁴ The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, “If someone sees something from his ruler that he does not like, he must be patient for the one who even moves a handspan away from his authority and dies in that state, dies a death of *jaahiliyyah*.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

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righteous, the affairs of the people will become good. And do not pray against them, thereby increasing their evil and increasing the trials for the Muslims.”¹

Ibn Uthaimen states that one should advise them directly to their face if that is possible; otherwise, one could write to them or contact those who are in direct contact with them.² Imaam Malik said, “It is a right for every Muslim or man in whose heart Allah has placed knowledge and understanding to go to the people in power and order them to do good, forbid them evil and admonish them. This is because if the scholar goes to the ruler and orders him to go good and forbids him from evil, if there is any, this is the virtue beyond which there is no further virtue.”³

This hadith stresses that one must have sincere conduct with respect to the legal Muslim rulers. Muslim rulers are human beings and they are apt to make errors. Therefore, they are in need of *naseehah* and sincere advice like any other Muslim. However, since what they do has an affect on so many others, making *naseehah* to them is of even greater importance. Al-Qarni states that this is why one can find so many hadith emphasizing making *naseehah* to the rulers, advising them to do what is right and forbidding them from what is evil.⁴

In fact, the models for the Muslim rulers, such as Abu Bakr and Umar, not only realized that it is a must for the Muslims to advise their rulers, but they actively sought such advice and reminded the Muslims as a whole that it is an obligation upon them to correct and advise the Muslim rulers. For example, in his first speech as the new caliph, Abu Bakr said, “I have been put in charge of you while I am not the best among you. If I do well, then support me. If I do wrong, then straighten me out.” It is also reported that Umar once said in a speech, “May Allah have mercy on the one who corrects us concerning our evil.” A man in the audience stood and said, “By Allah, if we were to find any crookedness in you, we would straighten it with our swords.” Umar replied, “All praise be to Allah who has put among the Muslims one who would correct Umar’s crookedness by his sword.”⁵

The goal of one’s interaction with the rulers or one’s discussions about the rulers should be pious and to bring them back to what is correct. Therefore, speaking to them in an un-called for harsh manner, showing a complete lack of respect for them and seemingly simply trying to embarrass them is not the proper way to make *naseehah* to the rulers. In fact, when Allah sent Moses and

¹ Quoted in Ali al-Qarni, *al-Hisbah fi al-Maadhi wa al-Hadhr bain Thibaat al-Ahdaaf wa Tatawur al-Usloob* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Rushd, 1994), vol. 1, p. 412.

² Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh*, vol. 4, pp. 480-481. In the chapter on the life of al-Nawawi, examples were given of al-Nawawi writing to the rulers to advise them.

³ Quoted in Muhammad Subayil, *Al-Adillah al-Shariyyah fi Bayaan Haqq al-Raa’ee wa al-Raiyyah* (Riyadh: Daar al-Salaf, 1995), p. 70.

⁴ al-Qarni, vol. 1, p. 406.

⁵ See al-Qarni, vol. 1, pp. 406-407.

Aaron to the Pharaoh, whose evil and harshness they knew quite well, Allah commanded them,

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى

“And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition or fear Allah” (*Taha* 44).

Furthermore, spreading the wrong or evil of rulers without any overriding need or benefit goes against the *naseehah* that one should have toward the rulers. In general, the result of such deeds is hatred and evil without any corresponding good. Instead, when they are wrong, they should be told that they are wrong—but one must always be careful and ascertain that the steps he is taking lead to greater benefit than harm. For this reason, many of the pious forefathers of Islam emphasized advising the rulers in private and not publicly. Indeed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself made that point in his statement,

مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْصَحَ لِسُلْطَانٍ بِأَمْرٍ فَلَا يُبْدِ لَهُ عِلَانِيَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَأْخُذَ بِيَدِهِ فَيُخَلِّوْهُ بِهِ فَإِنْ قَبِلَ مِنْهُ فَذَلِكَ وَإِلَّا كَانَ قَدْ أَدَّى الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ لَهُ

“Whoever wishes to give advice to a ruler about a matter should not do so publicly. Instead, he should take him by his hand and be alone with him [to talk to him] about it. If he accepts the advice from him [the matter is finished successfully]. If he does not [accept the advice], the person has fulfilled [the obligation] upon him.”¹

It is recorded that Saeed ibn Jubair asked ibn Abbaas, “Shall I order my ruler to do what is right.” He replied, “If you fear that he will kill you, then do not say anything bad about the ruler. But if you insist on doing something, then make it between yourself and him only.”² Al-Bukhari records that someone inferred to Usaama ibn Zaid that he should speak to the caliph Uthmaan ibn Affaan— concerning Uthmaan’s half-brother al-Waleed ibn Uqbah who had become known for drinking— and Usaama’s response was, “Do you think that I have not spoken to him simply because you did not hear it? I speak to him privately without opening a door such that I would be the first one to open that door.” The “door” he was referring to was the act of rebuking the rulers publicly instead of privately.³

Part of the *naseehah* to the rulers also includes when the ruler puts a person in charge of any matter or gives him a job to do that is sanctioned by the

¹ Recorded by al-Haakim and Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, the chain of this hadith is *sahih*. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, Footnotes to Amr ibn al-Aasim, *Kitaab al-Sunnah* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1985), p. 507.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 225; Subayil, pp. 68-69.

³ Cf., ibn Hajar, *Fath*, vol. 13, p. 52.

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shareeah, that person should discharge his duties honorably and honestly and not deceive or cheat the ruler in any way. Al-Khattaabi also mentions that one should not deceive the rulers by bestowing false praises upon them.¹ In other words, one must deal with them in a way that is pleasing to Allah and do so for the sake of Allah and fearing His punishment.

Making *Naseehah* to the Scholars

The Muslim scholars are leaders in the sense that they guide the others to the teachings of the Quran and sunnah. They are the ones who understand and are aware of how the *shareeah* is to be applied in daily life. Their position is one of great importance for the community as a whole. Hence, it is essential that the proper *naseehah* be made toward them.

Naseehah to them implies, for example, taking the knowledge that they pass on, accepting their personal rulings if they give sound proofs for their decisions, having good thoughts about them and not suspecting them of evil. Furthermore, as ibn Uthaimeen notes, one should not attempt to find their faults or mistakes. All scholars are human and they are all prone to make mistakes. One must accept that fact and one should correct them in the proper way. However, to search for their mistakes and expose them is not proper. When one does so, one is not just casting doubt on that one scholar but, in essence, one is casting doubt on all scholars and the *shareeah* as a whole.²

“to the common folk of the Muslims”

Making *naseehah* to the common folk of the Muslims would include: guiding them to what is good for them in both this life and the Hereafter, not harming them, teaching them about their religion and other things that they may be ignorant about, aiding them, concealing their faults, ordering them to perform good deeds and eradicating evil among them. It also includes having mercy for the young among them and showing respect for the elderly. One also should feel joy when they feel joy and one should be saddened when they are saddened.

Al-Nawawi pointed out that the pious forefathers would work for one another and advise one another to the point that they even sacrificed their own worldly interests out of preference to their brothers' needs.³

When one is in a position of authority over other Muslims, it is important that he act sincerely toward them and do what is in their best interests according to the *shareeah*. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

¹ Quoted in al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, vol. 2, p. 38.

² Ibn Uthaimoen, *Sharh Riyaaadh*, vol. 4, pp. 477-478.

³ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh*, vol. 1, p. 239.

مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ اسْتَرْعَاهُ اللَّهُ رَعِيَّةً فَلَمْ يَحْطُهَا بِنَصِيحَةٍ إِلَّا لَمْ يَجِدْ رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ

“There is no person whom Allah gives authority over others and he does not look after them in a sincere manner except that he will not even get the scent of Paradise.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

The obligation of sincere conduct by the ruler towards the masses includes appointing people to governmental posts on the basis of their ability and qualifications. Umar ibn al-Khattaab is reported to have said, “If a person is in a position of authority among the Muslims and appoints someone to a post due to love or blood relation between them, he has betrayed Allah and His messenger and has betrayed the Muslims.”¹

The Difference Between *Naseehah* and Shaming or Embarrassing Another Person

An important part of *naseehah* is to advise one another and correct each others’ actions. Speaking to another person concerning something that he does not like to have mentioned is common to both the praiseworthy act of advising another person and the blameworthy act of shaming and humiliating another person. In fact, one of the early scholars said, “You do not really give me advice until you say to me in my face what I dislike.”² It is important to realize the difference between these two acts in order to fulfill the obligation of advising one’s brother while remaining away from the sin of shaming one’s brother.³

First, it must be understood that mentioning another Muslim’s faults or sins simply to blame, ridicule or shame him is forbidden. The Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade his followers from rebuking the women who committed illegal sexual intercourse although he had ordered for her to be punished. (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

However, if there is some overriding benefit in mentioning such faults, then it can be either recommended or obligatory to mention them. That was, for example, the case with the scholars of hadith who were forced to mention the shortcomings of specific narrators. This action on their part was part of their *naseehah* to the Muslim nation as a whole, in order to accurately preserve the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him).⁴ Another example of that nature is the refuting of the misinterpretations of the Quran or sunnah that some people may try to spread throughout the Muslim community. It is a must to refute that

¹ Quoted in al-Qami, vol. 1, p. 437.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Al-Farq*, p. 16..

³ Cf., ibn Rajab, *Al-Farq*, *passim*.

⁴ Ibn Rajab, *Al-Farq*, p. 7.

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evil, even if it is done publicly, as long as the goal is not to ridicule them but to correct their mistakes and stop their evil.¹

It is noted that when advising others, it is best to do it in private. If one does it publicly, sometimes it can be a case of belittling or insulting the other person. This is especially the case if one Muslim is trying to advise the other about some wrong the person is committing. A Muslim who is making *naseehah* wants what is best. It is not his intention to harm or injure his brother Muslim. Furthermore, no Muslim would like that evil or sins are announced publicly and spread about. Hence, he will do his best to advise his brother privately and in the best manner.² On this point, al-Fudhail ibn Iyaadh stated, "The believer conceals [the sin] and advises the person while the evildoer exposes the sin and disgraces the person."³

The Importance of *al-Naseehah*

Every Muslim should think about this hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) described this religion by just one word: *naseehah*. This is the religion of Islam.

The Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were the people who best understood this hadith and how this hadith is to be applied. One time a companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Jareer, had his slave buy a horse and the slave paid three hundred *dinars* for the horse. Jareer went back to the person who sold the horse and he told him that it was worth 400 *dinars* and the man was also willing to accept that. Then Jareer said it was worth 500 *dinars* and so on, until he reached 800 *dinars* and he paid the man 800 *dinars* for the horse that his slave had bought for him for only 300 *dinars*. His explanation was the following: "I made the oath of allegiance to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to do the following: establish the prayer, give the zakat and make *naseehah* to every Muslim."⁴

Al-Fudhail ibn Iyaadh said, "The one who attains the most in our sight is not the one who has the most prayers or fasts. But the one who has attained the most in our sight is due to the generosity of the soul, the heart being free of [unjustified hatred and rancor] and the sincere conduct to the Muslim nation." Ibn al-Mubaarak was asked, "What is the best deed?" He replied, "Having sincere conduct for the sake of Allah." Mamar said, "It is said that the one who

¹ Ibn Rajab, *al-Farq*, p. 8. Ibn Rajab goes on to point out that if the refutation is done with improper speech or harsh words, this approach should be objected to but not the act of refutation in itself.

² al-Baitaar, p. 61.

³ Quoted in Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 225.

⁴ This story was recorded by al-Tabaraani. See Ibn al-Salaah, *Siyaanah*, p. 225.

has the most sincere conduct and advice for you among the people is the one who fears Allah the most with respect to you.”¹

It should be noted that this *naseehah* to Allah, His Book, the messenger, the leaders of the Muslims and the common folk of the Muslims is something that affects every second of the Muslim’s life. If one looks at the examples mentioned above one will note that there is really no moment that passes except that the person must exemplify this quality of *naseehah*. Therefore, if a Muslim cannot truly characterize himself as making *naseehah* then he should, in fact, question his religion as a whole. If he is not making the minimum requirements of *naseehah* to Allah or His book or messenger, and so on, can he really call himself a Muslim? Where is his Islam or *Imaan* without this *naseehah*? This is what the Prophet (peace be upon him) clearly pointed out when he said, “This religion is *naseehah*.”

Naseehah also plays an important role for the health of the Muslim society as a whole. It is one of key aspects protecting Muslim society from the spreading of evil, as those who may slip and commit evil are sincerely, out of love and brotherhood, encouraged and helped to stop. Such behavior genders love, cooperation and togetherness among Muslims while removing selfishness and hatred.²

Is *Naseehah* Only a Communal Obligation?

In many of the commentaries on this hadith, one will note the statement that *naseehah* is a communal obligation only.³ If some members of the community fulfill that responsibility, the others are absolved from any responsibility. Most likely, when scholars make statements of that nature, they have in mind only particular aspects of the general concept of *naseehah*.

As can be seen from the above commentary on this hadith, one cannot make such a general statement. There are definitely acts of *naseehah* that are obligatory upon every individual at all times. There are other acts that can clearly be called communal obligations, such as some aspects of enjoining good and removing evil. There are acts of *naseehah* that may be considered less than obligatory, such as recommended acts and the like. Therefore, the statement that *naseehah* is a communal obligation only cannot be considered an acceptable statement. Allah knows best.

Ibn Rajab gives an example of a particular type of *naseehah* that is obligatory only on a specific population of the Muslims. He says that the obligation to refute the misled heretical groups is an obligation that falls upon the shoulders of the people of knowledge only. They are the ones with the

¹ These were all quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 225. Also see Ahmad Haqqi, *Al-Arba'oon Hadeethan fee Akhlaaq ma Sharhaha* (Riyadh: Daar Taweeq, 1996), pp. 109-110.

² Cf., Fawwaaz Zamarli, *Al-Naseehah wa Atharaha fi Binaa al-Fard wa al-Mujtama al-Faadhil* (Beirut: Daar ibn Hazm, 1994), p. 5.

³ Note, for example, al-Nawawi, *Sharh*, vol. 1, p. 240.

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knowledge to refute such innovations. Similarly, it is also the scholars' obligation to refute the gross mistakes and slips of the other scholars. This is all part of their obligatory *naseehah* to the remainder of the Muslim community.

Other Points Related to this Hadith

- A Muslim cannot be all to himself and not care about what happens to the other Muslims. Instead, it is his obligation to make *naseehah* to the other Muslims. This means he is required to wish the best for them and to bring about the best for them if he has the ability to do so.
- The best *naseehah* that one can make for himself is to make *naseehah* to himself by encouraging himself to do what is right and proper and to stay away from sins and disobedience of Allah.
- Ibn Hazm points out that a person should not make *naseehah* only on the condition that his advice is accepted.¹ His responsibility is first and foremost to Allah. Even if the others do not accept his advice, he should still advise them. Furthermore, if they find that his advice is not the best approach to follow, this is for them to decide. The important point is that the Muslim fulfilled his obligation toward Allah by sincerely advising others.
- Zamarli stresses that when advising another person, the adviser should be sincere of heart. The goal of such advice is to make things better and remove some fault or evil. Deception and hypocrisy in one's heart would probably not lead to such good results. Zamarli states that in the same way that a deed is not accepted by Allah unless it is done sincerely for His sake, advice will not have its positive, reforming effect unless it is sincere from the advisor's heart.²
- Another important aspect for the advisor is to have knowledge concerning the act he is giving advice about. If he does not have such knowledge, he may think he is giving sound advice while, in reality, what he is advising may be harmful for the one to whom he is giving advice.³
- A Muslim should accept the sincere and sound advice that comes to him from any source. He should not allow pride or any other reason to interfere with him accepting what is best for him. Furthermore, when advice or correction comes to him from his brother, he should not begin to doubt his brother's intention and think that his brother is simply trying to ridicule or disgrace him. Umar ibn al-Khattaab once said, "Do not think evil of

¹ Ali ibn Hazm, *Al-Akhlaaq wa al-Seer fi Mudaawaat al-Nufoos* (Shariqah, UAE: Daar al-Fath, 1993), p. 48.

² Zamarli, pp. 17-18.

³ For more on this point, see Zamarli, pp. 18-20.

anything that comes from your brother Muslim's tongue whenever there is a way to interpret it in a good way.”¹

- Sultaan states that this *naseehah* is not just toward other Muslims. The Prophet (peace be upon him) made *naseehah* to his people, the disbelieving Quraish of Makkah. A Muslim should try to make *naseehah* to the non-Muslims. This is done by teaching them about Islam and trying to show them the straight path. When fulfilling this type of *naseehah* for the sake of Allah, one should be willing to endure hardships as the Prophet (peace be upon him) also had to endure hardships.²
- Love is an important driving force behind *naseehah*. If one has strong love for Allah, His messenger, His book and so forth, his conduct with respect to them will be more sincere. Al-Fudhail ibn Iyaadh said, “Love is better than fear. Do you not see that if you have two slaves and one of them loves you while the other fears you, the one who loves you will be sincere to you while you are present or absent due to his love for you. However, the one who fears you may be sincere to you when you are present and he fears you but he will deceive you and not be sincere to you when you are absent.”³

Summary of the Hadith

- The reality of this religion, the essence of this religion or a necessary component of this religion is *naseehah*.
- *Naseehah* means that the person has a true feeling of well-wishing for others. He wants what is best for them. He strives for that goal in his actions. The result of that true *naseehah* is the complete brotherhood feeling of Islam.
- *Naseehah* is to be towards Allah, His book, His Messengers, the leaders of the Muslims and Muslim people in general.
- Zamarli has an excellent passage at the end of his booklet on *naseehah* that is fitting as a summary here,

I say to the one who is giving advice (*naseehah*): It is a must upon you that you abide by the conditions and manners of giving advice so that the one who is being given advice will accept it, tend to it and respect it. It is obligatory that your concerning and intention, first and last, be bringing about some good or betterment for your brother; and the driving force behind your act [of advising] must be love and brotherhood. You should never stray from that purpose such that your purpose becomes fame, being greater than another person, boasting or acting for show. It is also a must for the one being advised to accept the advice no matter what its source, since it

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *al-Farq*, p. 15.

² Sultaan, p. 94.

³ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 219.

Hadith #7: The Religion is Naseehah

is a cause of reform and good for him. He should be kind to the advisor and have respect and love for him. He should not be tough with him or harsh or reject his advice to his face. We must all bear with each other concerning our mistakes and excuse one another as long as our goal and purpose is goodness and reform.¹

¹ Zamarli, pp. 67-68.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

Hadith #8:
"I have been ordered to fight..."

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِذَا فَعَلُوا ذَلِكَ عَصَمُوا مِنِّي دِمَاءَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَّا بِحَقِّ الْإِسْلَامِ وَحِسَابُهُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى

رواه البخاري ومسلم

On the authority of ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with both of them), the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "I have been ordered to fight against the people until they testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establish the prayer and give the zakat. Then, if they do that, their blood and wealth will be protected from me— except in accordance with the right of Islam. And their reckoning will be with Allah, the Exalted."

Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary

أمرت	- "I have been ordered"
أقاتل	- "to fight"
الناس	- "the people"
حتى	- "until"
إذا	- this a compound word; the ف means, "then," while إذا means "if"
دماءهم	- "their blood," the هم stands for "their"
أموالهم	- "their wealth"
إلا	- "except"
بحق	- this is a compound word; the ب means, "by, in accordance", حق means "right"
حسابهم	- "their reckoning"

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

على - “upon” literally this would mean that it is obligatory “upon” Allah, but its meaning here is “with” Allah.

Takhreej

Recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, al-Baihaqi, ibn Hibbaan, al-Daraqutni and others. The narration in Muslim from ibn Umar, though, does not mention the words, “except according to the right of Islam.”

Hadith with this or very similar meaning have also been transmitted from the Companions Abu Huraira, Jaabir ibn Abdullah, Anas ibn Malik, Jareer ibn Abdullah, Aus ibn Abu Aus, ibn Abbaas, Sahl ibn Saad, al-Numaan ibn Basheer, Taariq ibn Ashyam, Abu Bakrah, Muadh ibn Jabal and Samurah ibn Jundub.¹ This large number of Companions and the transmission from them has led scholars of hadith to conclude that this hadith is *mutawaatir*.²

General Comments About the Hadith

The importance of this hadith lies in the fact that it states the grounds and purposes of Islamic combat. It also declares when a person’s blood and wealth are inviolable. It also implies that a Muslim’s life may also be taken if he does an act that calls for the death penalty according to Islamic law.

Different Narrations of This Hadith

This *mutawaatir* hadith has been narrated with many different wordings. Most likely, the Prophet (peace be upon him) made the same or similar statement on more than one occasion. This is very likely given the overall importance of the teachings found in this particular hadith.

A look at the different narrations of this hadith clarifies some misunderstandings that may arise from this particular narration. Some of the other narrations include the following:

أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَقُولُوا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فَإِذَا قَالُوهَا وَصَلُّوا صَلَاتِنَا وَاسْتَقْبَلُوا
فِيلَتَنَا وَذَبَحُوا ذَبِيحَتَنَا فَقَدْ حَرَمْتُ عَلَيْنَا دِمَاؤَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَّا بِحَقِّهَا وَحِسَابُهُمْ عَلَى
اللَّهِ

¹ See ibn Muhammad, pp. 79-91.

² See Jalaal al-Deen al-Suwooi, *Qatf al-Azhaar al-Mutanaathirah fi al-Akhbaar al-Mutawaatirah* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1985), pp. 34-35; Muhammad al-Zabeeidi, *Laqt al-Laali al-Mutanaathirah fi al-Ahadeeth al-Mutawaatirah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1985), pp. 133-136. These two works just cited are collections of only *mutawaatir* hadith.

Hadith #8: "I have been ordered to fight..."

"I have been ordered to fight the people until they say, 'There is none worthy of worship except Allah.' If they say that and pray our prayers and face our *qiblah* and sacrifice our sacrifice, their blood and wealth have been made inviolable for us— except according to its due right. And their reckoning is with Allah." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

أَمِرْتُ أَنْ أَقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَقُولُوا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فَمَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فَقَدْ عَصَمَ مِنِّي
نَفْسَهُ وَمَالَهُ إِلَّا بِحَقِّهِ وَحِسَابُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ

"I have been ordered to fight the people until they say, 'There is none worthy of worship except Allah.' Whoever says, 'There is none worthy of worship except Allah,' has had his life and wealth protected from me— except according to its due right. And his reckoning is [to be] with Allah."¹ (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) Note that in this narration there is no mention of also believing in the Prophet (peace be upon him), establishing the prayer or paying the zakat. In the light of the other narrations, one cannot conclude from this narration, for example, that if a people say, "There is none worthy of worship except Allah," and then refuse to pray that they may not be fought.

أَمِرْتُ أَنْ أَقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَيُؤْمِنُوا بِي وَبِمَا جِئْتُ بِهِ فَإِذَا
فَعَلُوا ذَلِكَ عَصَمُوا مِنِّي دِمَاءَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَّا بِحَقِّهَا وَحِسَابُهُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ

"I have been ordered to fight the people until they bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and they believe in me and what I have brought. If they do that, their blood and wealth will be protected from me, except according to its due right. And their reckoning is with Allah." (Recorded by Muslim.)

The importance and interpretation of these different narrations shall be given below.

About the Narrator

Abdullah ibn Umar was discussed in the commentary on Hadith #3.

¹ Some scholars try to interpret this hadith, that only mentions the belief in Allah, by saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) made this statement before prayer and the other acts became obligatory. However, this is obviously not the case since the Prophet (peace be upon him) was not given permission to fight until after the migration to Madinah— a long time after the obligation to perform the prayers.

“I have been ordered”

Although Allah is not explicitly stated, the Prophet’s words imply that it was Allah who gave this order. This is because there is no human authority above the Prophet (peace be upon him).

However, there are many hadith in which a Companion states, “We were ordered to do such and such” or, “We were prohibited from doing such and such”. There is a difference of opinion concerning such hadith. Such a statement could imply that they were ordered by the Prophet (peace be upon him). In this case, the act that the Companion states must be taken as a *sunnah*, since it was ordered by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

The problem is that the statement could also mean that they were ordered by those in authority after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Hence, it is not a *sunnah* but perhaps the personal opinion of one of the governors. This is where the confusion and difference of opinion lies.

Most scholars conclude that if a Companion says, “We were ordered...,” it means that they were ordered by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and, hence, the mentioned act will be considered a *sunnah*. The exception to this is if there is proof to show that the Companion did not mean the Prophet (peace be upon him) when he made that statement.¹

“to fight against the people”

There is a difference of opinion concerning who is meant by “the people” in this hadith. The majority of the scholars think that it refers to the Arab polytheists. The People of the Book, for example, are excluded when they pay the *jizyah*.²

Ibn Hajr has given the responses as to why this hadith states to fight “the people”, implying all people including Jews and Christians. The first is that this hadith has been abrogated by the later rulings concerning *jizyah* and peace agreements. That is, originally the Prophet (peace be upon him) was ordered to fight all the people but then the laws were revealed that excluded the People of the Book from this ruling.

A second response is that this is a general statement from which particular groups have been excluded for specific reasons. If a general statement is made and then there is evidence to particularize it, the particularization is to be followed. Hence, there is evidence showing that this

¹ Cf., ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 107; al-Haitami, p. 126.

² Al-Haitami (p. 126) says that the People of the Book are excluded because they say, “There is no one worthy of worship except Allah.” However, his statement neglects to take into consideration the fact that in many narrations of this hadith, such as the one discussed above, it explicitly states that they must also testify that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah.

ruling does not apply to the Jews and Christians if they accept to pay the *jizyah*.

A third response is that this is a general term that is used to refer only to a specific group of people.¹ This is a permissible style in Arabic. This opinion is supported by a narration in al-Nasaai that specifically states, "I have been ordered to fight the polytheists..."

A fourth response is that the meaning of this hadith is not that the people are to be fought and killed until they accept the *shahaadah*. Instead, the meaning is that the people are to be fought until they accept the dominance of the law of Allah and withdraw their opposition. This objective can be met through many means. It could be met by fighting them. It can also be met by them accepting the law of Allah and paying a *jizyah*. It could also be met by some sort of peace accord between the Muslims and the others, in which the word of Allah will not be opposed in any way by the non-Muslims.

A fifth view is that the meaning is fighting or whatever takes the place of fighting. The *jizyah* would take the place of fighting.

The sixth view is that the goal of the *jizyah* is to drive the people to accept Islam. Hence, it is a cause for that goal. Therefore, the hadith says that they should be fought until they submit or they accept the option that will lead them to accept Islam.²

Seen in the light of the entire sunnah and way of jihad of the Prophet (peace be upon him), it seems that the strongest view, Allah knows best, is the fourth response. Hence, the meaning of "the people" in this hadith are all non-Muslims who refuse to embrace Islam or accept the law of Allah and live as citizens in the Islamic state by paying a *jizyah* in lieu of military service.³

Fighting in Islam

This hadith demonstrates that fighting is sanctioned in Islam. Fighting is sanctioned as it is a necessary act to spread truth and justice throughout the world. The only way to defend peoples' ways of life is through fighting and warfare. This is implied in Allah's statement,

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَتَّلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿١٩٠﴾
 الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ

¹ The difference between the second and third opinions is that in the second opinion the original ruling is particularized while in the third opinion the original statement never meant to include everyone that might be included under it.

² Ibn Hajr, vol. 1, p. 109.

³ There is no question that *jizyah* is an option that is offered to Jews and Christians. There is a difference of opinion over whether or not the option of *jizyah* should also be given to other non-Muslims, such as Hindus, Buddhists and so forth. This question would require a lengthy discussion beyond the scope of this commentary.

النَّاسَ بَعْضُهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَّهَدَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذَكَّرُ
فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا

“Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is able to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right— only because they say, ‘Our Lord is Allah.’ And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned” (*al-Hajj* 39-40).

Today, the disbelievers of the West have tried to convince Muslims that it is uncivilized and incorrect to fight in the name of religion. They claim that religion is a matter of personal conviction and, therefore, no one should be forced to follow a specific religion. Islam does accept that fact and, in general, does not coerce people into following Islam.

However, these same people of the West send their troops all over the world to defend “democracy” and to fight against the opponents of “democracy”. It is as if they are saying that it is acceptable to fight in the name of an ideology but not in the name of a religion. Actually, in essence, there is no difference between an ideology and a religion. (In both cases, one is accepting or implementing a specific way of life.)

The disbelievers of the West are fighting in the name of that ideology because, they claim, it is the best way for mankind and it gives everyone their true rights. Actually, their claim about democracy is false. Islam is the best way of life for mankind and it is the only way that gives everyone their true rights. Hence, it is Islam that must be fought for. And the disbelievers of the West have no logical ground to stand upon if they consider fighting in the name of “democracy” acceptable while fighting in the name of Islam not acceptable.

“until they testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establish the prayer and give the zakat”

Here, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated the acts that one must fulfill for his wealth and life to be considered protected and inviolable. For this hadith to be understood properly, each one of these acts are discussed separately.

Making the Testimony of Faith

When a person first becomes Muslim, the testimony of faith protects his life and wealth. This can be proven through many hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

One time the Companion Usaama ibn Zaid was fighting in jihad. He came across a man and was about to kill him. Just before he killed him, the person testified that there is none worthy of worship except Allah. Usaama went ahead and killed him because he believed that he was just saying that to protect his life. The Prophet (peace be upon him) rebuked Usaama. He repeatedly asked him what he would do about the person's statement, "There is none worthy of worship except Allah."

Therefore, as soon as a person makes the statement of faith, that will be accepted from him. He will be protected and not fought against at that time. This is the explicit meaning of those narrations that only mention the *shahaadah* as protecting a person's life and wealth. However, after he has embraced Islam, he must fulfill some conditions.

This can be seen in the hadith of Muaadh. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sending him to Yemen to call the people to Islam, he told him to call them to the testimony of faith. Then he told him that if they accepted that, they must then be taught that they have to pray. If they accept that, they must then be taught that they have to give the zakat. (Recorded by Muslim.)

However, whenever the Prophet (peace be upon him) was simply asked about Islam, he would not only mention the testimony of faith but he would also mention the other pillars of Islam. This was true in the hadith of Gabriel as well as other hadith.¹

Establishing the Prayer ² and Paying the Zakat

In this narration, the Prophet (peace be upon him) explicitly mentioned both of these acts. These acts are also explicitly mentioned by Allah in the Quran:

¹ See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 230.

² There are a number of narrations that imply that the Prophet (peace be upon him) accepted the Islam of some people on the condition that they did not have to pray, or they had to perform only two prayers or they would not have to pay the zakat. Although al-Arnaoot seems to accept one such narration, this author is not convinced of the authenticity of those narrations. Ibn Rajab does not seem to consider them authentic. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 228-229.

فَإِذَا أَنْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرَ الْحَرَّمَ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ
وَاخْذُوهُمْ وَأَحْصُرُوهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Then when the sacred months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and prepare for them each and every ambush. But if they repent and establish the prayer and give the zakat, then leave their way free. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (*al-Tauba* 5).

After a few more verses, in the same general context, Allah says,

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَنُفَصِّلُ
الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

“But if they repent, establish the prayer and give the zakat, they then are your brethren in religion. [In this way] We explain the signs in detail for a people who know” (*al-Tauba* 11).

Does this hadith mean that the “Muslim” who does not pray is, therefore, supposed to be killed because he has violated one of the rights of Islam?¹ According to al-Nawawi, this hadith is evidence that the one who intentionally does not pray is to be executed.² The opinions of the jurists concerning the punishment for one who does not pray was discussed in the commentary on Hadith #3.

However, as ibn Daqeeq al-Eid pointed out, it seems very clear that this particular hadith cannot be used as evidence that a person who intentionally does not pray is to be put to death. There is a difference between “fighting”, which implies opposing struggle between two parties, and “killing” someone. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used the *faa'il* form of the word. This implies that the action is being performed by both parties involved.³

According to al-Umari, the goal of the fighting mentioned in this hadith is not to bring about death to the other party as a type of punishment, as in the hadith of ibn Masood which is Hadith #14 in this collection. Instead, it is fighting for the purpose of bringing to end some form of wrong or evil. Killing in this case is an incidental or unavoidable possible result of the fighting and

¹ Al-Haitami (*Fath*, p. 127) states that if a non-Muslim is to be fought until he establishes the prayer, then a Muslim is even more so to be fought for that reason. That is, the Muslim believes in its obligation and yet he still refuses to pray. That person most definitely deserves to be fought, more so than the one who does not pray because he does not believe in the prayer.

² Quoted in ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 109.

³ See al-Shanqeeti, vol. 2, p. 55.

Hadith #8: "I have been ordered to fight..."

not a goal in itself. It is similar to the type of fighting that is mentioned in the verse,

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبَغَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ

"If two parties of believers fight, make reconciliation between them. If one of them rebels against the other, then fight you [all] against the one who rebels until it complies with the command of Allah" (*al-Hujuraat* 9).¹ When one fights the rebel forces, one is not trying to kill the individual Muslims but to defeat them and make them surrender to what is right. Therefore, this hadith cannot be used as evidence that the one who does not pray is to be killed as a form of punishment because it is concerned with a completely different topic.

The case of the individual who does not pay zakat is different. In his case, one is able to forcibly take the zakat from him while one cannot forcibly make someone pray five times a day. Hence, the one who intentionally does not pay zakat is not executed² but his zakat is taken forcibly from him. However, if he refuses to give in and fights the authorities, then he is also to be fought. This is all part of the right of Islam that is referred to in this hadith.

This hadith is directly concerned with any group of people who refuse to pray or pay the zakat, such as those during the time of Abu Bakr.³ This group of renegades is to be fought, even if they continue to profess the *shahaadah*. This hadith is directly talking about such people. In fact, if the Prophet (peace be upon him) was about to attack a village, he would go in the morning and if he heard the call to prayer, he would not attack the village. But if he did not hear the call to prayer, he would attack that village. (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

"Then, if they do that, their blood and wealth will be protected from me"

The inviolability and sacredness of a Muslim's blood and wealth is well established in Islam. Every Muslim must respect the life, wealth and honor of other Muslims. The wrongful shedding of a Muslim's blood is one of the greatest sins that a person could commit. Indeed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) took advantage of the great gathering at the Farewell Pilgrimage to tell those who were present,

¹ W. al-Umari, p. 324.

² Except according to some members of the Hanbali *madhhab*. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 235.

³ As shall be noted later, Abu Bakr did not refer to this hadith but the principle mentioned in this hadith does apply to the case of the renegades during his time.

إِنَّ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَأَمْوَالَكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ حَرَامٌ كَحُرْمَةِ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا فِي شَهْرِكُمْ هَذَا فِي بَلَدِكُمْ
هَذَا إِلَى يَوْمِ تَلْقَوْنَ رَبَّكُمْ

“Verily, your blood and wealth are inviolable to you like the sacredness of this day of yours in this month of yours in this land of yours, until you meet your Lord.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

“except in accordance with the right of Islam”

Most of these hadith with similar wordings simply mention the acts of prayer and fasting. However, all of the other necessary components of Islam are included under this statement of “the right of Islam.” Hence, some commentators conclude that prayer and zakat were specifically mentioned simply to stress their importance.

In fact, this is how the first Caliph understood such hadith. When he debated with Umar about fighting those who refused to pay the zakat, he quoted the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that stated,

أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أُقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَقُولُوا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فَمَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فَقَدْ عَصَمَ مِنِّي
نَفْسَهُ وَمَالَهُ إِلَّا بِحَقِّهِ وَحِسَابُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ

“I have been ordered to fight the people until they say, ‘There is none worthy of worship except Allah.’ Whoever says, ‘There is none worthy of worship except Allah,’ has had his life and wealth protected from me— except according to its due right. And his reckoning is with Allah.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) Abu Bakr’s argument was that paying the zakat was one of the rights that Islam has upon a person. Hence, if a people do not fulfill that right, they are to be fought.

Does that mean that the person who does not fast is to be killed? According to Malik and one narration from Ahmad, the one who does not fast is to be killed. According to al-Shafi’ee and another narration from Ahmad, such a person is not to be killed. The evidence they use is this hadith from ibn Umar. Ahmad stated that there has never been any mention of fasting in these hadith.¹ According to al-Shanqeeti, the one who does not fast is to be imprisoned and kept from food and drink.²

What about the person who does not perform the Hajj? There are two narrations concerning him from Imam Ahmad. One says he is to be killed and

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 235.

² Al-Shanqeeti, vol. 2, p. 56.

the other says he is not. However, the other scholars state that he is not to be killed.¹

Again, as individuals, this hadith probably is not related to the question of whether a person is to be killed for not fasting or performing the Hajj.

Included under "the right of Islam" is the practice of the most important outward demonstrations of Islam. If a people as a group, not individuals, refuse to apply these outward demonstrations of Islam, this hadith is evidence that they are to be fought. That is why, for example, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaibaani, the famous companion of Abu Hanifah, stated that if a people stop giving the call to prayer, then the Imam of the Muslims should fight against them.² The Malikis also have expressed the same opinion.³

Ibn Taimiya stated,

Any group that goes beyond the *shareeah* concerning any of the public, well-established laws of Islam must be fought, according to the agreement of the leading Imams of the Muslims, even if they state the two declarations of faith. Even if they state the declarations of faith and then refuse to pray, it is obligatory to fight them until they pray. If they refuse to give zakat, they must be fought until they give the zakat. The same is true if they refuse to fast Ramadhaan or make the pilgrimage. The same is true if they refuse to forbid any of the lewd acts, adultery, gambling, alcohol or anything that the *shareeah* has prohibited. The same is true if they refuse to apply the laws of the Book and the sunnah concerning life, wealth, honor, family and so on. The same is true if they refuse to order what is good and forbid what is evil or to strive against the disbeliever until they accept to give the *jizyah* while being belittled. The same is true if they openly demonstrate heresies that go against the Book and the sunnah and the way of the early generations and their Imams... Allah says in the Quran, "Fight them until there is no more *fitnah* (disbelief) and all the religion and way of life is for Allah" (*al-Anfaal* 39). If some of the way of life is for Allah and some of it is for other than Allah, it is obligatory to fight them until it is all just for Allah. Allah also says, "O believers, fear Allah and give up what remains from interest (*riba*) if you are truly believers. And if you do not do it, take a notice of war from Allah and His messenger" (*al-Baqara* 278-279). These verses were revealed concerning the people of Taif who had accepted Islam, prayed and fasted but they continued to deal in interest

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 235.

² That is an interesting statement in the light of what is happening in modern times. In some parts of the Muslim world, they do not allow the call to prayer to be given publicly because it disturbs the non-Muslims who are living there—many of whom are not even citizens of that country.

³ Al-Shanqeeti, vol. 2, p. 56.

(*riba*). So Allah revealed these verses and ordered the believers to leave what was left of interest. And Allah said, “If you do not do it, take a notice of war from Allah and His messenger” (*al-Baqara* 278-279)... *Riba* was one of the last deeds prohibited in the Quran, it is a type of wealth that is exchanged by two consenting parties. If the one who does not give that up is warring against Allah and His messenger, what must be case concerning the one who does not give up other forbidden acts that were forbidden before that and which are more greatly prohibited?¹

“The right of Islam” includes those heinous crimes that require the death penalty. These are mentioned in Hadith #14 of this collection and will be discussed at that time, Allah willing.

“And their reckoning will be with Allah, the Exalted”

This portion of the hadith demonstrates that people are to be treated according to their outward appearance. That is, if a person becomes Muslim just to save his life or for some worldly goal but he in no way makes that fact apparent, the other Muslims have to accept him and treat him as any other Muslim. The Prophet (peace be upon him) made this point very clear when he told Khaalid ibn al-Waleed,

إِنِّي لَمْ أُمَرَ أَنْ أَنْقُبَ عَنْ قُلُوبِ النَّاسِ وَلَا أَشُقَّ بُطُونَهُمْ

“I have not been ordered to investigate the hearts of the people nor to rip open their bellies.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Such was not the job of the Prophet (peace be upon him) nor is it the job of any of his followers. However, when the person returns to Allah in the Hereafter, Allah will judge him according to what was really in his heart. This is a fact from which there is no escaping. Allah has said,

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ﴿١١﴾ لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ ﴿١٢﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلَّى
 وَكَفَرَ ﴿١٣﴾ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللَّهُ الْعَذَابَ الْأَكْبَرَ ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا إِيَابَهُمْ ﴿١٥﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّ
 عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ

“So remind them [O Muhammad]. You are only one who reminds. You are not a controller over them. Save the one who turns away and disbelieves, then

¹ Ahmad ibn Taimiya, *al-Majmooat al-Fataawa* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ubaikaan, 1997), vol. 14, part 28, pp. 278-279.

Hadith #8: "I have been ordered to fight..."

Allah will punish him with the greatest punishment. Verily, to Us will be their return. Then, verily, for Us will be their reckoning" (*al-Ghaashiyah* 21-26).

Based on this hadith, the Shafi'ees state that if a clear and open hypocrite or *zindeeq* claims to repent, then his repentance is to be accepted.¹ One must accept what a person shows himself outwardly to be. In fact, the Prophet (peace be upon him) knew who the hypocrites were. However, he never punished them simply based on that knowledge which was given to him by Allah. As long as they outwardly showed themselves to be Muslims, they were accepted as part of the Muslim community. Only when such people violate the rights of Islam may they be executed.

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- Some people have tried to doubt the authenticity of this hadith. They claim—although their claim does not seem to be correct—that after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him), neither Abu Bakr nor Umar referred to this hadith when discussing what to do about the Arab tribes who refused to pay the zakat to the leader of the Muslims. After the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him), when Abu Bakr was chosen as the leader of the Muslims, some tribes refused to pay the zakat to him that they used to pay to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Abu Bakr argued that they must be fought. Umar was of the opinion that they could not be fought because they make the testimony of faith. Abu Bakr argued that the zakat is a right that is due on the wealth and he would fight them. Finally, Umar agreed with Abu Bakr's view. Neither of them, it is claimed, referred to this hadith at any time in their discussion. Assuming that this argument is true, which it does not seem to be, this does not mean that any doubt should be cast on this hadith. It is well-known that no individual Companion was knowledgeable of all of the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Indeed, there are explicit examples where both Abu Bakr and Umar were not aware of some hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It could have been the case that ibn Umar and the numerous others who knew this hadith were unaware of the discussion taking place between Abu Bakr and Umar. Otherwise, they could have presented this hadith and brought a quicker resolve to the dispute.
- Al-Tabari has an interesting view concerning the different narrations of this hadith that were presented earlier. It will be recalled that some narrations simply state that one must make the profession of faith. Al-Tabari states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that in reference to the polytheists and idol-worshippers who rejected the concept of *tauheed*.

¹ The Malikis still say that he is to be killed. However, it is also narrated from Malik that if the person comes himself and admits his wrong and openly repents, then it is accepted from him. See *al-Shanqeeti*, vol. 2, p. 57.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

As for this hadith of ibn Umar, he says that it is in reference to those who accept *tauheed* but refuse to accept the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Finally, as for the other narrations that explicitly mention the prayer, facing the *qiblah* and slaughtering of animals, according to al-Tabari, they were in reference to those who had embraced Islam but they did not fulfill its fundamental aspects of praying in congregation and praying the Friday Prayers. Hence, they were to be continued to be fought until they submitted to those deeds.¹

- According to ibn Hajr, al-Shanqeeti and Sultaan, one can conclude from this hadith that a heretic who accepts *tauheed* and outwardly shows his adherence to the *shareeah* is not to be declared a disbeliever.²

Summary of the Hadith

- This religion of Islam is one that must be spread to the people. Indeed, people must even be fought in order to spread this religion. This is how important it is to spread this religion.
- Once the people embrace Islam, they are no longer to be fought; their wealth and lives become protected.
- A person could possibly perform such a heinous crime that calls for his life to be taken.
- Allah is the One who knows the Unseen and what is in the hearts. In this world, people are to be treated according to their outward appearance. However, Allah knows who are the true Muslims and who are the insincere and the hypocrites. Hence, Allah will judge them accordingly on the Day of Judgment.

¹ Al-Shanqeeti, vol. 2, p. 54.

² Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 108; Al-Shanqeeti, vol. 2, p. 55; Sultaan, p. 103.

Hadith #9
"What I have Forbidden You, Avoid..."

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ صَخْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ:
سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: مَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ
عَنْهُ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ وَمَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِهِ فَافْعَلُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا
أَهْلَكَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَثْرَةُ مَسَائِلِهِمْ وَاخْتِلَافُهُمْ عَلَى
أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ

رواه البخاري ومسلم

On the authority of Abu Huraira Abdul Rahman ibn Sakhr (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying, "What I have forbidden you, stay away from. What I have ordered you [to do], do as much of it as you can. Verily, the people before you were destroyed only because of their excessive questioning and their disagreeing with their Prophets."

Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary

- نهيتكم - "I have forbidden for you," the ت is for the first person past tense, the كم is the second person plural.
- فاجتنبوه - "then avoid it," the word literally comes from a root meaning to put something to the side.
- أمرتكم - "I have ordered you"
- استطعتم - "within your ability, as you can"
- أهلك - "destroyed"
- قبلكم - "before you"
- كثرة - "excessive, lots"
- مسائلهم - "their questioning"
- اختلافهم - "their differences"
- أنبيائهم - "their prophets"

Takhreej

The wording above is actually that of Muslim. With similar other wordings, this hadith was recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah, al-Shafi'ee in *al-Umm*, ibn Hibbaan, al-Baihaqi and others.¹

General Comments on the Hadith

Although it is succinct, this hadith leads directly and indirectly to a number of important principles of Islamic fiqh. It also states the causes that bring about the destruction of a people.

The Circumstances Behind the Hadith

The narration in *Sahih Muslim* gives the circumstances that led to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) statement:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ خَطَبَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الْحَجَّ فَحُجُّوا فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ أَكُلَّ عَامٍ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَسَكَتَ حَتَّى قَالَهَا ثَلَاثًا فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَوْ قُلْتُ نَعَمْ لَوَجِبَتْ وَلَمَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ ثُمَّ قَالَ ذُرُونِي مَا تَرَكْتُكُمْ فَإِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ بِكَثْرَةِ سُؤَالِهِمْ وَاخْتِلَافِهِمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ فَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَإِذَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ فَدَعُوهُ

On the authority of Abu Huraira: The Prophet (peace be upon him) once addressed us saying, "O people, Allah has made the Hajj obligatory upon you." A man said, "Every year, O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) remained quiet. The man repeated the question three times. Finally, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "If I were to say, 'Yes,' it would become obligatory upon you and you would not be able to do it."² Then he said, "Leave me with what I have left you with. Verily, the people before you were destroyed because of their excessive questioning and their

¹ Cf., ibn Muhammad, pp. 92-93.

² This incident highlights a very important point related to Islamic Legal Theory: If a command is stated in the texts, does that mean that one must perform that act once or does one have to perform it on a repeated basis? This is not the proper place to enter into a discussion of that question. The interested reader may consult Muhammad Adeb Saalih, *Tafseer al-Nusoos fi Fiqh al-Islami* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 284-315.

Hadith #9: "What I have Forbidden You, Avoid..."

opposition to their prophets. If I order you to do something, do what you can. If I prohibit you something, leave it."¹

About the Narrator: Abu Huraira

Abu Huraira (d. 59 A. H.) was a famous companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him) who was born about eighteen years before the *Hijrah*. There are differences of opinion concerning his actual name. The strongest opinion seems to be that it was Abdul Rahmaan ibn Sakhr ibn al-Dausi.

He embraced Islam in 7 A. H. and constantly kept the company of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) after embracing Islam. He lived in the Prophet's mosque as one of the people known as *ahl al-Suffa*.

He related more hadith than any other companion (5374). The Prophet (peace be upon him) guided him to an act that would keep him from ever forgetting a hadith again. At night, along with the late-night prayer, he would also study hadith. He was also known to be very cautious when it came to narrating hadith.

He was well known for his piety and he did not involve himself in the politic strife of his time. He was the governor of Bahrain² for some time under Umar ibn al-Khattaab.

"What I have forbidden you, stay away from"

The Nature of Prohibition

The word *nahi* (نهى) is translated here as "forbidden," although it has two implications. There is a strict or complete prohibition of an act and then there is a recommendation to avoid an act out of dislike for the act. The first type is called *التحريم* (*al-tahreem*), which makes something *haraam* or forbidden. The second type is called *الكرهية* (*al-karaaha*), which makes an act discouraged or disliked (*makrooh*).

The most apparent meaning of this particular hadith is in reference to what is strictly forbidden, and not simply disliked. This includes adultery, fornication, drinking alcohol, taking interest, stealing, murder and so forth. These acts are all strictly prohibited and, based on this hadith, one must do one's best to avoid them under all circumstances.

Disliked acts are to be avoided but there is no sin upon the person who commits them, especially on an irregular basis. Even if there is no necessity involved, it is conceivable that a Muslim may perform some of these acts.

¹ Al-Haitami points out that there are other occasions that have been mentioned in relation to this hadith. It is possible that more than one event led to the Prophet (peace be upon him) making this specific statement.

² Bahrain is currently the area of al-Hasa in Saudi Arabia.

However, the person who wants to attain a purer level of *taqwa* and closeness to Allah would definitely do his best to avoid this category of acts also. This category would include, for example, eating raw onions or garlic before attending the congregational prayer.

“What I have ordered you [to do], do as much of it as you can.”

The Nature of Order

Similar to the term, “prohibition”, the term “order” has two levels to it. One is when a person is ordered to do something and is, under normal circumstances, not excused for not performing the act. This kind of order is called *eejaab* (إيجاب) and makes an act obligatory. The second type of order is more of a recommendation to do a specific act. This type is called *nadab* (ندب) and renders an act recommended.

The obligatory acts include the prayers, zakat, fasting, fulfilling one’s oaths and promises and so forth. A person must do his best to fulfill these acts. If a person fails to fulfill such an act, in general, he has committed a sin.

The recommended acts include the *sunnah* prayers, spending for good causes and so forth. If a person does these acts, Allah will be pleased with him and will reward him. If a person fails to perform these acts on occasion, there is no sin imputed to him.

The Principle that “What One Can Perform is Not Excused because of What One Cannot Perform”

This legal maxim that is mentioned by the jurists is directly derived from this hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has told Muslims that, when he orders something, they must fulfill whatever is within their ability to perform. It is understood from this statement that certain acts may fall outside the limits of one’s ability.

Suppose one is in a situation where he can fulfill part of what is ordered but is simply not able to fulfill all of it. What should he do in that case? The general principle is that he must fulfill all that he is able to fulfill and he is excused from that which he is not capable. As just stated, this conclusion is directly derived from this hadith as one must do whatever he is able to do.

An example commonly given is the case where a person is not able to pray while standing. In this case, he still prays but he does so sitting. This example is directly based on another hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

صَلِّ قَائِمًا فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَقَاعِدًا فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَعَلَى جَنْبٍ

Hadith #9: "What I have Forbidden You, Avoid..."

"Pray standing. If you are not able to, then pray sitting. And if you are not able to [do even that], then pray while on [your] side." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

There are, though, some cases in which, if one cannot perform part of the act, one does not perform the act at all. For example, if a person, such as a diabetic, can only fast half a day due to his condition, then he does not fast a portion of the day and break his fast for the remainder of the day. Instead, he is not obliged to fast whatsoever. This is because fasting half a day is not considered a form of worship in any sense. Hence, the person does not do that portion. Similarly, if a person must free a slave as an expiation, if he can only afford to free a third of a slave, that is pay one-third of his price, he does not do that because such is not fulfilling the act that he was supposed to perform.¹

The Relative Importance of Orders and Prohibitions

Every command or prohibition has its importance. However, the scholars have noted how, in this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke about orders and prohibitions in a completely different manner. In one case, the case of prohibitions, he told Muslims to stay away from them completely. In the other case, the case of orders, he told Muslims to perform as much of them as he can. This difference in his speech is quite significant and has been discussed in detail by the scholars.

If fulfilling an order becomes very difficult upon a person, he is, in many cases, excused from fulfilling that command. This is an implication from this hadith. However, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has left no such room for indulging in forbidden acts. Even if it is difficult upon a person to refrain from a forbidden act, he must do so. He cannot use "hardship" or difficulty as an excuse to fulfill his desire by performing a forbidden act. In fact, from the *shareeah* point of view, everyone is "capable" of refraining from a particular sin while not everyone may be capable of fulfilling what has been commanded. Al-Haitami notes how the *shareeah* allows one to not perform an obligatory deed if there is some hardship, such as breaking one's fast or not praying while standing due to illness, however, the *shareeah* never allows one to take part in

¹ Al-Zarkashi has divided all acts into four cases. The first case is where one definitively performs what he can and what he is not able to do of that act will not affect the correctness of the act. (Such is the case of the prayer noted above, in which if one cannot pray standing, he prays sitting and performs everything that he can of the prayer.) The second case is where there is some difference of opinion but the strongest opinion is that the person performs what he can of the act and leaves what he cannot do. The third case is where one definitively does not perform the act all, neither what he can of the act nor what he cannot of the act, as the act must be done completely or not at all. (The fasting of half a day falls under this category.) The fourth case is where the scholars have differed but the strongest opinion is that one does not perform the act that he cannot do completely. For details, see Muhammad al-Zarkashi, *al-Manthoor fi al-Qawaaid* (Kuwait: Wizaarah al-Auqaaf wa al-Shuoon al-Islaamiyyah, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 227-233.

something forbidden unless the case is not simply hardship but extreme necessity.¹

This hadith, in hand with other evidences from the Quran and sunnah, have led most scholars to conclude that it is more important to remain away from forbidden acts than it is to perform the ordered deeds.² This does not mean that one may be lax in performing what has been ordered. However, it does mean that one must be even more careful and stringent when it comes to avoiding the forbidden acts. One of the early scholars said, “The righteous deeds are performed by the righteous and the wicked. However, only the truthful ones avoid the sinful deeds.”³ Indeed, there is even a hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was advising Abu Huraira and he said,

أَتَقِ الْمَحَارِمَ تَكُنْ أَعْبَدَ النَّاسِ

“Protect yourself from the forbidden acts and you will be the one who worships [Allah] the most of the people.”⁴

This stage is reached after one has fulfilled the necessary obligatory acts, such as the acts related to *tauheed*, prayer and so forth. It is, however,

¹ Al-Haitami, p. 132.

² Ibn al-Qayyim was of the opposite view. He stated that disobeying an order is a greater sin than doing an act that has been forbidden. His discussion of this topic goes on for some twelve pages, with twenty proofs for his position. [See Muhammad ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Fawaaid* (Beirut: Daar al-Nafaais, 1984), pp. 154-166.] However, all his arguments are either logical arguments or conclusions based on indirect evidences of the Quran or sunnah. Such arguments cannot be used to oppose the clearer evidences from the Quran or sunnah, such as the hadith under discussion above. This is not the proper place to go into a lengthy discussion and refutation of his arguments. His first argument only, as an example of his reasoning, will be dealt with here. His first argument (p. 154) is a quote from Sahl ibn Abdullah who said, “Not performing an order is greater in Allah’s sight than performing a forbidden act because Adam was prohibited from eating from the tree but he ate from it and Allah relented toward him. But Iblis was ordered to prostrate to Adam and he did not prostrate, so Allah did not relent toward him.” This argument is completely irrelevant to the question at hand. When it is said that avoiding forbidden acts is more important than performing the obligatory deeds, this is said in a *ceteris paribus* sense (that is, all other things being held equal). If a person, who is otherwise a believer, under the influence of desires slips and performs a prohibited act, he is definitely better than a person who out of arrogance and pride refuses to obey a command because he thinks the command is not becoming of who he is. The question being discussed here is the question of a believer either not performing what he is ordered to do or performing what he is prohibited from doing. One cannot make an analogy between that case and the very different situations of Adam and Iblis. Hence, ibn al-Qayyim’s first argument, which is usually a person’s strongest argument, is not valid whatsoever. Allah knows best.

³ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 252. According to al-Arnaoot and Baajis’ footnote, the speaker was Sahl ibn Abdullah al-Tustari.

⁴ The remainder of the hadith states, “Be happy with what Allah has given you and you will be the richest of the people. Be good to your neighbor and you will be a believer. Love for the people what you love for yourself and you will be a Muslim. Do not laugh much for laughing too much deadens the heart.” Recorded by al-Tirmidhi and Ahmad. Al-Arnaoot seems to accept his hadith. (See his footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 252.) Saleem al-Hilaali explicitly states that due to its supporting narrations, it is a confirmed hadith. See al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 147.

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more important to avoid the forbidden acts than to go beyond those obligatory acts into the non-obligatory acts. Indeed, avoiding the forbidden is obligatory while the recommended acts are supererogatory.

Commenting on this aspect, al-Bugha and Mistu, two modern authors, wrote,

From this point, one can see the mistake that many Muslims commit, especially during these times. This spreads contradiction in their lives. One finds a person very keen on doing the acts of obedience and the obligatory acts. He might even be very strict in following the recommended and beloved acts. However, one also finds him, at the same time, lax when it comes to doing forbidden acts. He might practice many forbidden acts. [For example,] one can find a fasting person taking part in interest transactions. A woman who made the Hajj and pays zakat leaves her house exposing her beauty [not wearing the proper *hijaab*]... Such people think that their act of worship will save them in Allah's sight... However, this goes against what Allah, the All-Wise, the Lawgiver has stated. It is confirmed in the sunnah of the leader of the messengers and the understanding of the leading noble Companions and Imams that the foundation of worship is to avoid what Allah has prohibited. [And,] the path of success is to strive against one's self and desires and make them avoid the forbidden acts... Abdullah ibn Umar, the Imam of the worshippers, stated, "To return one-sixth of a *dirham* [illegally gotten] is preferred to spending one hundred thousand [*dirhams*] in the way of Allah." Al-Hasan al-Basri, the leader of the Followers, said, "The worshippers of Allah do not worship in any way better than avoiding what Allah has forbidden." Umar ibn Abdul Aziz also once said, "*Taqwa* is not praying during the late night and fasting during the day and mixing [between permissible and impermissible] between those two. But *Taqwa* is to fulfill what Allah has obligated and avoid what Allah has forbidden. If, in addition to that, there are some [good voluntary] deeds, it is goodness upon goodness."

This shows us that avoiding the forbidden takes precedence over doing the acts of obedience. This does not mean, as we said, that a Muslim should be lax in performing the obligatory deeds. This is how some of those people who have diseased hearts and weak souls behave. They are very lax and lazy when it comes to Allah's law and they do not do what Allah has obligated. Then they claim that they are better than those who pray and fast due to the fact that their behavior with the people is good and the religion means to have good dealings with the

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people... These people, like those described above, have left the path of guidance...¹

Hence, both approaches are wrong. A Muslim must perform the acts that are obligatory upon him while at the same time completely remaining away from the forbidden acts. Al-Baitaar, another modern author, echoed their views when he wrote,

We see some people very keen on using the *miswaak* (the toothstick) while they do not avoid backbiting, spreading tales and having forbidden wealth. They will argue about covering the head if they are behind an Imam whose head is uncovered while they will not be careful about lying in their dealings or looking at what Allah has forbidden one to look at. [People must be aware of how incorrect this situation is.]²

“Verily, the people before you were destroyed only because of their excessive questioning”

As was clearly demonstrated in the Hadith of Jibreel, not all questioning is bad. The Angel Jibreel came and asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) important and beneficial questions. Indeed, there are some questions that are considered *fardh ain* or an obligation upon the individual. Those are the questions that one needs to ask in order to understand and practice the religion correctly, such as how to pray, how to fast and so forth.

Therefore, to understand this portion of the hadith, one has to understand what types of questions are being referred to. The same is true for the verse in the Quran in which Allah says,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَسْأَلُوا عَنْ أَشْيَاءٍ إِنْ تُبَدَ لَكُمْ تَسْأَلُكُمْ وَإِنْ تَسْأَلُوا عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنزَّلُ الْقُرْءَانُ تُبَدَ لَكُمْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهَا وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

“O believers! Ask not about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble. But if you ask about them while the Quran is being revealed, they will be made plain to you. Allah has forgiven that, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing” (*al-Maaidah* 101).

The prohibition or censure in these two texts concerns questions for which answers are not needed. They are in relation, for example, to hypothetical questions, questions just for fun and ridicule, and questions due to obstinacy. These kinds of questions are not allowed. They were put forth by the hypocrites, disbelievers and those whose hearts were diseased of the Prophet’s time and are still prohibited today.

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 58-59.

² Al-Baitaar, p. 73.

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During the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), in particular, it was not preferred to ask many questions about permissible and impermissible acts. This was because it may be due to somebody's excessive questioning that a particular act would become forbidden. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once stated,

إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فِي الْمُسْلِمِينَ جُرْمًا مَنْ سَأَلَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ لَمْ يُحَرِّمْ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ
فَحَرَّمَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَجْلِ مَسْأَلَتِهِ

"The Muslim with the greatest sin with respect to the other Muslims is the one who asked about something which was not forbidden but became forbidden due to his questioning." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

In fact, in general, those Muslims who made the *hijrah* to Madinah were not allowed to ask questions, as the Companion al-Nawaas ibn Samaan stated. (Recorded by Muslim.) If something was needed for them to know, Allah would reveal it in the Quran or the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It was only the bedouins and outsiders who did not have daily access to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that were allowed to come and put forth questions to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Anas stated that they were not allowed to ask questions. Therefore, they would be very happy whenever an intelligent bedouin would come and ask questions and they would be able to listen in. (Recorded by Muslim.)

Scholars point out that this fear of something becoming forbidden due to a person's questioning ended with the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It was only during his time, when the Quran was being revealed, that such a possibility existed. Hence, that possibility is no longer a reason for the disapproval for asking questions. However, there are still many valid reasons for which it is disapproved to ask too many questions.

The Correct Approach

Ibn Rajab points out that everything a Muslim needs is made clear in the Quran and sunnah. The clear exposition is there. Therefore, one does not have to worry about theoretical questions. Instead, what is of utmost importance, is to turn to the Quran and sunnah and to study them, to learn and understand what they say and then to apply them in one's life. This is the correct approach. The person should be most concerned about understanding and application. Different cases that one might be able to hypothesize in the future are of no concern because, in reality, they may never come up.

The Muslim must turn to the Quran and sunnah. He must do his utmost to understand them properly. Then he should busy himself with believing in them, if the texts are a matter of faith, and applying them, if the texts are

related to action. If a text is an order, he should apply it to the best of his ability. If it is a prohibition, he must remain away from what is prohibited. This was the way of the Companions when it came to taking the knowledge from the Prophet (peace be upon him).¹

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has shown that one should be concerned with fulfilling the orders and staying away from the forbidden and not be concerned with asking questions. That is the relationship between the different parts of this hadith. Again, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “What I have forbidden you, stay away from. What I have ordered you [to do], do as much of it as you can. Verily, the people before you were destroyed only because of their excessive questioning and their disagreeing with their Prophets.” That is, do not worry about asking too many questions. One should just take what has been clearly given and act upon it. It is either an order to do something or a prohibition. In order to implement it, one need not ask too many questions about it.

This was the way of the Companions. Umar would curse those who would ask about situations that had not occurred. If Zaid ibn Thaabit was asked about something, he would say, “Has that happened?” If the answer was in the negative, he would say, “Leave it until it happens.” Al-Auzai once said, “If Allah wants to prevent His servant from getting the blessings of knowledge, He makes his tongue busy with the perplexing problems. Verily, I have seen those people and they are the people with the least amount of knowledge.”² The Companion Abu al-Darda once stated, “You will not be a scholar until you are a student. And you will still not be a scholar based on knowledge until you act [based on that knowledge]. And it is sufficient as a sin for a person that he continues to be argumentative. And it is sufficient as a sin for a person that he continues to be quarrelsome.” (Recorded by al-Daarimi.)

If the person is just concerned with hypothetical cases, it would lead him not to act at all. He may even come across some cases where what has been stated cannot be applied— in fact, in his ignorance, he may not even realize that the text does not apply at all to such a case.³ This weakens his faith in the text and weakens his application of the text.

Ibn Rajab points out that, unfortunately, people also go to the opposite extreme. That is, instead of taking a text and asking questions about it and so forth, they simply take the text but fail to study and understand its meaning. Historically, this happened with some of the people busy with hadith. They

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 243-244.

² Quoted in Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 245. If something is truly expected to occur, then one may ask about it. For example, someone is permitted to ask, “If I am flying tomorrow from New York to Los Angeles and the times for prayers will be during the flight, how shall I pray then?”

³ One of the biggest problems with hypothetical questions is that one cannot truly imagine all of the circumstances surrounding an event. If the event were to actually occur, one would understand how it came about and what is the correct ruling concerning it. However, when one is simply imagining a case, one cannot imagine the entire picture properly.

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passed on the texts but never realized what the texts meant. Consequently, they had some very strange ideas about how to apply the hadith.¹

Both of these approaches are incorrect. The correct approach is to accept whatever has been said in the Quran and sunnah. One should strive to understand it properly, in the light of the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), teachings of the Companions and the other great scholars of Islam. Then, when one understands the purport of the verse or hadith, one applies it in his life.

In fact, as ibn Rajab pointed out, when a new situation arises and this approach is properly followed, the person will be able to understand the situation properly. He will be able to apply what he has studied and understood from the Quran and sunnah to that new situation. Ibn Rajab then states that whoever tries to follow a path other than this one, will be confused and destroyed in the end.²

The key to all of this is that the person must have the right intention. He must have the intention to get closer to Allah by knowing and understanding what Allah has revealed. He must have the intention to properly follow the Straight Path as it is shown in the Quran and sunnah. If the person does that, Allah will guide him and show him the straight path. Allah will teach him what he had not known. He will be from those truly knowledgeable people that Allah has described in the Quran:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

“It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah”
(*Faatir* 28).

“Verily, the people before you were destroyed only because of... their disagreeing with their Prophets.”

Differences and bickering are one of the greatest means by which a people become weakened. They turn their attention and anger towards one another. They even disagree with their leader and guide, as is the case when people turn against the guidance of their own prophets.

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated a second reason for the destruction of the earlier peoples: their disagreeing with their prophets— that is, their lack of complete and absolute submission to their Prophets. This is in contrast to Allah’s description of the true believers:

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 248. Unfortunately, this phenomenon continues to exist. Many people simply go to the texts of the hadith, taking them at face value and think they understand them, without studying them in their totality and studying what the scholars have said about the meaning of that hadith.

² Cf., ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 249-250.

إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ
 يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ
 وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

“The only saying of the faithful believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say, ‘We hear and we obey,’ And such indeed are the successful. Whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, fears Allah and keeps his duty [to Him], such are the successful” (*al-Noor* 51-52).

One of the classic examples of a people disagreeing with their prophet is found in the Tribes of Israel. Allah states in the Quran,

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا
 هُزُؤًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالُوا آدَعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ
 يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانُ بَيْنَ
 ذَلِكَ فَافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ قَالُوا آدَعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْثُهَا
 قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقْعُ لَوْثُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّظِيرِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾
 قَالُوا آدَعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقْرَ تَشَبَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن
 شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ
 وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لِأَشْيَةٍ فِيهَا قَالُوا آلَيْنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبَحُوهَا
 وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ

“And (remember) when Moses said to his people, ‘Verily, Allah commands you that you slaughter a cow.’ They said, ‘Do you make fun of us?’ He said, ‘I seek refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant.’ They said, ‘Call upon your Lord for us that He may make plain to us what it is.’ He [Moses] said, ‘He [Allah] says, “Verily, it is a cow neither too old nor too young, but [it is] between the two conditions. So do what you have been commanded.” They said, ‘Call upon your Lord for us to make plain to us its color.’ He said, ‘He says, “It is a yellow cow, bright it in its color, pleasing the beholders.”’ They said, ‘Call upon your Lord for us to make plain to us what it is. Verily, to us all

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cows are alike. Surely, if Allah wills, we will be guided.' He [Moses] said, 'Verily, He says, "It is a cow neither trained to till the soil nor water the fields, sound, having no other color except bright yellow.'" They said, 'Now you have brought the truth.' So they slaughtered it though they were near not to do it" (*al-Baqara* 67-71).

These verses describe the obstinate and disagreeable behavior of the Tribes of Israel. The Quranic commentators have presented a story related to this incident.¹ In brief, it states that a person was found murdered and, to discover the murderer, Moses (peace be upon him) told them to sacrifice a cow. In fact, the only cow that they finally found who met all the descriptions that they, in reality, forced upon themselves was an expensive cow. Hence, some of them were not willing to fulfill the order because of the expenses involved.²

The important point is what is shown in the text of the Quran: how they responded to Moses' command. Instead of accepting and submitting, they objected first and then quarreled about the details. It came to the point that they almost did not fulfill the command of Allah.

Instead of simply fulfilling what Allah had ordered of them, they began to question. And because of their questioning and obstinate approach, Allah actually made the matter more and more difficult for them by giving more details about the cow that they should slaughter. In fact, on this point there is a hadith recorded by al-Bazaar in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated,

إِنَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَوْ أَخَذُوا أَنْثَى بَقْرَةٍ لَأَجْرَتْهُمْ

"If the Tribe of Israel had even taken the smallest [or least valuable] cow, it would have sufficed for them."³ If this hadith is authentic, it demonstrates the point here in a beautiful fashion.

¹ This story is from what is known as the *Israaeeliyaat* or stories that are taken from the oral narrations, legends and texts of the Jews and Christians. If such stories are confirmed by the Quran or sunnah, they are known to be true. If such stories contradict the Quran or sunnah, they are known to be false. If they are neither confirmed or contradicted by the Quran or sunnah, one cannot state whether they are actually true or false. In most cases, however, they do not add any valuable knowledge to what is in the Quran or sunnah. So, in general, it is best to avoid them.

² For the entire story, see ibn Katheer, *Tafseer*, vol. 1, pp. 194-197.

³ After recording the hadith, al-Bazaar stated, "We do not know of this being narrated from Abu Huraira except through this chain." The chain contains Ibbaad ibn Mansoor. According to al-Haithami, he is weak but the remaining narrators in the chain are all trustworthy. However, ibn Hajr states that his hadith are close to the level of *hasan*. Al-Mizi records various contradicting statements about Ibbaad. Ibn Adi concludes that his hadith are to be recorded, meaning that his narrations are not acceptable by themselves but are accepted if they are supported by other narrations. Unfortunately, in this particular case, there does not seem to be anyone else who supports this narration. The same statement is narrated as a statement of ibn Abbas. According to ibn Hajr, this hadith is also narrated as a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in ibn Abu Hatim's commentary on the Quran. However, in the published edition of that work, this statement is not mentioned as a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Allah knows best. Cf., ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 15, p. 188; Noor al-Deen Ali al-Haithami, *Majma al-Zawaaid wa Manba al-Fawaaid* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1992), vol. 7, p. 26; Noor al-Deen Ali al-Haithami, *Kashf al-*

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Allah has made a very clear warning in the Quran for anyone who considers differing with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and not completely submitting to his way. Allah has said,

فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
أَلِيمٌ

“And let those be warned who oppose [any] order of the Messenger that there will be a trial to befall them or a painful punishment inflicted on them” (*al-Noor* 63).

Related Issues

The Principle that “Hardship Begets Facility”

A legal maxim that is derived from this hadith is that “hardship begets facility.” It is clear from this hadith that not all that the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered is within the capacity of each individual. There may be times when fulfilling the order may lead to great hardship. In such cases, the *Shareeah* makes things easier for the individual so that he does not have to face any undue hardship.

For example, it may become very difficult upon a person who is traveling to fulfill all of the regular practices of Islam. The *shareeah* has realized this fact and has taken the traveler’s particular situation into consideration. Therefore, for example, a traveler is allowed to break his fast, combine his prayers and shorten them as well.

A fiqh example based on this principle is the ignoring of small amounts of impurities that may be difficult to remove or continuously avoid. Similarly, in business contracts, there might be some amount of “ignorance” or lack of exactness involved that is overlooked by the *shareeah*.¹ These are all based on this principle that undue hardship or difficulties are taken into consideration by the *shareeah*.

This does not mean that if one faces any form of hardship, he is no longer to apply the *shareeah*. There are some types of “hardship” that the

Astaar an Zawaaid al-Bazaar (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1984), vol. 3, p. 40; Yoosuf al-Mizi, *Tahdheeb al-Kamaal fi Asmaa al-Rijaal* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1988), vol. 14, pp. 156-161; Abdullah ibn Adi, *al-Kaamil fi Dhua'faa al-Rijaal* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1984), vol. 4, pp. 1644-1646; Abdul Rahmaan ibn Abu Haatim, *Tafseer al-Quran al-Adheem* (Madina: Maktaba al-Daar, 1408 A.H.), vol. 1, pp. 214-215.

¹ For example, when getting into a taxi one does not know exactly how much the ride is going to cost him to a specific location. Although this information is not known and undetermined at the outset of the implied contract, due to the difficulty in determining such matters, the *shareeah* overlooks that small amount of uncertainty and allows this transaction due to the need for it.

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shareeah expects the person to bear. For example, prayer five times a day is a type of "hardship," in the sense that it requires effort on the part of the person. However, that kind of "hardship" is approved by the *shareeah* and no one is allowed to abandon that act in the name of hardship.

What is referred to by this principle is the undue or extreme hardship that one cannot normally meet on a day to day basis.

The Principle that "When Conflicting, Preventing Harm takes Precedence Over Producing Benefits"

This is another important principle that is discussed by the jurists. Once again, it is closely related to the meaning of this hadith wherein the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave more importance to refraining from forbidden acts than fulfilling what he had ordered.

Unfamiliarity with this principle has kept many people today from understanding a number of the rulings of the *shareeah*. For an act to be prohibited in the *shareeah*, it is not a must for it to be a "pure evil", as some people seem to think. In other words, it is not necessarily the case that it does not contain any good in it at all. The important point is that the evil that usually results from it is greater than the good that may come from it. The *shareeah* is more concerned with preventing harm and will prohibit an act if the overall outcome is negative and not positive.

This is very clearly shown in the Quran with respect to gambling and alcohol. Allah says,

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ
وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا

"They ask you concerning alcoholic drink and gambling. Say: In them is a great sin and [some] benefit for men, but the sin of them is greater than their benefit" (*al-Baqara* 219).

Hence, acts must be judged by their overall good and overall evil. If the Quran or hadith has prohibited something, then it is known for certain that its overall result is something harmful. Someone may look at the fact that Islam, for example, prohibits interest. The person could present many possible aspects of interest that may be good for society. However, the evil of interest greatly outweighs any positive aspects that it may contain. Hence, the *shareeah* has disallowed it.

The Principle that “Necessity Renders Some Forbidden Acts Lawful”¹

As can be seen in the commentary to this hadith, the general principle is that under all normal or usual circumstances, a Muslim must do his best to remain away from any of the acts that have been forbidden by the *shareeah*. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that if he has forbidden something, one must stay away from it altogether. A few scholars have even concluded from this hadith that a Muslim may never perform forbidden acts under any circumstances.²

However, according to the vast majority of scholars, there are some exceptions to this general rule. These exceptions are based on the law of necessity. Forbidden acts are forbidden due to some evil or harm that they bring about. Sometimes, though, the harm that comes about due to abstaining from those forbidden acts is greater than the harm of the acts themselves.

Islamic law recognizes that there are some aspects that are required for life to be lived in a proper manner. These aspects are five: religion, life itself, mental capacity, wealth and familial ties. The proper preservation of these five aspects takes precedence over the goal of avoiding forbidden acts. For example, a person may be starving to death. That is, his life, one of the five aspects, is now being threatened. The only food that is available to him, that will preserve his life, is pork. The following question must then be answered: What takes precedence, preserving his life or avoiding pork? In this case, preserving his life takes precedence. This is what is being referred to in the following Quranic verse,

قُلْ لَا آجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهْلًا لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Say [O Muhammad]: I find not in that which has been inspired to me anything forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat it, unless it be carrion, blood poured forth, the flesh of swine, for that surely is impure, or unlawful meat which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for other than Allah. But whosoever is forced by necessity without willful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, [for him] certainly, your Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (*al-Anaam* 145).

¹ For a detailed discussion of this principle, the interested reader should consult Jameel Mubaarak, *Nadhariyah al-Dharoorah al-Shariyyah: Hudoodaha wa Dhawaabituha* (al-Mansoorah: Dar al-Wafa, 1988), *passim*.

² Cf., ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 15, p. 189.

Hadith #9: "What I have Forbidden You, Avoid..."

Like all other principles, though, it is important that this principle be applied correctly and not be abused. The scholars were well aware that this is a principle that many might try to abuse. People might start performing all sorts of forbidden acts in the name of necessity. Hence, the scholars derived from the Quran and sunnah the exact parameters or limitations by which this principle must abide.

The first limitation is that one of the goals that the *shareeah* is attempting to preserve must be threatened or in danger. That is, either religion, life, wealth, mental capacity or familial ties are threatened. If one of these are not at risk or being greatly harmed, then one cannot invoke the law of necessity.

Second, the expected harm must be factual or probable. That is, a remote possibility of something occurring sometime in the distant future is not grounds to invoke the law of necessity.¹ Third, the implementation of this law of necessity may not lead to some greater harm. For example, the preservation of one's life is more important than the preservation of one's mental capacity. Therefore, according to those scholars who allow it², it is preferred to consume alcohol than to die from thirst. Fourth, when invoking the law of necessity, one may not perform an act that will put another person in a state of necessity or harm any of his fundamental needs. The final limitation is that necessity is restricted to what it truly necessitates. In the above example, for instance, the person would eat what he needed of the pork to remain alive and capable. He would not be allowed to go beyond what he actually needed.

Al-Bugha and Mistu make an important point related to this concept of necessity,

Getting more of this world is not part of necessity in any way whatsoever. Getting more of the amenities [non-necessities] of this life and having an easier life is not part of necessity. For example, if a person has a small amount of capital, he is not allowed to deal in interest to make more business. If a person has a feasible small living space, he cannot invoke the law of necessity to make it permissible for him to get a large living quarter through any means whatsoever. If a woman has a husband or guardian who is maintaining her, necessity would not then allow her to go out and mix with men and be alone with men in order to have employment or a job.³

¹ For example, many sisters today claim that they have to earn degrees and work now because it could be the case that their husbands die ten years down the road and leave them with no support. Such a conjecture is nothing but mere guesswork and one cannot act on the basis of such possibilities.

² Some scholars do not allow the consumption of alcohol in the case of necessity, claiming that it just adds to one's thirst instead of decreasing it.

³ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 52.

A Misunderstood Verse of the Quran

Before leaving this hadith, it would be proper to discuss a verse of the Quran that is very much related to the topic of this hadith. This verse is often misunderstood and misapplied.

The verse is *al-Taghaabun* 16. Its wording is somewhat close to this hadith under discussion. The verse reads,

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَسْمِعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَنْ

يُوقِ شَحْحَ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“So keep your duty to Allah as best you can, and listen, and obey, and spend; that is better for your souls. And who is saved from his own greed, such are the successful.”

According to al-Khaalidi, this verse is probably the most quoted verse as a defense for one’s failure to perform obligatory acts or as a justification for performing prohibited acts. He presents the understanding that some people have of this verse,

Some Muslims fail to perform some obligatory acts. They also perform some forbidden acts [believing] that they have a license to do so with respect to some laws. They escape some obligations. Hence, they do not achieve the kind of *taqwa* that Allah asks of them. All of these acts are in contradiction [to what is prescribed] and lead to punishment on the Day of Resurrection.

But for some of them, what they are doing is not sufficient. Instead, they add to it a greater sin that leads to an even more heinous punishment. They turn to this verse. They attempt to find in it some evidence and excuse for them; they seek from it a license and acceptance for their deeds. “So keep your duty to Allah as best you can.” So the verse orders the Muslim to have *taqwa* according to his ability— they say— so he must try to perform the obligatory deeds and abstain from the forbidden acts. But if he neglects some obligatory acts, there is no blame, hardship or sin on him. And if he does some forbidden acts, there is no harm or sin either. Because the verse excuses him. It gives him a license and escape.¹

The consequences of such an understanding of this verse are clear: Everybody has his own level of capability in fulfilling the obligatory and abstaining from the forbidden. Everyone is different and no one can be blamed

¹ Salaah Al-Khaalidi, *Tasweebaati fi Fahm Bad al-Ayaat* (Damascus: Daar al-Manaar, 1987), pp. 94-95.

Hadith #9: “What-I have Forbidden You, Avoid...”

for his shortcoming as long as he is doing what he finds he is able to do. Therefore, everybody’s application of Islam will be different. Everyone is allowed to practice Islam in his own manner according to what he sees is right and applicable to him. The result is that there is not one Islam but many “Islams”. Everyone will be free to apply what he says he can apply of Islam. And, furthermore, no one can say he is wrong in his application of Islam since he is fulfilling the command found in the verse, “So keep your duty to Allah as best you can.”

But is this the correct interpretation of the verse? Is it possible to make such a conclusion?

First, the verse should be looked at in the light of other verses of the Quran— in particular, those dealing with the requirement of *taqwa*. In *surah ali-Imraan* (verse 102), Allah says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O believers, observe your duty to Allah with right observance¹, and die not save as those who have surrendered (unto Him).”² Al-Khaalidi states that this verse in *ali-Imran* and the above verse from *al-Taghaabun* clearly explain each other. He states,

The verse in *ali-Imran* orders us to have *taqwa* of Allah with right observance [or according to His right]. And the meaning of “with right observance” is: a true, sincere, pure and serious *taqwa*. [It means] that we should sacrifice to the limit of our ability and potential in fulfilling and achieving that *taqwa*. And [it means] that we remain at that level of *taqwa* for as long as we live— such that not one of us dies except as a Muslim...

And this is the same type of *taqwa* that the verse in *surah al-Taghaabun* requires from us. The verse of *al-Taghaabun* orders us to have *taqwa* of Allah according to our ability and potential. “So keep your duty to Allah as best you can.” And the meaning of “best you can” is explained in *surah ali-Imran* as “with right observance”. Therefore, a Muslim does not achieve the *taqwa* to the best he can unless that *taqwa* is the right observance of *taqwa*. Each of these verses clarifies and explains the other. They must be understood together in order for the meaning to be correct and acceptable.³

Similarly, the hadith of the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) shed some light on the meaning of this verse. In the hadith under discussion, the

¹This can also be translated as, “as He should be feared,” or “according to His right”.

²Some say that the verse of *al-Taghaabun* abrogated the verse of *ali-Imraan*. This is a weak opinion. Ibn Katheer records it with a weak chain and al-Tabari bluntly rejects it.

³Al-Khaalidi, *Tasweebaat*, p. 96.

Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) stated, again, “Leave me as I leave you for the people before you were ruined because of their questions and their differences with their prophets. So, if I forbid you something, then keep away from it. And if I order you to do something, then do it as much as you can.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) This hadith clearly shows that whatever is forbidden must be completely avoided. The only exception to this is the case of necessity. But necessity has been well-defined and specified by the *shareeah* itself. That is, it is not up to the individual to decide for himself what is necessity. It is defined by the *shareeah* and not one’s personal likes, dislikes or feelings.

Similarly, the Muslim fulfills— to the best of his ability and potential— what he has been commanded. Even in this case, he may have some license or excuse for not performing specific acts. But, again, these licenses or sanctions have been defined by the *shareeah* itself and not by the individual.

This is an important point that must be emphasized. Allah knows full well the capabilities of humans as well as their shortcomings. At the same time, He, the All-Merciful, the All-Knowing, prescribed certain acts upon the Muslims. He made prayer five times a day obligatory. He made fasting the month of Ramadhaan an obligation— save for those who are sick or traveling. He made honesty and justice obligatory. He made love for the believers an obligation. All of these acts (and many more) He has made obligatory on humans while knowing full well their capabilities and limitations. Hence, if anyone, for example, claims that prayer five times a day is too much of a hardship or difficulty and he does not have to perform them because Allah has stated, “So keep your duty to Allah as best you can,” he is lying and making a false claim against the practicality of the *shareeah*. Allah obliged all believers to pray five times a day and this is a proof that it is within the capabilities of humans. Even in extreme cases where the person cannot perform the movements of the prayer due to some physical ailment, they are still required to pray in the manner that they are able.

Furthermore, when one turns to the statements of the Companions concerning the verse, “O believers, observe your duty to Allah with right observance”, it becomes quite obvious that the meaning of this verse in *surah al-Taghaabun* is not as some people claim. Ibn Masud said that the words, “O believers, observe your duty to Allah with right observance”, means to obey Allah and not to disobey Him, to remember Him and not to forget Him and to thank Him and not to be ungrateful to Him. Similarly, ibn Abbas proclaimed, “This verse has not been abrogated. But ‘O believers, observe your duty to Allah with right observance,’ is for people to strive in the way of Allah according to His right upon them, not to fear the punishment of anyone when working for the sake of Allah, and to be just for Allah’s sake even if it be against themselves, their fathers or their mothers.”¹

¹Al-Suyooti, vol. 2, pp. 282-284.

Hadith #9: "What I have Forbidden You, Avoid..."

Al-Tabari summed up the meaning of this misinterpreted phrase, "So keep your duty to Allah as best you can," when he explained it as, "Beware of Allah, O believers, and fear His punishment. And ward of His punishment by performing what He has obligated and abstaining from what is in disobedience to Him. And do the deeds that bring you closer to Him according to your capacity and exhort all of your efforts [for that goal]."¹

Hence, the Muslim should exhort all of his energy to fulfill Allah's commands. He should work sincerely, fearing Allah and hoping for His acceptance and reward; then, for what he actually is not capable of performing— and Allah alone knows his complete potential— he should sincerely seek Allah's forgiveness for his shortcomings while praying that Allah accepts his meager deeds.

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- Earlier, the circumstances behind this hadith were given. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about performing Hajj every year. He replied that if he were to say, "Yes," it would become obligatory. This is evidence that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself made *ijtihad*. It is also evidence that it is a must to follow the Prophet's *ijtihad* and one is not free to reject it, claiming it is only the Prophet's *ijtihad*. It is actually not just the Prophet's *ijtihad*— but it is also approved and sanctioned by Allah. Otherwise, if the Prophet were to ever make a mistake in his *ijtihad*, Allah would correct him and would not allow him to mislead the Muslims.
- In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is encouraging Muslims to be concerned with the most important matters and then move on from there to the lesser important matters. For example, in this hadith, there is an implied instruction to apply hadith, fulfill commands and avoid anything prohibited. The Muslim should not be concerned to go into details which are not of relevance or importance at the moment. If he has time for additional study and understanding later, that is well and good. But the first thing is the accepting, understanding and applying at the present moment. If one does not apply what is stated in the Quran or sunnah but instead bothers himself with hypothetical questions or asking, "Why is this?" and "Why is that?", then he is doing what the Prophet (peace be upon him) has censured in this hadith.²
- This hadith is clearly related to the diseases that are afflicting the Muslims of today, even those who claim to be practicing Islam and following the way of the *Salaf*. Instead of taking the teachings of Islam and applying them to the best of their ability, they sit, do little works and, instead, talk

¹Al-Tabari, vol. 14, part 28, p. 127.

² Cf., ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 15, p. 192.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

about theoretical issues that most Muslims can do little or nothing about. When they talk about these issues, they disagree with one another about those theoretical points. When they disagree, they begin to hate one another and call each other names, such as heretic and so forth. They are weak and on the verge of destruction. This is all because they are not heeding the guidance of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this very important hadith. One should understand and apply what is found in the Quran and sunnah. One should do his best to fulfill what he is ordered and always remain away from what is forbidden. He should not indulge too much in questioning, theorizing and differing with others. Instead, he should concentrate on doing what he is able to do.

- If the Quran and sunnah have prescribed a specific way to do something, one should do it in that fashion. Any way that the person fulfills it will be sufficient if that is all that is stated in the Quran and sunnah. One need not even go beyond that and try to determine even further details if they are not mentioned in the Quran and sunnah. This furthering questioning was exactly the behavior of the Tribe of Israel that was condemned in the Quran.

Summary of the Hadith

- If something is prohibited, one must stay away from it completely. The only exception to that is the true cases of necessity. Due to necessity, an act may no longer be considered prohibited.
- If something is ordered, one must perform it to the best of his ability. It is not possible to completely and excellently perform everything that one is ordered to do. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated the cases of prohibition and order in different tones.
- Asking too many questions, beyond what is needed and not with the real intent of application, is blameworthy. It was one of the reasons that prior peoples were destroyed.
- Similarly, differing with any prophet is completely blameworthy. Instead of accepting and submitting, prior peoples showed some form of opposition to what their prophets requested of them. This was the second major cause for their destruction.

Hadith #10

"Allah is pure and accepts only..."

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى
إِنَّ اللَّهَ طَيِّبٌ لَا يَقْبَلُ إِلَّا طَيِّبًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِمَا أَمَرَ بِهِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ فَقَالَ (يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا
مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَعَمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ) وَقَالَ
(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ) ثُمَّ
ذَكَرَ الرَّجُلَ يُطِيلُ السَّفَرَ أَشْعَثَ أَغْبَرَ يَمُدُّ يَدَيْهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ
يَا رَبِّ يَا رَبِّ وَمَطْعَمُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَشْرَبُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَلْبَسُهُ حَرَامٌ
وَعُذْيُ بِالْحَرَامِ فَأَنَّى يُسْتَجَابُ لِذَلِكَ

رواه مسلم

On the authority of Abu Huraira who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Verily Allah, the Exalted, is pure and accepts only that which is pure. Allah has commanded the believers to do that which he has commanded the Messengers. The Exalted has said, 'O Messengers! Eat of the good things and do right.' And the Exalted also said, 'O believers! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you.'" Then he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] mentioned a man who after a long journey is disheveled and dust-colored. "[The man] stretches his hands out toward the sky and says, 'O Lord, O Lord,' while his food is unlawful, his drink is unlawful, his clothing unlawful and his nourishment is unlawful. How is he to be answered [in such a state]?"

Recorded by Muslim.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

Selected Vocabulary

طيب	- "good" in reference to Allah, it implies purity.
يقبل	- "accept"
المؤمنين	- "the believers"
المرسلين	- "the messengers"
كلوا	- "eat," this is addressed to a group.
اعملوا	- "do, act"
رزقناكم	- "provided you"
ذكر	- "he mentioned"
الرجل	- "the man"
السفر	- "the journey"
أشعث	- "disheveled"
أغبر	- "dust-colored," the person is so covered with dust that his skin becomes dust-colored.
يمدّ	- "stretches"
يديه	- "his two hands"
السماء	- "the sky"
يا	- "O"
رب	- "Lord"
مطعمه	- "his food"
مشربه	- "his drink"
ملبسه	- "his clothing"
يستجاب	"respond"

Takhreej

This hadith was recorded by Muslim, Ahmad, Abdul Razzaaq, al-Baihaqi, al-Tirmidhi, al-Daarimi and others.¹

General Comments About the Hadith

The importance of this hadith is that it describes the acts that are pleasing and acceptable to Allah. It shows that if an act is not pure and good, according to the *Shareeah*, Allah will not accept it. Indeed, Allah may not even respond to one who calls on Him if his sustenance is not from permissible sources.

About the Narrator: Abu Huraira

Abu Huraira was discussed in the commentary to the previous hadith.

¹ Ibn Muhammad, p. 94.

Hadith #10: "Allah is pure and accepts only.."

"Verily Allah, the Exalted, is Pure"

The hadith states that Allah is *tayyib*. Literally, *tayyib* means something good. As for its meaning in reference to Allah, Ibn Rajab wrote,

The meaning of *al-tayyib* here is *al-tahir* (the pure). That is, Allah is holy, above every imperfection and need; He is pure and perfect. This is similar to the usage of the word in the verse, "Good women (*al-tayyibaat*) are for good men (*al-tayyibeen*) and good men are for good women. Such [good people] are innocent of [every bad statement] that the people make" (*al-Noor* 26). The meaning is that they are free of any base form of lewdness and its evil.¹

This means that Allah has all of the attributes of perfection and completeness. He is not in need of a partner, wife, child and so forth. He is also not in need of sleep or rest. All of these perfect aspects are implied in this one statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in which every form of shortcoming, weakness, blemish or need is removed from Allah.²

"and accepts only that which is pure"

In another hadith, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) specifically spoke about charity, he said virtually the same thing. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِعَدْلِ تَمْرَةٍ مِنْ كَسْبٍ طَيِّبٍ وَلَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا الطَّيِّبَ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتَقَبَّلُهَا
بِيَمِينِهِ...

"Whoever gives in charity what is equivalent to a date that is from his pure earnings, and Allah only accepts what is pure, then Allah takes it with His right hand..." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

However, it is argued that this particular hadith from Abu Huraira is more general than that. It is not simply talking about legal and pure wealth. But it is talking about all deeds. That is, Allah does not accept any deed unless it is free from any aspect that would ruin it. The deed must be free from any form of show or ostentation. If the deed involves wealth, the wealth must be purely legal wealth. All deeds and all actions must be pure and free from any taint whatsoever. Otherwise, Allah will not accept that deed. He is above accepting such a deed.

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 258-259.

² Sultaan, p. 113.

The Meaning of Having a Deed Accepted

This hadith makes it very clear that deeds are not accepted if they are accompanied with forbidden aspects. However, “acceptance” has many different meanings to it. Ibn Rajab points out that it could imply any of the following:

- (i) Allah is pleased with the deed, praises the one who performs it, tells the angels about the deed performed and so forth;
- (ii) the deed will be rewarded in the Hereafter;
- (iii) the person has performed his legal obligation of enacting such a deed;
- and (iv) if the deed is not performed properly, Allah will not reward it and the person has not fulfilled his obligation of performing that deed.¹

It seems that what is meant here by “Allah does not accept,” is (i) and (ii): Allah is pleased with the deed and He will reward it in the Hereafter.

Therefore, this no way implies that the person does not have to perform a particular obligatory deed if there is evidence that it will not be “accepted” by Allah. If he does not perform the deed in itself, he will receive a further punishment. This is the manner in which the hadith that contain phrases like, “Allah does not accept the prayers” or “Allah does not accept the deeds,” are to be understood. For example, there is a hadith that states that the prayers of a person who consumed alcohol will not be “accepted” for forty days. The person must still perform those prayers. The obligation is still upon him. However, Allah is not pleased with the person, so He is not pleased with his deeds and Allah does not mention them to the angels. But the person still must perform them. Otherwise, he may also be punished for not performing the deeds.²

A verse in the Quran also states, while quoting the son of Adam,

إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“Allah accepts only from those who are God-fearing” (*al-Maaidah* 27). For this reason, the *Salaf* used to fear that their deeds were not accepted by Allah. It is not enough to simply perform a deed for it to be accepted by Allah and for Allah to be pleased with it. Many other factors are also involved. One of the most important factors is that the person has a fear of Allah with respect to his deed— that he may not be performing the deed in a way that is pleasing to Allah. Similarly, the person must make certain that all of his wealth and

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 262. Ibn Rajab only mentioned the first three types. The fourth type is mentioned by Sultan, p. 114. The proof for the fourth type is a hadith that states, “Allah does not accept the prayer of any of you after he invalidated [his ablution] until he makes ablution.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

² Cf., ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 262.

Hadith #10: "Allah is pure and accepts only.."

provisions are, to the best of his ability, from pure and legal sources. Otherwise, his deeds may not be accepted by Allah.

"Allah has commanded the believers to do that which he has commanded the Messengers."

This hadith makes it very clear that one of the most damaging aspects for a person's deed is when he relies on or lives off of money that is not pure and legal. The food that he eats must be permissible. The money with which he buys his food must be permissible. This is one of the essential keys by which one's deeds will be accepted by Allah. This is an integral command that Allah has given to all of the messengers before and which Allah has also given to this Nation. This is how the Messengers must live their lives and this is how all true believers must live their lives.

"O Messengers! Eat of the good things and do right."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) quoted this verse from the Quran,

يَتَأْتِيهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُّوْا مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا

"O Messengers! Eat of the good things and do right" (*al-Muminoon* 51).

This verse shows the honorable position of the messengers in the sight of Allah. They purify themselves with respect to their body and their spirit. They purify their physical being by consuming only the pure, beneficial things that Allah has permitted them. They purify their spiritual being by performing good deeds. Hence, both physically and spiritually they are purified.¹

This verse was also a refutation of the disbelievers who objected to the fact that the messengers ate and walked in the marketplace like other humans. In essence, there is nothing shameful in eating and drinking. In fact, it is a necessity of physical life. However, the most important matter is what is being consumed. That is, the important point is that what is being consumed is pure, good, wholesome and lawful. In addition, what is being consumed must have been obtained through legal means. In such a case, no blame may be imputed to the person.

This same noble command that was addressed to the messengers was also specifically addressed to the believers. The command was repeated with respect to the believers due to the importance of the command itself and the fact that all true servants of Allah must abide by it.² The believers must also do their best to get their sustenance through legal means and to consume only

¹ Cf., Muhammad ibn Ashoor, *Tafseer al-Tahreer wa al-Tanweer* (no publication information given), vol. 18, p. 68.

² Cf., al-Sindi, *Sharh*, p. 54.

what is good and legal. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) then quoted the following verse:

“O believers! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you.”

Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) quoted the following verse,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ

“O believers! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you” (*al-Baqara* 172).

In the Quran, this verse follows a number of verses in which the disbelievers are rebuked for prohibiting some pure and good things that Allah has allowed them. They prohibited them supposedly as an act of worship of Allah, although Allah never sanctioned such behavior. Hence, Allah commands the believers to eat of the pure things that Allah has allowed them.

So the believers have been given the same command as the messengers. They must only consume what is pure and good— in other words, what is allowed by the *shareeah*. They must neither disallow what Allah has permitted nor may they consume what Allah has forbidden. In the context of this hadith, however, it seems that the point stressed here by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) is that one must not consume what Allah has prohibited. Consuming what Allah has prohibited takes the person further away from Allah and may cut him off from Allah’s mercy.

Therefore, the messengers and their followers are ordered to eat from the good and permissible sources and to do righteous deeds. Ibn Rajab states,

As long as the food eaten is permissible, then the good deeds are accepted. If the food eaten is not permissible, how, then, could the deeds be accepted? What is mentioned later concerning supplication and how it will not be accepted while one is participating in forbidden acts is an indication of how far away deeds are from being accepted when the person is sustaining himself through forbidden means.¹

The order to “eat” in this verse implies permissibility and is not an obligation. Scholars have divided consuming food into five categories. The first category is that which is obligatory. This is the amount of food that it takes for one to survive and maintain himself. The second category is that food for which one will also receive a reward for eating. This is the food that is specifically consumed with the intention that it will give one the strength needed to perform acts of worship and so forth. The permissible food is that which is beyond the first two categories. The next category is that of disapproval, where the person eats more than what he needs to satisfy and fill

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 260.

himself. The fifth category is the forbidden level where one eats so much or such foods that he actually is physically harming his body and his ability to worship Allah.¹

"Then he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] mentioned a man..."

The remainder of this hadith is a very moving example that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has given. As shall be seen, the man has done almost everything that one should do in order for his supplication to be answered. However, because he is living his life off of forbidden means, Allah may not respond to him, even though Allah loves to respond to those who call on Him. Allah has said in the Quran,

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ
فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

"And when My servants ask you [O Muhammad] concerning Me, then [answer them] that I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So let them obey me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright" (*al-Baqara* 186).

"after a long journey"

This is the first characteristic that the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned about that man. Ibn Daqeeq al-Eid and others understand this to mean that the person has undertaken a long journey for the cause of worship, such as for jihad or Hajj.² This is not explicitly mentioned in the hadith. However, it is sufficient that the person was on a journey and was invoking Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once said,

ثَلَاثُ دَعَوَاتٍ مُسْتَجَابَاتٌ دَعْوَةُ الْمَظْلُومِ وَدَعْوَةُ الْمُسَافِرِ وَدَعْوَةُ الْوَالِدِ عَلَى وَلَدِهِ

"Three supplications are responded³ to: the supplication of the oppressed, the supplication of the traveler and the supplication of the father for his child."⁴

Ibn Rajab explains the relationship between traveling and having one's supplication answered. He says that when one is traveling, in a strange land, away from his family, facing hardship, the heart becomes soft and realizes its

¹ Cf., al-Tiraiqi, p. 28.

² Ibn Daqeeq al-Eid, *Sharh*, p. 41.

³ Another narration mentions, "without any doubt concerning them."

⁴ This hadith was recorded by al-Bukhari in his book entitled *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, Abu Dawood, Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Majah and others. According to al-Tirmidhi, ibn Hajr, al-Albaani and al-Hilaali, it is *hasan*. See al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 161.

dependence upon and need for Allah. This feeling in the heart is one of the greatest causes for one's supplication to be answered by Allah.¹

“disheveled and dust-colored”

This characteristic mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) implies modesty and simplicity on the part of the person. This has also been noted as being one of the causes for Allah to respond to one's supplication. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) stated,

رُبَّ أَشْعَثَ > أَغْبِرَ < مَدْفُوعٍ بِالْأَبْوَابِ لَوْ أَقْسَمَ عَلَى اللَّهِ لَأَبْرَهُ

“Many a person with disheveled hair [and dust-colored]² is turned away from the doors [whereas Allah holds him in such high esteem] that if he were to swear by Allah, Allah would fulfill that for him.” (Recorded by Muslim.) It is described that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) went out to pray for rain, he would go out in a very humble, modest manner to beseech Allah.

“stretches his hands out toward the sky”

This is the third particular characteristic that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) mentioned about this particular man. Again, the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned something that is very important when it comes to having one's supplications responded to by Allah. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَيٌّ كَرِيمٌ يَسْتَحْيِي إِذَا رَفَعَ الرَّجُلُ إِلَيْهِ يَدَيْهِ أَنْ يَرُدَّهُمَا صِفْرًا خَائِبَتَيْنِ

“Your Lord is munificent and generous, and is ashamed to turn away empty the hands of His servant when he raises them to Him.”³

Raising the hands in supplication was known to be the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him). When he performed the prayer for rain, he raised his hands so high that one could see the white of his armpit.⁴ Similarly, when he beseeched Allah for help during the Battle of Badr, he extended his arms such that his cloak fell off from this shoulders. (Recorded by Muslim.)

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 269.

² The word, “dust-colored” is mentioned in many of the books but may actually not be part of the hadith in *Sahih Muslim*. Allah knows best.

³ This hadith was recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi and ibn Maajah. Ibn Hajr states that its chain is good and al-Hilaali states that it is *hasan*. See al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 162.

⁴ Such was recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim. Incidentally, while performing the prayer for rain, the arms are extended with the palms facing downwards towards the ground, not upwards towards the sky.

Hadith #10: "Allah is pure and accepts only.."

"says, 'O Lord, O Lord'"

This is the fourth important characteristic mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this hadith. The person is making an urgent request of Allah by repeating the fact that Allah is the Lord. The term Lord implies that Allah is the One who creates and sustains everything. The person is recognizing and admitting that fact by calling Allah by this name. He is admitting his dependence and need upon Allah when he calls Allah by this name.

Hence, this is the one of the most important names by which Allah is to be beseeched. Indeed, when one studies the supplications that are found in the Quran, one will note that many of them begin with, "O Lord," or "O our Lord."¹

"while his food is unlawful, his drink is unlawful, his clothing unlawful and his nourishment is unlawful"

By the grace and mercy of Allah, Allah has revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) some of the main circumstances that lead to Allah choosing to answer one's prayers. Some of these "causes" have been explicitly referred to in this particular hadith. They are yet other causes, such as invoking at specific times. However, at the same time, one must be aware that there are also "causes," actually preventive factors, that lead Allah not to respond to one's supplications. The Muslim must be aware of these also and avoid them to the best of his ability. In this particular hadith, there is explicit mention of one of the preventive factors that leads Allah to not respond to one's prayers.

If one's life is filled with forbidden aspects, how does one expect Allah to respond to his prayers? The person himself does not respond to Allah's teachings and yet he expects Allah to respond to his calls. This hadith makes it clear that if one really wants Allah to respond to his prayers, he must remain away from those things that Allah has forbidden. He must respond to Allah's call and then Allah will certainly respond to his call upon Him.

One of the *Salaf* stated, "Do not be surprised that the response is slow in coming as you have blocked its road due to your sins."²

"How is he to be answered?"

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not explicitly state that the person's invocation would not be responded to. Instead, he has made it abundantly clear that indulging in forbidden aspects is one of the major reasons

¹ See, for example, *al-Baqara* 201, *al-Baqara* 286 and *ali-Imraan* 8. Actually, there are numerous examples of this nature in the Quran.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 277.

why a person's supplications may not be responded to. However, as ibn Daqeeq al-Eid points out, in Allah's mercy and grace, He may still respond to such a person although the person himself is doing something so great that it could prevent him from being responded to.

Allah may also respond to his supplications for quite a different reason. It may be another means by which the person takes himself to his own destruction and punishment. He is involved in forbidden deeds and yet he supplicates and Allah gives him what he asks for. This should cause some awakening on his part. He should recognize the blessings that Allah has given him and how Allah has responded to him although he has not responded properly to Allah's call. If this does not have any affect on him, then it is a matter of Allah simply giving him more blessings while he is making himself more and more ungrateful for what Allah has given him. Hence, the person is just taking himself closer and closer to his own destruction.

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- Giving charity from illegal wealth or wealth wrongfully attained is not acceptable to Allah.
- Ibn Abbas was asked about a man who was performing a deed, taking wealth wrongfully from others and then he repented. He made Hajj, freed slaves and gave charity from that wealth. Ibn Abbas said about him, "Filth does not wipe away filth." Similarly, ibn Masud said, "Filth does not expiate filth. But pure deeds wipe away filth."¹
- If a thief or usurper gives in charity for his own sake, such a deed will not be accepted. That is, the person will not be rewarded for it. In fact, he will be considered sinful because he used the money in a specific way without getting permission for that. The original or rightful owner also will not be rewarded for that, since that was neither his intent or purpose. This is the opinion of a number of scholars and it has been narrated from Saeed ibn al-Musayyab. Similarly, if a ruler or governor wrongfully takes wealth from the public treasury and builds a mosque with it or distributes copies of the Quran with that wealth, claiming that he is doing a charitable act, he will not be rewarded for such a deed and his act is wrong, even though people may benefit from his wrongful act.²
- If a person has money that was gotten through illegal means and he is not able to return the money to its rightful owner or his heirs, then he may give it away to charitable causes. This is the opinion of Malik, Abu Hanifah, Ahmad and others. Imam al-Shafi'ee was of the opinion that such wealth

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 264.

² Cf., ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 265. Imam Ahmad makes an exception in the case where the money has been properly collected by the government, such as through war booty. If it is not such, then what they have done is forbidden and they will not be rewarded for it.

should be kept and saved until it could be returned to its rightful owners. Al-Fudhail ibn Iyaadh states that such money should be destroyed or thrown into the ocean and cannot be given in charity. Ibn Rajab states that the correct opinion is that it is to be given in charity as it is forbidden to waste wealth, as is clear in a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Obviously, though, the one who received it wrongfully and gives it away does not give it as charity on his own behalf, seeking its reward. Instead, he gives it on behalf of its rightful owner in the hope that the rightful owner will benefit from that in the Hereafter, since it is not possible to benefit him with it in this life.¹

- This hadith also alludes to the importance of supporting oneself through permissible means. How one supports himself is how he lives his life. All of his life is based on how he is supporting himself. If he is supporting himself through legal means, then he will be blessed and rewarded for all that he does with what he has provided for himself. But if he supports himself through illegal means, then all that he does with that wealth may be of no benefit to him whatsoever. Indeed, he may just be exposing himself to more sin. In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ مَا يُتِنُّ مِنَ الْإِنْسَانِ بَطْنُهُ فَمَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ لَا يَأْكُلَ إِلَّا طَيِّبًا فَلْيَفْعَلْ

"The first thing that putrefies of a human is his stomach. Therefore, if one of you can keep himself to consuming only good (legal and from legal sources) food, he should do so." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) One's wealth and provisions must be from pure sources. It should be from pure sources and it is best that it be from the work the person did himself. A true believer should not rely upon others. Instead, he should work and support himself and support himself only through pure and legal means. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

خَيْرُ الْكَمْبِ كَنْبُ يَدِ الْعَامِلِ إِذَا نَصَحَ

"The best earnings are those that come from the person's own hand, if he was sincere."² In another hadith, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) also said,

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 267-268.

² Recorded by Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, it is *hasan*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 622.

وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَأَنْ يَأْخُذَ أَحَدُكُمْ حَبْلَهُ فَيَحْتَطِبَ عَلَيَّ ظَهْرَهُ خَيْرٌ لَهُ مِنْ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ
رَجُلًا فَيَسْأَلَهُ أَعْطَاهُ أَوْ مَنَعَهُ

“By the One in whose hand is my soul, it is better for one of you to take a rope and gather wood and carry it on his back and sell it [as a means to a legal livelihood] rather than to ask a person for something and that person may or may not give him.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

- The realization that Allah responds to a person’s call upon him should lead the person to respond to Allah’s orders and commands. Allah says,

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ
فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

“And when My servants ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me, then [answer them] that I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. Therefore, let them respond to Me [My commands] and believe in Me that they may be rightly guided” (*al-Baqara* 186).

Summary of the Hadith

- Abu Abdullah al-Naji made a statement that very closely summarizes the meaning of this hadith. He said,

Five characteristics make a deed complete. [These five are:] faith by knowing Allah, knowing the truth, doing the deed purely for the sake of Allah, performing the deed according to the sunnah and eating only what is permissible. If any one of these characteristics is lacking, the deed will not be raised [to Allah]. For example, if you know Allah but do not know the truth, it will not be of benefit in the least. If you know the truth but do not know Allah, that also will not benefit you. If you know Allah and know the truth but your deed is not sincere and pure, it will not be of benefit. If you know Allah, know the truth, perform the act sincerely but it was not according to the sunnah, it will not be of benefit. If you met all four but you did not eat from permissible sources, it will also be of no benefit.¹

- Doing forbidden acts greatly affects one’s relationship with Allah. Although is Allah ready to respond to the believers’ supplications, Allah may not respond to the one who greatly indulges in forbidden acts— even

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 262-263.

Hadith #10: "Allah is pure and accepts only.."

if he has met all of the manners that are appropriate and beneficial for supplications.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

Hadith #11

“Leave that which makes you doubt...”

عَنْ أَبِي مُحَمَّدٍ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ سِبْطِ رَسُولِ
اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَرَيْحَانَتِهِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ:
حَفِظْتُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: دَعَا مَا يَرِيئُكَ
إِلَى مَا لَا يَرِيئُكَ

رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ وَالتَّسَائِيُّ وَقَالَ التِّرْمِذِيُّ حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ

صَحِيحٌ

On the authority of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abu Taalib, the grandson of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his beloved (may Allah be pleased with both of them), who said: I memorized from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), “Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt.”

Recorded by al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasaai. Al-Tirmidhi said, “It is a *hasan sahih* hadith.”

Selected Vocabulary

- سبْط - “grandson”
ريحانته - “his *raihaana*,” Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies write, “Lit., ‘his fragrant flower’. The word *raihaana* was used by the Prophet in respect of al-Hasan and al-Husain, the sons of Ali ibn Abu Taalib, the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law.”¹
حفظت - “I memorized,”
دع - “leave”
يريك - “makes you doubt,” the ك at the end stands for the second person, “you”; الريب means doubt, others say that it means doubt with suspicion.²

¹ Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies, p. 52.

² Al-Mubaraakfoori, vol. 7, p. 221.

Takhreej

This hadith was recorded by al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasaai, al-Tayaalisi, Ahmad, al-Haakim, ibn Hibbaan, al-Daarimi, al-Baihaqi, Abu Yala and others. It has been narrated through a number of chains from the famous scholar of hadith, Shu'bah. Shu'bah narrated it from Buraid ibn Abu Maryam from Abu al-Hauraa al-Saadi from al-Hasan ibn Ali.

Al-Tirmidhi called this hadith *hasan sahih*. Al-Haakim also called it *sahih* and al-Dhahabi agreed with him. Al-Suyooti, al-Albaani, Ahmad Shaakir, ibn Muhammad, al-Hilaali and Shuaib al-Arnaoot have all declared this hadith to be *sahih*.¹ The hadith also has supporting evidence in hadith narrated from ibn Umar, Waathilah ibn al-Asqa, Anas ibn Maalik and al-Nu'maan ibn Basheer.²

In this collection, al-Nawawi has only recorded a portion of this hadith. In the hadith from al-Tirmidhi, the complete text is the following:

دَعُ مَا يَرِيكَ إِلَى مَا لَا يَرِيكَ فَإِنَّ الصُّدُقَ طُمَأْنِينَةٌ وَإِنَّ الْكُذِبَ رِيَّةٌ

“Leave what makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt. Verily, truth is tranquillity and falsehood is doubt.”

General Comments About the Hadith

This hadith lays down a very general principle that can be applied in all aspects of one's life. If a person truly applies the meaning of this hadith, he should, Allah willing, find psychological well-being and inner peace. The hadith also shows the road to true piety. In just a few words, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated these very beneficial and useful principles.

Especially nowadays this hadith is of extreme importance. Today, many people talk about differences of opinions among the scholars. Furthermore, there are numerous new things or practices (such as business practices) that seem to have some good and some bad to them that have not been discussed in detail by the scholars yet many people feel free to voice their opinions on a whole range of such topics. How can one save himself from all of this confusion? How can one know what path to follow that will lead him to the truth and lead him to Allah being pleased with him? Under situations like this, one truly needs to turn to this hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

¹ See ibn Muhammad, pp. 96; al-Hilaali, *Eqqaadh*, p. 165; al-Arnaoot and Baajis's footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 278.

² Ibn Muhammad, pp. 97-99.

Hadith #11: "Leave that which makes you doubt..."

About the Narrator: Al-Hasan

Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abu Taalib was the grandson of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) through his daughter Faatima. Both he and his brother al-Husain were beloved by the Prophet (peace be upon him). In appearance, he very much resembled the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Al-Hasan was born in the year 3 A.H. He was born one year before his brother al-Husain. They both grew up around the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Prophet's mosque.

Al-Hasan was a very pious man. Al-Hasan wanted his best to avoid any of the political strife of his time. After the death of his father, he became the caliph. However, to avoid any further conflict and strife among the Muslims, he gave up that position in an agreement with Muawiya. That took place in the year 41 A.H. In this way, he achieved the prophecy that was made by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) when he said that his son al-Hasan was a leader and that Allah would bring back together two great groups of Muslims through him. This is exactly what happened in the year 41, known as the year of the coming together.

He narrated thirteen hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Like al-Numaan, he was quite young when the Prophet (peace be upon him) died. In this particular hadith from al-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith*, he explicitly stated, "I memorized from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)," thus leaving no doubt that he had heard those words directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Al-Hasan died in the year 50 A.H., at the age of 46. He was buried in Al-Baqi' cemetery.

"Leave that which makes you doubt..."

The essence of this hadith is the same as a previous hadith: One should avoid doubtful matters. When one avoids doubtful matters, his religion and honor become free of criticism.

However, this hadith, with its additional wording found in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* and elsewhere, points out a very important additional aspect of avoiding doubtful matters. If a believer only does those acts that he is positive and certain are permissible and proper acts, then his heart is at rest. Psychologically, he is at peace with himself. He is not wrestling with himself over any particular act that he performed. He is not blaming himself for anything that he did because he was certain that the act that he performed was permissible.

On the other hand, the one who gets involved in doubtful matters is never at rest. His heart and mind are always disturbed and troubled. He is always questioning whether it was right for him to do that act and if, in fact, he

should have avoided it. Even if outwardly he is showing no ill feelings about an act he performed, his heart may be boiling and unhappy because he, in fact, is not certain whether he should have done what he did.

The key to true piety is leaving doubtful matters. This is true abstention. Abu Abdul Rahmaan al-Mammari once said, "If the servant is truly pious and God-fearing, he leaves what makes him doubt for what does not make him doubt." Hasaan ibn Abu Sanaan once said, "There is nothing easier than piety and godliness: If something makes you doubt, leave it."¹

Is this Approach Obligatory or Simply Recommended?

According to al-Munaawi, the advice given in this hadith is only recommended and it is not obligatory. He comes to that conclusion because the strongest opinion is that avoiding doubtful matters is recommended and not obligatory², as was discussed under Hadith #6.

From a strict *fiqh* point of view, what he said might be correct. But who would want to give up the advantages of following such an approach. When one avoids doubtful matters one frees one's religion and honor from any criticism or suspicion. The person's heart is at rest and tranquil. He has no reason to face psychological problems over the acts that he performed. And, finally, to truly be among the people of *taqwa*, one must avoid such doubtful matters. Yes, from a strict *fiqh* point of view one may say that this approach is simply recommended and not obligatory, but from the point of view of giving *naseehah* to all Muslims, every Muslim should be encouraged and taught to follow what is clearly permissible and remain away from all doubtful matters. Allah knows best.

In this manner, also, one is following the examples of the pious forefathers. They set the tone for all later generations. Sultan has given a number of such examples, including the following: One time Abu Bakr ate some food from someone else. The person told him that the food he ate was from the money he made from being a fortune-teller during the time of *Jaahiliyyah* (pre-Islamic ignorance). Immediately, Abu Bakr put his finger down his throat and vomited what he had eaten. (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) One cannot say that such wealth was forbidden since it was earned while the person was a non-Muslim. However, to avoid any doubtful matter whatsoever, Abu Bakr vomited.³

But where are such people today? Al-Bugha and Mistu make the point that the masses are in need of examples, rulers or scholars, who take such an approach. They need to see in front of them those people who follow what is permissible, avoid what is forbidden and also avoid what is doubtful. If the

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 280.

² Al-Munaawi, vol. 3, p. 528.

³ Sultaan, p. 119.

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people have no such example, then they get involved in the doubtful matters without any bad feelings whatsoever in their conscience. Indeed, they even go beyond that and boldly go into the forbidden as they have no example to show them the proper way of *taqwa* and piety.¹

Al-Baitaar goes even further and states that it is a must for those who are being taken as examples and being followed to avoid doubtful matters and to set the proper example for the others to follow.² Nowadays, many of those who are being looked upon as examples are setting the worst example because they willingly and easily fall into doubtful and questionable matters, taking the matter very lightly.³ If there is any difference of opinion whatsoever, they follow the easiest opinion regardless whether the truth is on their side or not. These are the people who are often times being taken as examples today. Therefore, it is no surprise that the masses are going even beyond the doubtful into the clearly forbidden.

"Verily, truth is tranquillity and falsehood is doubt."

Al-Teebi explains this portion of the hadith by saying that if a believer finds his heart being disturbed by something, he should avoid that thing. This is because the heart of the true believer is tranquil at the sight of truth and righteousness. However, the heart becomes unsure and shaky at the sight of falsehood and wrong.⁴

Of course, this is truly the case when the person is attune to the Quran, sunnah and following the way of the *Salaf*. If his heart is diseased and indulging in forbidden and doubtful acts, then his heart cannot recognize truth and falsehood. It may even become uneasy at the sight of truth and at rest at the sight of falsehood, like the heart of the hypocrites. Al-Munaawi states that truth and honesty, when it mixes completely in the believer's heart, mixes with the light of faith and tranquillity. It extinguishes the lamp of falsehood for falsehood is darkness and darkness cannot mix with light.⁵

However, in general, truth brings about tranquillity. That is, when something is true, proper and good, the person's heart is at rest with it. He does not quiver or doubt. When a person does what is truthful and correct, he never has to blame himself later. Furthermore, the truthful will be rewarded and saved by Allah due to their truthfulness. Again, this aspect is especially true for the believer who has knowledge of the religion. That his heart is very satisfied with something is a sign that the thing is good and proper. But when his heart is

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 80.

² Al-Baitaar, p. 84.

³ Some of them even do doubtful things as a matter of principle. They claim that since it is not clearly forbidden, one cannot say it is forbidden and, hence, they do it.

⁴ Al-Munaawi, vol. 3, p. 529. Also see al-Qaari, vol. 6, p. 43.

⁵ Al-Munaawi, vol. 3, p. 529.

disturbed and cannot rest because of something, this is a sign that the thing is not right. There is something wrong and unacceptable about it.

Ibn Rajab points out that this is one of the reasons why the intelligent people accepted the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) so readily while the same people rejected Musailamah, the liar. By his speech, they knew the Prophet (peace be upon him) was true. His speech put their heart at rest because there was no room for any doubt about what he was saying. However, the opposite was the case with Musailamah's false claims. The heart could definitely not feel comfortable and accept the claims he was making.¹ Again, though, this principle only applies if the heart is not corrupted and diseased. Otherwise, it cannot recognize truth from falsehood.

Ibn Uthaimin mentions another aspect of falsehood being doubt. He says that the first one who has doubts and suspicions is the one who committed the falsehood or lie. He has doubt whether or not the people believed what he said. That is why liars very often swear by Allah as to what they said as they need people to believe their lies. The person's heart afterwards will not be able to rest because he will always worry whether the people believed him or not and he will always worry that the people might find out about his falsehood. Hence, falsehood always leads to doubt and never leads to tranquillity.²

“Recorded by al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasaai. Al-Tirmidhi said, ‘It is a *hasan sahih* hadith.’”

Al-Tirmidhi

Abu Isa Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Saura al-Tirmidhi was one of the greatest scholars of hadith during his time. He was born in 209 A.H. (824 C.E.) in al-Tirmidh (which is part of today's Uzbekistan). He traveled widely in search of hadith. Among his closest teachers were Imam al-Bukhari and Ishaq ibn Rahawaih. He died in 279 A.H.

Al-Tirmidhi was well-known for his knowledge and piety. He had many works related to the field of hadith. One of his works was a compilation of the Prophet's characters and manners, known as *al-Shamaail*.³

The work he is most famous for is *al-Jaami' al-Kabeer*, which is also known as *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. It is one of what is called “the six books of hadith”. It contains chapters on all of the important fiqh topics. It has almost 4000 hadith in it as well as numerous statements from later scholars.

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, 285.

² Ibn Uthaimin, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 1, p. 275.

³ An abridged version of this work is available in English: Ahmed E. Bemat, trans., *The Abridged Shamail-e-Tirmizi* (Lahore: Progressive Books, 1979).

Hadith #11: "Leave that which makes you doubt..."

Al-Nasaai

Abu Abdul Rahmaan Ahmad ibn Shuaib ibn Ali al-Khurasani al-Nasaai was born in 215 A.H. in Nasa, Persia. At the age of 15, he journeyed in search of knowledge. He visited Khurasan, Iraq, Arabia, al-Shaam, Egypt and other places. He was a great scholar of hadith. He was very strict in his grading and accepting of narrators.

Al-Nasaai is also well-known for his bravery and participation in jihad. He would train the troops in the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Al-Nasaai also compiled a number of works related to hadith. His largest work is known as *al-Sunan al-Kubra*. He abridged that larger work into a smaller work known as *al-Sunan al-Mujtaba*. This latter work is what became famous as *Sunan al-Nasaai*.¹ When a scholar simply states, "Recorded by al-Nasaai," it means that it is in that smaller work.

It seems that al-Nasaai died in 303 A.H. in Damascus. He had written a book about the virtues of Ali ibn Abu Taalib. It is said that the remnants of the Khawaarij in Damascus were the ones who killed him, possibly due to that book. Allah knows best.

"Al-Tirmidhi said, 'It is a *hasan sahih* hadith.'"

Al-Tirmidhi often uses the term *hasan sahih* to describe a hadith. This term has led to a great deal of confusion among the scholars. However, before getting to that term, one must first define the terms *sahih* and *hasan*.

In general, for a hadith to be called *sahih* it must meet the following five conditions, as stated earlier:

- (i) The chain or *isnaad* must be connected, with no missing links.
- (ii) Each of the narrators must be a person of religion and integrity.
- (iii) Each of the narrators must be proficient in narrating hadith.
- (iv) The narration cannot contradict stronger authorities or narrations.
- (v) There must not be any hidden damaging defect or *illah* in the transmission of the hadith.

For a hadith to be *hasan* on its own merit, it also must meet these five conditions. However, the level of proficiency (condition iii) is lowered somewhat for the case of *hasan* hadith. That is, if a person is at the highest level of proficiency, his hadith will be called *sahih*. If he is at the next level of proficiency, his hadith will be called *hasan*.

Hence, a hadith could be either *hasan* or *sahih*. What then is the meaning of al-Tirmidhi's phrase *hasan sahih*? This phrase seems to join together two mutually exclusive terms. Unfortunately, it seems, al-Tirmidhi himself never actually defined the term. Hence, the scholars have tried to

¹ A portion of this work has been translated into English: Muhammad Iqbal Siddiqi, trans., *Sunan Nasai* (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1994).

determine the meaning of it. They have come up with seven different ideas as to the correct meaning of al-Tirmidhi's expression. Here are the different explanations:

(1) Al-Nawawi, in his *Taqreeb*, said that *hasan sahih* is a hadith that is related through one chain which is *sahih* and through another chain that is *hasan*. Ibn Daqeeq al-Eid said that this is wrong as al-Tirmidhi sometimes writes, "*hasan sahih ghareeb*, we do not know it through any other chain." Therefore, this excludes al-Nawawi's definition because it requires the existence of at least two chains. Some later scholars have defended al-Nawawi's definition and have stated that *ghareeb*, in al-Eid's quote from al-Tirmidhi, refers to the fact that one of the narrator's is solitary and not that there is only one chain for the hadith. This clarification leaves al-Nawawi's definition as a possible explanation except if this definition is what al-Tirmidhi meant he should have said "*hasan and sahih*" instead of "*hasan sahih*."¹

(2) Some say that the hadith is *hasan* (which lexically means, "good"; here the implication is that it gives glad tidings and so forth) with respect to its text and *sahih* with respect to its chain. Others argue that this does not make any sense as al-Tirmidhi sometimes used this term for hadith concerning the hell-fire, law of retaliation, punishment and so on. In such cases, what does it mean to say that the hadith is "good"? Furthermore, all of the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are good.

(3) Ibn al-Salaah has a similar interpretation. According to him, al-Tirmidhi used the term *hasan* according to its common lexical meaning while he used the term *sahih* according to the hadith scholars' special terminology. In the same way, the argument continues, ibn Abdul Barr once said, "This hadith is very good [*hasan*]," about a hadith that had liars in its chain. Obviously he was not describing the degree of the hadith but was only discussing the meaning of the hadith.²

(4) Ahmad Shaakir offers another possible definition. He theorizes that *hasan* means accepted, that is, one should act in accordance with this hadith, in the same way that Imam Malik used to use the phrase, "Our people act in accordance with this report." If al-Tirmidhi only uses the term *sahih* then it is similar to Malik saying, "We do not act according to this report," that is, the report may have been abrogated or it does not describe a general ruling.³

(5) Ibn Katheer says the term refers to another new category of hadith between *sahih* and *hasan*. It is the highest degree of *hasan* and the lowest degree of *sahih*. Concerning this statement, al-Iraqi says that there is no proof for it and it is, in fact, very far away from the correct meaning.⁴

¹ See Jalaal al-Deen al-Suyooti, *Tadreeb al-Raawi fi Sharh Taqreeb al-Nawaawi* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1979), vol. 1, p. 161.

² Al-Suyooti, *Tadreeb*, vol. 1, p. 162.

³ Ahmad Shaakir, *al-Baath al-Hatheeth Sharh Ikhtisaar Uloom al-Hadeeth* (Cairo: Daar al-Turaath, 1979), pp. 36-37.

⁴ Shaakir, *Baath*, p. 36.

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(6) Ibn Daqeeq al-Eid also presents his own definition. According to him, the term *hasan sahih* refers to a hadith that can be raised to the degree of *sahih* as it has the best quality narrators for a *hasan* hadith. At one place Ibn Hajr wrote something similar to this when he stated that it refers to a hadith which has some narrators of *hasan* quality and others of *sahih* quality.

(7) Ibn Hajr also presents a definition somewhat between that of Ibn al-Salaah and that of Ibn Daqeeq al-Eid. He says a *hasan sahih* hadith is one in which there is a difference of opinion concerning the narrators. Some scholars consider them of the first or higher classes while others consider them from the third class, that is, some say they qualify for *sahih* hadith while others say they only qualify for *hasan* hadith.¹

In this author's opinion, the most important thing to note about hadith which al-Tirmidhi labeled *hasan sahih* is that they are, at least according to al-Tirmidhi, acceptable hadith. Regardless of which of the above definitions is true, this is the point that is most important. Furthermore, many of the hadith that al-Tirmidhi called *hasan sahih* were also recorded by both al-Bukhari and Muslim which means that they are from among the highest ranking hadith.

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- If there is a conflict between something that is known for certain and something that is a matter of conjecture, then that which is known for certain takes precedence over the conjecture. This is an important legal maxim that is applied throughout Islamic *fiqh*.² In fact, it has numerous ramifications in almost every area of *fiqh*. Here are some examples of how this principle is used in the realm of *fiqh*:
If a person has clothing that has some impurity on it but he is not sure where the impurity is, then he must wash the entire clothing as otherwise he cannot be certain that he removed the impurity.
If a person has a doubt during his prayer concerning how many *rakats* he performed, then he should act based on what he knows for certain. For example, suppose he is praying the *Dhuhr* Prayer and he cannot recall if he had finished one *rakah* or two. However, he is certain that he has prayed at least one *rakat*. In that case, he continues his prayer based on what he is certain of (that he finished one *rakat*) and he disregards what he is doubtful concerning. At the end, he makes the prostrations of forgetfulness.³
- Another principle in *fiqh* is that it is not allowed to make *ijtihaad* if something is clearly and definitively stated in the texts of either the

¹ Al-Suyooti, *Tadreeb*, vol. 1, p. 164.

² Although this principle is closely related to this hadith, "Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt," al-Baahusain did not mention this hadith once in his excellent and detailed work on this principle. Cf., Yaqoob al-Baahusain, *Qaaidah al-Yaqeen la Yazoolu bi-l-Shakk* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Rusd, 1996), *passim*.

³ See Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 1, p. 274.

Quran or hadith.¹ This is also related to the question of avoiding what causes one doubt. The Quran and sunnah are the truth and correct without any doubt. Therefore, there is no call to leave what the Quran or sunnah clearly state for the opinion or claims of anyone else. All other claims, if they contradict or seem to avoid what is clearly stated in the Quran or sunnah, are, at best, doubtful. Hence, one should avoid them. This is an important guideline nowadays as there are a number of Muslims, generally called “modernists,” who outwardly accept the clear texts of the Quran and sunnah and then give numerous dubious arguments as to why those texts are not to be applied today or why they have to be reinterpreted. The best that can be said about their arguments is that they are doubtful, and certainly do not reach the level of certainty. The safest approach for the Muslim is to ignore their arguments and follow what is clearly stated in either the Quran or sunnah. In this way, the Muslim will be following this teaching of the Prophet (peace be upon him) concerning leaving what makes one doubt. Furthermore, he will also be avoiding the doubtful matters and, as discussed in the commentary to Hadith #6, this will protect him from falling into the forbidden matters.

- When the scholars differ on an issue and a person cannot determine which is the correct opinion on that issue, it is best and safest to avoid their difference of opinion and follow the portion that they agree upon. This takes one further away from doubt.² For example, if the scholars differ on whether an act is obligatory or recommended, the safest approach is to consider the act obligatory and not fail in performing it. This is the safest approach and it will put the person’s heart to rest. If, on the other hand, he decides to treat that same act as simply recommended, every time he does not perform it he may fear that he is leaving something that is actually obligatory.

This approach, though, must not be misapplied. This is only if there is doubt involved. If there is a difference of opinion among the scholars and one is certain the opinion he is following is correct— and he does not feel any doubt about it— then he does not apply the principle just mentioned in the above paragraph. For example, there is a difference of opinion concerning the timing of the Friday Prayer. All of the scholars agree that it may be performed after the time that *Dhuhr* begins. However, some also allow it to be performed before high noon. Since the proofs that it may be performed before high noon are authentic, explicit and clear, there is no need to refrain from that opinion simply because there is a difference of opinion on this matter.³

¹ Cf., al-Baahusain, p. 72.

² This concept was briefly touched upon earlier in the commentary to Hadith #6, concerning avoiding the doubtful matters.

³ For a detailed discussion of this point, see the author’s *The Friday Prayer— Part I: The Fiqh* (Aurora, CO: IANA, 1994), pp. 23-27.

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According to ibn Rajab, if one comes across a hadith that gives an exceptional permission for something but then one notes that the Companions, the scholars of this nation and others do not apply it, then it is best not to apply it. He says that it is not conceivable that Allah would allow, among this Nation, the followers of falsehood to dominate the followers of truth in that manner. This is especially the case if it is not known that any of the people of the virtuous first three generations applied that ruling. What the first three generations followed is the truth and what opposes that is falsehood.¹

- It is not exactly proper that one involves himself in forbidden aspects and then, all of a sudden, on some points that he has chosen, he decides to avoid the doubtful matters. Instead, one should follow what is clear in all matters, which includes avoiding the clearly forbidden. Then it will benefit him to also avoid the doubtful matters. Otherwise, such an approach may not be of no benefit whatsoever. A famous incident of this nature involved Abdullah ibn Umar. He was asked by the people of Iraq about the blood of a fly, is it impure or not. These are the same people who had just murdered al-Husain, the grandson of the Prophet (peace be upon him). So he answered, "They ask about the blood of a fly while they have killed al-Husain. I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say, 'They [al-Husain and al-Hasan] are my *raihaanas* in this world.'" (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) Bishr ibn al-Haarith was asked about a man whose mother asked him to divorce his wife. He said, "If he obeys his mother in everything and the only thing left in his obedience is to divorce his wife, then he should do so. If he obeys her by divorcing his wife and then he goes afterwards to his mother and beats her, then he should not do so."²
- As noted in Hadith #6, when one becomes involved in doubtful matters, he can never be certain that he is not indulging in forbidden matters also.³
- One should base all of his life on the things that he is certain and sure about. He should avoid doubtful matters and matters that he is sure are wrong or harmful. This approach to life will lead him to true happiness in both this life and the Hereafter, Allah willing.
- There is no piety in avoiding something that is clearly and unquestionably permissible. Piety lies in avoiding anything for which there is a true doubt. If someone is avoiding something that is clearly permissible, supposedly as an act of piety, then he is simply following the whisperings of Satan and not the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
- One of the ways of Satan is to take an act that is clearly forbidden and then show some sign that it could be permissible. The person gets fooled by this small sign of permissibility and he follows the footsteps of Satan in this

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 283.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 283.

³ Sindi, *Sharh*, p. 56.

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matter by doing that act.¹ If an act is clearly forbidden, that status cannot be removed by doubt and conjecture. Such is the case sometimes with *riba* (interest) today. It is something clearly forbidden yet some people try to find some “loophole” that could make it permissible and then they claim that at the most it is doubtful and not forbidden.

- In contemporary times, many people get confused over new methods of business and selling. Some times promotional methods may contain some implicit aspect of *riba* (interest) or something of that nature. The Muslim then becomes confused whether he should take part in them or not. However, when one realizes the little gain that he may get from such an act compared to the possibility of angering Allah, he should really ask himself, “Is the benefit really worth it?” When the person thinks of it in this way, he will conclude that it is best just to avoid such doubtful things. He will not lose much in reality and, most importantly, his heart and soul will feel tranquil, Allah willing.

Summary of the Hadith

- A Muslim should be certain of every act he performs. If he has any doubt concerning something, he should leave it for an act concerning which he has no doubt.

¹ Cf., al-Baitaar, p. 84.

Hadith #12

“Part of the Perfection of a Person’s Islam is...”

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ تَرْكُهُ مَا لَا يَعْنِيهِ حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ، رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ وَغَيْرُهُ هَكَذَا.

On the authority of Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Part of the perfection of a person’s Islam is his leaving that which is of no concern to him.”

A *hasan* hadith. Recorded by al-Tirmidhi and others in that fashion.

Selected Vocabulary

- من - “from,” here it has been translated as “part of,” just to make the translation smoother.
- حسن - In this hadith, the word means, “perfection, completeness”
- المرء - “the man”, here it stands for a human, either male or female.
- تركه - “his leaving, avoiding”
- يعنيه - “concerns him,” the meaning of العناية, from which this word comes, is something of extreme concern and importance to a person.¹

Takhreej

This hadith was recorded by al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah, ibn Hibbaan and numerous others. The chain that they have for this hadith is al-Azuzaai on the authority of Qurrah ibn Abdul Rahman on the authority of al-Zuhri from Abu Salamah from Abu Huraira.

Shuaib al-Arnaut, a modern-day scholar of hadith, had the following to say about this hadith,

[It is a] *hasan lighairihi* hadith.¹ It is recorded by al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah, ibn Hibbaan and it is recorded by ibn Abu al-

¹ Sultaan, p. 122.

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Dunya in *al-Samat* on the authority of Saad ibn Zanboor from Abdul Rahmaan ibn Abdullah al-Umari (and he is a rejected narrator) from Suhail ibn Abu Saalih from his father from Abu Huraira. On the same topic, there are narrations from Abu Dharr, Zaid ibn Thaabit, al-Haarith ibn Hishaam and Ali ibn Abu Taalib.²

In his commentary to al-Nawawi's *Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, Saleem al-Hilaali, another contemporary scholar of hadith, stated,

[It is a] *sahih lighairihi* hadith.³ Al-Tirmidhi and ibn Maajah recorded it through the chain of al-Auzaa'i on the authority of Qurrah ibn Abdul Rahmaan ibn Hau'eel from al-Zuhri from Abu Salamah on [Abu Huraira's] authority. That chain is *hasan*. Its narrators are trustworthy save for Qurrah ibn Hau'eel. He is honest but has some rejected reports.⁴ It has supporting evidence in the hadith of Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Ali in *mursal*⁵ form that is recorded by Malik and through his chain also by al-Tirmidhi. In general, then, the hadith is *sahih lighairihi*. On the same topic, there are reports from a number of Companions, including Abu Bakr, Ali ibn Abu Taalib, Zaid ibn Thaabit and al-Haarith ibn Hishaam, may Allah be pleased with them.⁶

Finally, al-Albaani has also declared this hadith to be *sahih* but, in the referred to work, has not mentioned any details concerning it.⁷

However, upon closer inspection, it may be that their conclusions are not quite correct. Ibn Muhammad has done a detailed research on this hadith.⁸

¹ *Hasan lighairihi* ("hasan due to other evidences") means that as the chain or hadith stands alone, it is weak. However, supporting evidences remove any doubt about it and raise it to the level of *hasan*.

² Shuaib al-Arnaoot and Baajis' footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 287.

³ *Sahih lighairihi* ("sahih due to other evidences") means that as the chain or hadith stands alone, it is *hasan*. However, supporting evidences remove any possible lingering doubt about it and raise it to the level of *sahih*.

⁴ Here al-Hilaali is simply restating what ibn Hajr said about the narrator in *Taqreeb al-Tahdheeb*. In that work, ibn Hajr tried to give a one or two word description about the narrator. Such descriptions, as the reader may note shortly, cannot really be relied upon as many times they do not give a good enough picture about the narrator. For ibn Hajr's statement, see Ahmad ibn Hajr, *Taqreeb al-Tahdheeb* (Riyadh: Daar al-Aasimah, 1416 A.H.), p. 800.

⁵ *Mursal* means that the name of the Companion who narrated the hadith is missing from the chain.

⁶ Al-Hilaali, *Bahjah*, vol. 1, p. 141.

⁷ See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (Riyadh: Maktab al-Tarbiyah al-Arabi li-Duwal al-Khaleej, 1988), vol. 2, p. 269.

⁸ One of the problems with some of the books today is that many of the authors who write them do not possibly have the time to research all of the hadith they quote in the detail that is sometimes needed. Hence, they make conclusions based on what earlier scholars have stated or based on general books on narrators, such as ibn Hajr's *Taqreeb al-Tahdheeb*. Upon closer inspection, one may find that their research is lacking and their conclusion is not convincing. Praise be to Allah, this does not occur often but it certainly does occur on occasion.

Hadith #12: "Part of the Perfection of a Person's Islam..."

His conclusions are quite different from the above-mentioned. Here is a review of almost all of the different chains of this hadith, as alluded to in the above quotes.¹

(At the outset, the reader must keep in mind that to use a particular chain for supporting evidence, it must be the case that the supporting chain or report is not what is termed "very weak". That is, if that chain contains liars or completely rejected narrators, it cannot be used as supporting evidence.)

The Chain of al-Zuhri from Abu Salamah from Abu Huraira

After recording this hadith, al-Tirmidhi stated, "This hadith is *ghareeb*.² We do not know it from the hadith of Abu Salamah from Abu Huraira from the Prophet (peace be upon him) except through this chain."

As stated above, the chain is al-Auzaai from Qurrah ibn Abdul Rahmaan from al-Zuhri from Abu Salamah from Abu Huraira. The problem with this chain surrounds Qurrah ibn Abdul Rahmaan. Ahmad said about his hadith, "Very rejected hadith." Yahya called him weak. Abu Haatim and al-Nasaai stated that "he is not strong".³ Abu Zurah stated that hadith he related are rejected hadith. Abu Dawud said that there are objectionable aspects in his hadith.⁴ However, ibn Hajr called him honest with rejected reports.

The important aspect to note about this chain is that Qurrah ibn Abdul Rahmaan claimed that al-Zuhri narrated it from Abu Salamah from Abu Huraira. Qurrah was not the only one who narrated it in this manner from al-Zuhri. Abdul Razzaaq ibn Umar also narrated it in this fashion from al-Zuhri (as recorded in *Tareekh Baghdaad* and al-Uqaili's *al-Dhuafa al-Kabeer*). However, Abdul Razzaaq's narrations on the authority of al-Zuhri are rejected. Hence, that narration cannot be used as supporting evidence.

Al-Baghdaadi, in *Tareekh Baghdaad*, also has another similar narration from al-Zuhri, but this goes through an unknown narrator.

Ibn Battah al-Akbari has this narration with the chain Baqiyyah ibn al-Waleed on the authority of al-Zuhri from Abu Salamah from Abu Huraira. This

¹ For the most part, this review is based on ibn Muhammad, pp. 100-109. The exact references for the quotes made will be found in that work.

² What al-Tirmidhi means by *ghareeb* here is that, in this particular fashion, the hadith has only one source.

³ This is a common way of saying that he is weak.

⁴ These are the quotes that ibn Muhammad reproduced concerning Qurrah. Apparently he got them from al-Mizi. Here is another, more favorable, quote from al-Mizi: Ibn Adi said, "I do not find him having very rejectionable hadith. I hope that there is no harm in him." Ibn Hibbaan included Qurrah in his book of trustworthy narrators— although ibn Hibbaan included many in that work who are not considered trustworthy by the other scholars. In his footnotes to al-Mizi, Bashaar Maroof adds the following quotes: Al-Daaraqutni said, "He is not strong." Yahya said, "There is no harm with him in my opinion." Yahya ibn Maeen said, "He is lax when it comes to hearing hadith and in narration but he is not a liar." Al-Ajali said, "His hadith are to be recorded." See al-Mizi, vol. 23, pp. 581-584.

is extremely problematic because Baqiyyah committed *tadlees*¹ and in this narration he used a vague term (the word *an*) for how he received the hadith. What makes matters worse is that Baqiyyah also committed a form of *tadlees* known as *tadlees al-taswiyah*. This is where the person drops a weak narrator from further up in the chain to make the chain look stronger. Hence, in this case, Baqiyyah most likely simply dropped Qurrah from the chain between al-Auzaai and al-Zuhri. Hence, this chain also cannot be used as supporting evidence.

However, there are other chains of this hadith from Abu Huraira. These chains will be examined next.

The Chain of Sulaiman ibn Yasaar on the authority of Abu Huraira

Ibn Abu al-Dunya recorded this hadith in *al-Samat* with a chain that goes through Sulaiman ibn Yasaar from Abu Huraira. The problem with that chain is that it contains Abdullah ibn Ibraaheem al-Madani. Abu Dawood, al-Daaraqutni and al-Saaji all stated that his hadith are rejected. Al-Haakim said, "He narrated on the authority of weak narrators fabricated hadith that no one other than him narrated." Ibn Hajr said, "Rejected, ibn Hibbaan has attributed fabrication to him." Hence, this chain is very weak and also cannot be used as supporting evidence.

The Chain of Saeed ibn al-Musayyab on the authority of Abu Huraira

In *al-Tamheed*, ibn Abdul Barr presents this hadith with a chain going back to Saeed from Abu Huraira. This chain contains Abdul Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Samarqandi. Ibn Abdul Barr himself said about this narration, "Abdul Jabbar made a mistake in it, and broke the chain up. There is no place for Saeed ibn al-Musayyab in this hadith." A narration that is proven to be a mistake also cannot be used as supporting evidence.

The Chain of Abu Saalih on the authority of Abu Huraira

Ibn Abu al-Dunya (in *al-Samat*), ibn Adi and al-Tabaraani (in *al-Mujam al-Ausat*) have recorded this hadith from Suhail ibn Abu Saalih from his father from Abu Huraira. This chain also is completely unacceptable. It contains Abdul Rahman ibn Abdullah al-Umari. Ahmad said about him, "His hadith are not worth anything. I listened to his hadith and then we left him. His hadith are rejected hadith. He was a liar. So I tore his hadith to shreds." Al-Nasaai, al-Daaraqutni, ibn Hajr, Abu Haatim and al-Dhahabi have similar low

¹ *Tadlees* is where the narrator makes it appear or could give one the impression that he heard a hadith directly from another narrator whom he had met while, in fact, he did not hear it directly but heard it through an intermediate source.

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opinions of him. Hence, again, this chain cannot be relied upon as supporting evidence.

The Hadith of Zaid ibn Thaabit

Both Saleem al-Hilaali and Shuaib al-Arnaoot refer to narrations of this hadith that have come from Companions other than Abu Huraira. These other narrations are to be explored next.

The first of these narrations is the hadith of Zaid ibn Thaabit. It was recorded by al-Tabaraani in *al-Mujam al-Sagheer* as well as by others. However, the chain for this narration is very weak. The chain contains Muhammad ibn Katheer ibn Marwaan. He is a rejected narrator according to ibn Maeen, al-Azdi, ibn Adi, ibn Hajr and Abu Haatim.

The Hadith of Abu Dharr al-Ghifaari

Ibn al-Sunni (in *Amal al-Yaum wa al-Lailah*), ibn Adi and al-Samarqandi (in *Tanbeeh al-Ghafileen*) have also recorded this hadith with a chain going back to Abu Dharr al-Ghifaari.¹ This chain contains Yahya ibn Saeed al-Qurashi. His hadith are filled with mistakes and he cannot be accepted if he is the sole narrator of a report. Furthermore, the hadith contains ibn Juraij who committed *tadlees* and in this chain he narrated it with a vague term (*an*). Ibn Adi said that this is a rejected hadith. Al-Albaani said that it has a very weak chain. Hence, such a hadith cannot be used as supporting evidence for this hadith of Abu Huraira under discussion.

Actually, ibn Abdul Barr and ibn Hibbaan have another chain for this hadith from Abu Dharr. However, this chain is also completely unacceptable. It contains Ibrahim ibn Hishaam ibn Yahya al-Ghasaani. He has been described as either a liar or a rejected narrator.

Similarly, in *al-Risaalah*, al-Qushairi has another chain for this hadith from Abu Dharr. But it also has Yahya ibn Abu al-Aizaar, a rejected narrator who has been accused of lying.

The Hadith of Ali ibn al-Husain

Al-Tirmidhi and a number of others also record this hadith with the chain Malik ibn Anas from al-Zuhri from Ali ibn al-Husain from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in *mursal* form. All of the narrators are trustworthy but the name of the Companion who heard the hadith is missing. This is how Malik himself recorded the chain in his *Muwatta*.

¹ Actually, the wording of this hadith is quite different from the one being discussed here. In this author's opinion, it could not be used as supporting evidence for the hadith of Abu Huraira even if it were authentic. Its wording is, "The one who reckons his speech as part of his deeds speaks very little except in matters of concern to him."

Al-Tirmidhi recorded the hadith in this fashion and then stated, This is how more than one of the companions of al-Zuhri narrated this: from al-Zuhri from Ali ibn al-Husain from the Prophet (peace be upon him), like the narration of Malik, in *mursal* form. In our opinion, this is a more authentic narration than the hadith of Abu Salamah from Abu Huraira. And Ali ibn al-Husain never met Ali ibn Abu Taalib.¹

The following students of al-Zuhri also narrated this hadith in *mursal* fashion: Ziyaad ibn Saad, Yunus ibn Yazeed and Mamar ibn Raashid.

It must be noted that some people have narrated it differently from Malik. Khaalid ibn Abdul Rahmaan al-Khurasani narrated it from Malik in this way: from al-Zuhri from Ali ibn al-Husain from his father [al-Husain ibn Ali ibn Abu Taalib] from the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, Khaalid is noted for making mistakes and not having a good memory.

But he may not have been alone in such a narration. Moosa ibn Dawood al-Dhibbi also narrated it in that fashion from “Malik and Abdullah ibn Umar al-Umari”, as was recorded by Ahmad, al-Tabaraani and others. Musa is also known for making mistakes. This chain was probably from Abdullah who was a weak narrator.

Yet others narrated it from Ali ibn Husain from his father from Ali ibn Abu Taalib. However, this chain is also defective and has been declared mistaken by al-Daraqutni, who was a scholar of defective hadith.

The correct view is that the chain, as correctly reported from Malik, was: al-Zuhri from Ali ibn al-Husain from the Prophet (peace be upon him), in *mursal* form. This was the conclusion of al-Daraqutni, al-Baihaqi, al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadi and al-Bukhari.

Ibn Muhammad’s Conclusion

After studying all of the above chains, as well as few not mentioned here, Ibn Muhammad makes the following conclusion,

In sum, the hadith is not authentic. It is confirmed from the research just presented that the correct version is that which Malik recorded in *al-Muwatta* from al-Zuhri from Ali ibn al-Husain in *mursal* form. All other narrations are weaker than this. I do not say that to say that it is correct to use *mursal* hadith as evidence. Indeed, *mursal* hadith are a type of weak hadith. This hadith has some supporting chains, as have been presented, by which some people strengthen the hadith. However, all of them are weak and their chains are very weak and cannot be used as support, no matter how many and numerous they are. It is not allowed to use the hadith of

¹ Quoted in Ibn Muhammad, p. 105.

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rejected narrators or narrators implicated of lying as supporting evidence, as is well-known in the sciences of hadith. Furthermore, those who use such narrations as supporting evidence do not discuss their defects in order to know the reality of such reports nor do they make a judgment about them that makes clear their condition. Instead, they find it sufficient to refer to them quickly. In that way, they are mixing truth with falsehood.¹

Ibn Muhammad then gives the impression that two other modern-day scholars have come to the same conclusion. They are Abu Ishaq al-Huwaini and Abdullah al-Judai.

This Author's Conclusion

Malik's narration of this hadith in *al-Muwatta* is in *mursal* form. *Mursal* hadith are weak hadith. However, they are considered the strongest type of weak hadith. Since only the name of the Companion is missing, they could easily be moved up to the level of *hasan* if one can find supporting evidence for that narration.

Al-Tirmidhi's narration of this hadith goes through Qurrah ibn Abdul Rahmaan. In general, he is not a completely rejected narrator. His hadith could be used as supporting evidence. His hadith are to be found in *Sunan Abu Dawood*, *Sunan ibn Maajah*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* and *Sunan al-Nasaai*. In fact, his hadith are even found in *Sahih Muslim*, but only in conjunction with other narrators.

But there is a deeper problem here. Qurrah's narration of this hadith supposedly goes through al-Zuhri. Qurrah's way of narrating this hadith through al-Zuhri contradicts that which all of the other leading students of al-Zuhri have narrated. There is no strong evidence to suggest that al-Zuhri narrated this hadith in two fashions, once in *mursal* form from Ali ibn al-Husain and the other in connected form from Abu Salamah. The narration from Qurrah and the other rejected narrators are not sufficient to establish that fact.

What this means is that the narration from Qurrah is *shaadh*. That is, it is contradicted by stronger authorities and narrations. It must be considered a mistaken narration. Hence, it cannot be used as supporting evidence. This must be why, Allah knows best, scholars such as al-Daraqutni, al-Bukhari and others concluded that the only correct narration of this hadith is the *mursal* narration of Malik from al-Zuhri.

Those who say that this hadith is *sahih* or *sahih lighairihi* cannot adequately support their conclusions. Almost all of the narrations that al-Hilaali, for example, referred to are very weak narrations that cannot be used as supporting evidence. In reality, there are only two narrations of worth for this

¹ Ibn Muhammad, p. 109.

hadith. One is the *mursal* form from al-Zuhri and the other goes through Qurrah. They are both weak in themselves. If they are both weak in themselves, but they support each other, the most one could say is that they are *hasan lighairihi*. One could not, though, justifiably call the hadith *sahih* or *sahih lighairihi*.

Those who say that the hadith is *hasan lighairihi* have more to stand on. This would definitely be the accepted conclusion except for the fact that Qurrah claimed the narration to be from al-Zuhri. It seems, Allah knows best, as some of the greatest scholars have concluded (such as Imam Ahmad, Yahya ibn Maeen, al-Bukhari and al-Daraqutni¹), that his narration is not correct. Hence, it cannot be used to raise this hadith.

The conclusion is that the hadith is *mursal*, which is the strongest form of weak hadith. It is a borderline case due to the narration of Qurrah, but the principles of the sciences of hadith force the conclusion that the hadith is weak. Allah knows best.

General Statements About the Hadith

In general, if a hadith is weak, it cannot by itself be used as evidence in the *shareeah* nor should it be acted upon. Therefore, there is no need to discuss it in detail. However, since this hadith is somewhat borderline, with many scholars accepting it, it will be discussed to some extent. Furthermore, much of the discussion will be centered around concepts that go beyond this one particular hadith.

This hadith is a foundation for manners, etiquette and behavior in Islam. Abu Muhammad ibn Abu Zaid, the leader of the Malikis of his time, stated that all the good manners and behavior are alluded to in four hadith: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak well or remain silent," "Part of the perfection of the person's Islam is his leaving that which is of no concern to him," the hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) told the one seeking his advice, "Do not get angry," and the hadith, "A believer loves for his brother what he loves for himself."²

Some say that this hadith is half of Islam. This is because Islam is either about doing something or abstaining from something. This hadith is explicitly about the latter portion. However, it implicitly also touches upon the former portion. Hence, one can say that it is about all of Islam.³

¹ Ibn Rajab refers to these scholars as making this conclusion. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p.287-288. Allah knows best, but it seems that Ibn Rajab himself is not convinced that this hadith is *hasan*.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 288.

³ Al-Haitami, p. 144.

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About the Narrator: Abu Huraira

His life was discussed in the commentary to Hadith #9.

“Part of the perfection of the person’s Islam”

The hadith states, *مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ*. Some translators have understood this to mean, “Part of someone’s being a good Muslim.” However, the commentators on this hadith point out that the meaning is that the act described is part of a person perfecting or completing his Islam.¹ Hence, if a person wants to make sure that he is applying or living Islam completely and correctly, then he must make sure that he is meeting this qualification.

In *Sahih Muslim*, there is a hadith on the authority of Abu Huraira that describes the great reward for those people who complete and “perfect” their Islam. Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِذَا أَحْسَنَ أَحَدُكُمْ إِسْلَامَهُ فَكُلُّ حَسَنَةٍ يَعْمَلُهَا تُكْتَبُ بِعَشْرِ أَمْثَالِهَا إِلَى سَبْعِ مِائَةٍ
ضِعْفٍ وَكُلُّ سَيِّئَةٍ يَعْمَلُهَا تُكْتَبُ بِمِثْلِهَا حَتَّى يَلْقَى اللَّهَ

“If one of you makes his faith excellent, he will be recorded for every good deed ten-fold to seven hundred fold. And for every evil deed he does, he will have recorded one similar to it, until he meets Allah.” (Recorded by Muslim.) According to ibn Rajab, every good deed will be recorded ten-fold. However, the increase upon that is determined by how much a person completes his faith. In other words, the purer his intention, the greater the deed he performed and so forth will lead the deed to being multiplied seven-hundred fold.²

The Convert and Completing His Islam

There are some hadith that show that it is very important for a person who converts to Islam to do his best to complete and perfect his Islam. By doing so, he will have wiped away all of his previous sins and will be rewarded for all of the good deeds that he did before entering into Islam. A hadith in *Sunan al-Nasaai* states,

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 83.

² Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 295.

إِذَا أَسْلَمَ الْعَبْدُ فَحَسَنَ إِسْلَامُهُ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ كُلَّ حَسَنَةٍ كَانَ أَرْزَلَهَا وَمُحِيتَ عَنْهُ كُلُّ سَيِّئَةٍ كَانَ أَرْزَلَهَا ثُمَّ كَانَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ الْقِصَاصُ الْحَسَنَةُ بِعَشْرَةِ أَمْثَالِهَا إِلَى سَبْعِ مِائَةٍ ضِعْفٍ وَالسَّيِّئَةُ بِمِثْلِهَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَجَاوَزَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَنْهَا

“If a servant accept Islam and completes his Islam, Allah will record for him every good deed that he performed before [his Islam] and Allah will erase for him every evil deed that he did before [his Islam]. Then everything after that will be according to a retribution. For every good deed, he will be recorded ten-fold up to seven hundred fold. And for every evil deed he will be recorded similarly [one] for it, unless Allah overlooks that for him.”¹

This hadith shows that a person will be rewarded for the good deeds that he performed before becoming Muslim. His evil deeds will also be erased after becoming Muslim. However, this is conditional. This is conditional upon the fact that he perfects or completes his Islam. That is, it is conditional that he remain away from the evil deeds after he becomes a Muslim. This understanding is further supported by a hadith in both *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* in which ibn Masud asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) if they were to be held accountable for the deeds that they performed in *Jaahiliyah* (pre-Islamic ignorance). The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) told him,

أَمَّا مَنْ أَحْسَنَ مِنْكُمْ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ فَلَا يُؤَاخَذُ بِهَا وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ أُخِذَ بِعَمَلِهِ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ
وَإِلَّا

“As for the one of you who excels in Islam, he will not be held accountable for it. As for the one who does evil [with respect to his Islam], he shall be held accountable for what he did in *Jaahiliyah* as well as in Islam.”

But there is a hadith in *Musnad Ahmad* which states, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was speaking to Amr ibn al-As,

يَا عَمْرُو أَمَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ يَجُبُّ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهُ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ

“O Amr, didn’t you know that Islam wipes away all of the sins that one performed before it.”² But this hadith must be understood in the light of the other hadith. According to ibn Rajab, the meaning of this hadith is that if a

¹ Recorded by Malik and al-Nasaai. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 122.

² This narration is from *Musnad Ahmad*. *Sahih Muslim* has virtually the same with a slight change in the wording.

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person completes his Islam and excels in Islam, then all of his previous sins will be erased and overlooked. Otherwise, if he continues to perform such evil acts in Islam, his previous acts will not be overlooked.¹

“his leaving that which is of no concern to him”

In this part of the hadith, it states that a person avoids things that are of no concern to him. What is meant by this is not things that are of no concern to him based on his desires or wants. What is meant is things that are of no concern to him based on the guidance of the *shareeah*. That is, from a *shareeah* point of view, those things are of no benefit for him in either this life or the Hereafter. Therefore, he should remain away from them.

Hence, the standard concerning what is or is not “of concern” is the *shareeah* and not an individual’s wants or desires. This is why this hadith talks about this aspect in the context of perfecting and completing one’s Islam.²

Otherwise, there are a lot of things that an individual may claim are of no concern to him while, from the *shareeah* point of view, they must be of concern to him. When, for example, the teachings of Allah are being violated, this must be of concern to every Muslim whether they wish to admit this or not. When evil is being spread or rights are ignored, a Muslim must be concerned. When a Muslim brother is in need of sincere advice, he must be advised. A Muslim cannot use this hadith as an excuse for avoiding his obligations of ordering good, eradicating evil, advising others and guiding others.

What is of No Concern to a True Believer

The next logical question is: According to the *shareeah* then, what is it that is of no concern to a believer? What are these matters that he should avoid? The things that are of no concern to him or, in other words, which he should avoid are the forbidden acts,³ the doubtful acts, the disliked acts and over-indulgence in the permissible matters of which he is not in need.

This hadith is in reference to one’s actions, beliefs and speech. With respect to all of these, one should leave those matters that are of “no concern” or no benefit to him whatsoever. Among these, the scholars have emphasized speech the most. Many people may avoid, by their actions, things that are not of concern or benefit to them. However, it is very difficult for many people to

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 296. Ibn Rajab then goes into a lengthy discussion of the *surah al-Furqaan* 68-70. Some scholars feel that that verse implies that previous evil deeds will be turned into good deeds. However, some say that it means that the person will then do good deeds in this life. Yet others say that it means that in the Hereafter the evil deeds will be transformed and the person will be rewarded for them due to the worry and remorse that he suffered because of them after becoming a Muslim.

² Cf., ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 289.

³ That is, performing them is of no concern. However, eradicating them must be of concern to him.

constrain their tongues only to those things that are of concern or which are beneficial. Hence, the scholars have stressed this aspect while discussing this hadith.

The problem is that many times people do not realize that their speech is truly part of their deeds while, in some cases, it could be the most damaging aspect of their deeds. Umar ibn Abdul Azeez once said, “The one who reckons his words as part of his actions speaks very little— only about those things that are of concern to him.” In fact, even the Companion Muaadh ibn Jabal seemed not to realize how important one’s words are and that they are truly part of one’s deeds. He once asked the Prophet (peace be upon him), “Are we to be taken to account for what we say?” The Prophet (peace be upon him) answered him,

تَكَلَّمْتَ أُمُّكَ يَا مُعَاذُ وَهَلْ يَكْبُ النَّاسُ فِي النَّارِ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ أَوْ عَلَى مَنَاخِرِهِمْ
إِلَّا حَصَائِدُ أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ

“O Muaadh, may your mother be bereaved of you. Is there anything that topples people on their faces— or on their noses— into the Hell-fire other than what their tongues reap?”¹

Allah has also stated that there is no benefit in most of the private conversations that people take part in. Allah says,

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ
بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا
عَظِيمًا

“There is no good in most of their secret talks save (in) him who orders charity and righteousness, or conciliation between mankind. As for him who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall give him a great reward” (*al-Nisaa* 114).

Al-Nawawi states that a person must only speak something that is beneficial. He said that if a speech is equal in its merits or harm, then it is best to refrain from saying it. Otherwise, permissible speech may lead to forbidden or disliked speech. This actually happens quite often. However, if one is silent, it does not lead to any harm whatsoever.²

¹ Recorded by al-Tirmidhi. It is part of Hadith #29 in this collection.

² Quoted in Sultaan, p. 123.

A True Believer Would Not Take Part in Such Matters

The Maliki jurist ibn al-Arabi once said that a person is not able to fulfill all of the necessary matters that he must take care of, why then should he get into the unnecessary, extra matters that are of no real concern to him?¹ If a person starts getting involved into matters that are of no real concern or benefit to him, he will be wasting and losing valuable time. He will be losing time that he will never be able to regain.

For a true believer, the only matters of concern or benefit to him are Islam, *Imaan*, good deeds, the necessary acts that one needs to do to survive in life, such as eating, drinking, earning a living and so forth. These aspects are enough to take up every moment of his life. When will he have time to turn to trivial, useless or harmful pursuits?

A common problem today among Muslims is the endless pursuit and study of matters with very little benefit while, at the same time, ignoring the most important matters that are of great benefit. This is a sign that a person's Islam is not complete or perfect. In fact, this is a sign that the person himself may not truly understand Islam. How much time do Muslims today spend studying and learning the Quran and hadith? Compare that to how much time they spend watching television, gossiping about others, debating on trivial points and reading numerous books on detailed political information which neither benefits nor harms them. If a person truly understood and applied this hadith, he would realize that every moment of his life must be spent only in those things that are beneficial to him in both this life and the Hereafter.

Al-Hasan al-Basri once said, "A sign that Allah has turned away from a servant is that He makes him busy with matters that are of no concern to him."² When a person reaches such a point, he must repent and ask Allah to guide him to those matters that are important and beneficial.

Other Points Related to this Hadith

- A true believer is heads and shoulders above the petty, useless activities that so many people get involved with in this world. If something is not beneficial to him in this life or the Hereafter, he avoids it. This is part of the completeness and perfection of his faith.
- Islam protects society as a whole from any kind of harm. Much of the harm that inflicts society is when people spend their time involved in matters that are of no concern to them. This includes meddling into the affairs of others when it is neither one's responsibility nor one's right. In all societies, these types of practices usually lead to great evil. In this one

¹ For the quote from ibn al-Arabi, see Muhammad al-Zarqaani, *Sharh al-Zarqaani ala Muwatta al-Imaam Maalik* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1990), vol. 4, p. 317.

² Quoted in al-Haitami, p. 145, and al-Zarqaani, vol. 4, p. 317.

short sentence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recommended a way to avoid all these kinds of societal problems.

- If a person truly worships Allah as if he sees Him, or at least knowing that Allah sees him, he would not allow himself to be seen by Allah indulging in useless and possibly harmful pursuits. Instead, he will spend all of his time in doing things that he knows Allah would be pleased with. This is a sign of true *Imaan* and *ihsaan*, or as the hadith states, the completeness and perfection of one's Islam.¹
- A believer should train himself to avoid useless or harmful pursuits and, instead, concentrate on the truly beneficial and important matters. At first, it might sound easy to avoid matters that are of no concern and not beneficial. However, in reality, many times the situation is different. That is why this is a sign of a true Muslim. The person must realize this fact and work on himself to improve his Islam in this direction.²
- The believer must realize that he has been given this life for a very important purpose: to worship Allah. When a person remembers that he is going to be standing in front of Allah one day, he realizes that there is no time to waste and no energies to be used for the wrong purposes. Allah has reminded mankind—who loves to toil and play—in the Quran,

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

“Did you think that We had created you in play (without any purpose), and that you would not be brought back to Us” (*al-Muminoon* 115).

Summary of the Hadith

- First, it should be once again noted that it was concluded that this hadith is most likely a weak hadith. However, it is definitely close to being *hasan*, and that is why it was commented upon in some detail. Allah knows best.
- If a person avoids what does not concern him, it means that he is only doing things that are of concern and benefit. Hence, by this means, he is on the road to completing and perfecting his Islam.
- All matters can be divided into one of two categories: Either something that is of concern or benefit to the individual or something that is of no concern or no benefit to the individual. An individual can either do one of them or leave it. If he does what is of concern to him, he has done well. If he leaves what does not concern him, he has also done well. However, if he leaves what is of concern or he does what is not of concern, then he is following the wrong path.³

¹ Cf., al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 84.

² Al-Baitaar, p. 87.

³ al-Haitami, p. 144.

Hadith #13
"None of You [Truly] Believes Until..."

عَنْ أَبِي حَمَزَةَ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ خَادِمِ رَسُولِ
اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
قَالَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ
رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ وَمُسْلِمٌ

On the authority of Abu Hamzah Anas ibn Maalik, the servant of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who said, "None of you [truly] believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."

Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary

- خادم - "servant"
أحدكم - "one of you"
يحب - "he loves"
لأخيه - "for his brother," this is a compound word. The ل means, "for," while أخيه means his brother; the ة at the end means "his"; the word "brother" here is in the masculine but the hadith applies equally well to one's "sister" in Islam.
لنفسه - "for himself," this is a compound word. The ل means, "for." نفسه means "his self," the ة means "his."

Takhreej

This hadith was recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasaai, ibn Maajah, Ahmad, ibn Hibbaan, al-Daarimi, Abu Yala and numerous others.

It should be noted that the narration in *Sahih Muslim* differs slightly from what al-Nawawi has presented here. The narration in *Muslim* states,

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ أَوْ قَالَ لِجَارِهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ

“None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother— or he said for his neighbor— what he loves for himself.” In Muslim’s narration there is mention of the doubt about the exact wording, “or he said”. However, in al-Bukhari’s narration there is no such doubt. A narration of Abu Nuaim’s work related to *Sahih al-Bukhari* has the wording, “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother and his neighbor what he loves for himself.”¹

Another important narration of this hadith may be found in *Musnad Ahmad*. It states,

وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَا يُؤْمِنُ عَبْدٌ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ

“By the One in whose hand is my soul, a servant does not truly believe until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself of goodness.” Here, the last words, “of goodness” have been added. This narration, according to ibn Muhammad, is also an authentic narration.² As shall be noted below, these additional words are of some significance.

There is also another narration with the wording,

لَا يَبْلُغُ الْعَبْدُ حَقِيقَةَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِلنَّاسِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ

“The servant does not reach the reality of [or true] faith until he loves for the people what he loves for himself.” This was recorded by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad*.³

General Comments about the Hadith

This hadith stipulates one of the most important rules of behavior in Islam. It is a clear sign as to how Muslims are supposed to behave toward one another. It states a general principle that may be applied in all walks of life. The importance of this principle is so great that some consider this hadith one-fourth or one-third of Islam.

About the Narrator: Anas ibn Maalik

Abu Hamzah Anas ibn Maalik ibn Nadar al-Khazraji was born ten years before the *Hijrah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He embraced Islam while very young. His mother brought him to the Prophet (peace be upon him) so he could act as a servant to the Prophet (peace be upon him). He spent about

¹ See ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, p. 82.

² See ibn Muhammad, pp. 110-113.

³ According to al-Hilaali, the chain of this narration is also *sahih*. See al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 182.

Hadith #13: "None of You [Truly} Believes Until..."

ten years in that capacity. He also took part in ten of the battles of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed that Allah bless him, give him wealth, long life, lots of children and enter him into Paradise. Consequently, he became a wealthy man and had over 120 children and grandchildren by the time of his death. He was over one hundred years old when he died. Allah willing, he can look forward to the last part of the Prophet's supplication.

After the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him) he moved to Damascus and later settled in Basra. He is considered to be the last Companion to have died in Basra, dying in the year 93 A.H.

Some 2,200 hadith are narrated on his authority in the books of hadith.

"None of you [truly] believes until"

The narration from *Musnad Ahmad* sheds light on the meaning of the passage, "None of you believes," in this hadith:

لَا يَبْلُغُ الْعَبْدُ حَقِيقَةَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِلنَّاسِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ

"The servant does not reach the reality of [or true] faith until he loves for the people what he loves for himself." This means that the denial of faith alluded to in this hadith does not imply a complete denial of faith. That is, a person does not become a disbeliever, losing all faith, by not loving for his brother what he loves for himself.

What it does mean, though, is that for a person to have true and complete faith, he must love for his brother what he loves for himself. This love is a necessary component of a true and complete faith. As was stated in the discussion of the hadith of Jibreel, a person who does not meet the obligatory requirements of faith is not deserving to be called a true or complete believer. This is what this hadith is referring to.

It is not necessarily true that once a person has this characteristic he will always possess it. *Imaan* is dynamic and open to fluctuations. Sometimes a person may possess this characteristic while at other times he may not. This was also discussed before. At times he may be a true believer. At other times, he may be weaker in faith. Both Abdullah ibn Rawaaha and Abu al-Darda, two Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), stated, "*Imaan* is like a shirt. Sometimes a person wears it and at other times he takes it off."¹

On the other hand, this hadith does not mean that if a person meets this characteristic, he has complete *Imaan* even if he does not meet the other requirements of *Imaan*. This hadith is simply stressing that this characteristic is an essential pillar of true and complete *Imaan*. It is like the saying, "There is no

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 303.

prayer but with purity (*tahaarah*).” There is more to prayer than *tahaarah*. Similarly, there is much more to *Imaan* than simply loving for one’s brother what one loves for himself.¹

“he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”

This is the condition that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated for true faith. In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) made it very clear that one of the keys to entrance into Paradise is meeting this condition. In a hadith in *Sahih Muslim*, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

فَمَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يُزْحَرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَيَدْخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَلْتَأْتِهِ مَنِئْتُهُ وَهُوَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَلْيَأْتِ إِلَى النَّاسِ الَّذِي يُحِبُّ أَنْ يُؤْتَى إِلَيْهِ

“Whoever loves to be saved from the Fire and entered into Paradise should die with belief in Allah and the Last Day and should treat the people in the way that he wishes to be treated by them.”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) set an example in this matter. One time Abu Dharr asked to be given a position of leadership. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him,

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ إِنَّي أَرَاكَ ضَعِيفًا وَإِنِّي أُحِبُّ لَكَ مَا أُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِي لَا تَأْمُرَنَّ عَلَيَّ اثْنَيْنِ وَلَا
تَوَلَّيَنَّ مَالَ يَتِيمٍ

“O Abu Dharr, I see that you are weak. And I love for you what I love for myself. Never be in charge of two people [or more] and never be in charge of the wealth of orphans.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) was giving him sincere advice. Being in a position of authority is a difficult position and being in charge of the wealth of orphans is a dangerous position. This is especially true if the person is weak and not able to fend off others. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) who himself did not wish to be in such positions advised Abu Dharr to stay away from such positions. This demonstrates the Prophet’s love for his Companions as he loved for them what he loved for himself. This also demonstrates an aspect of the Prophet’s true and complete *Imaan*.

In *Ihya Uloom al-Deen*, al-Ghazazali presents a story about a man who complained that his house was infested with rats. He was told to get a cat. His reply was, “I fear that if the rats hear the cat’s meow, they will flee to the adjoining houses and what I like not for myself I do not like for them.”²

¹ Cf., al-Mudaabaghi, p. 146.

² Quoted in Uthmani, vol. 1, p. 373.

Hadith #13: "None of You [Truly] Believes Until..."

This shows how true believers are to be towards one another. They not only want good for themselves but also for each other. On the other side of the coin, if any of their Muslim brethren is hurt, then they also feel the pain. They do not like that situation for themselves so they do not like it for the other believers either. Such is the Messenger of Allah's (peace be upon him) description of the community of believers. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادُّهِمْ وَتَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ
تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى

"The parable of the believers with respect to their love, mercy and compassion for one another is like that of the body: if one of its limbs is hurting, the remainder of the body is afflicted by sleeplessness and fever." (Recorded by Muslim; al-Bukhari has something similar.) Hence, from these two hadith one sees that the believers are happy when the other believers are happy and the believers are hurting when the other believers are hurt.

However, this can only come about when the person's heart is free of jealousy and envy. If a person is jealous and envious of others, he will never feel happy when others receive what they love. Instead, he will only feel happy when he receives what he loves above and beyond the others. This selfishness and self-centeredness cannot co-exist with true *Imaan*. There is no such thing as a true believer who has such feelings in his heart for the others. Actually, how could a true believer think and feel in that way? A true believer realizes that everything comes from Allah. Allah's bounties are much greater than one can imagine. There is room for everyone and if a person does not receive much of this worldly life, there will be plenty for him in the Hereafter. There is no need for him to feel any kind of competition or envy with respect to his fellow believers.

Does This Hadith Mean that One Should Give Preference to One's Brother

Abu al-Zinaad once stated,

The apparent meaning of this hadith is that one should desire equality [between what he has and what his brethren possess]. However, in reality, it means that one should love for his brother more than what he has for himself. This is because humans want to be the best among the people. If he loves the same for his brother, then that must be included [that

is, he must love for his brother to be superior to all others in the same way that he loves for himself to be superior].¹

Similarly, al-Fudhail ibn Iyaadh once said, “If you love that the people be similar to you, you have not fulfilled your *naseehah* to your Lord. What about the case when you love for them to be below you?”²

This is an interpretation that is mentioned by some scholars. The important question then arises: Is this the correct understanding of this hadith? According to most scholars, that is not the correct understanding of this hadith. They say that that is describing a higher level of *Imaan* that one may aspire to but it is not the necessary aspect that one must possess to have complete and true *Imaan*. For that, it is sufficient that one loves for his brother to have the same that he has. Ibn Rajab stated,

[The statement of al-Fudhail] points to the fact that giving *naseehah* to them [the Muslims] is to love that they are even better than oneself. This is a very high level and exalted state of well-wishing. However, that is not obligatory. What is required in the *shareeah* is that one loves for his brother to be similar to himself. At the same time, if he sees that someone else possesses a religious virtue that he does not have, he should strive to catch up with him and he should be sad due to his shortcoming and being behind those ahead of him. This is not being envious with respect to what Allah has given them but this is competing with them in virtues and being sad for oneself due to one’s shortcoming and being behind those in the forefront.³

This “competition” or outdoing each other in good deeds for the sake of Allah is praiseworthy. This is where people compete or try their best to please Allah as much as possible. This hadith does not condemn such behavior in anyway. Allah has said in the Quran,

وَفِي ذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ

“And for this [rewards] let those strive who want to strive” (*al-Mutaffifeen* 26).

Commenting on this required aspect of loving for another what one loves for himself, ibn al-Salaah stated,

This might be considered difficult or even impossible. However, that is not the case. The one who fulfills this characteristic loves that his brother has the same or similar things that he has, without any competition between the two or

¹ Quoted in ibn Daqeeq al-Eid, *Sharh*, pp. 44-45. In reality, not everyone possesses that feeling of wanting to be superior. Perhaps it should be said that if somebody desires that for himself, then he should desire it for his brother also.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 309.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 309.

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without anyone being short-changed out of any blessing because of what his brother has. This is very simple for a pure heart. However, [even that] is difficult for the corrupted heart.¹

However, there is no question that Allah is very pleased with the person when he reaches that higher level of sacrificing on behalf of his brother in Islam. Allah has stated,

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْتِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

"But those who, before them, had homes [in Madinah] and had adopted the faith love those who emigrate to them and have no jealousy in their breasts for that which they have been given [of the booty], but give them [the Emigrants] preference over themselves, even though they were in need of that. And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness, such are they who will be the successful" (*al-Hashr* 9).

There are some principles that must be kept in mind here. One does not have the right to actually bring about physical harm to those who are dependent on him in order to apply this noble principle of giving preference to others. Muhammad ibn Marzooq said,

[This can be done] without harming the rights. For example, if a person only has what is enough for him to survive or only enough to cover his own private parts, then it is obligatory upon him to start with himself before his own son, father or brother, not to speak of a distant person. This is based on foundational points of the *Shareeah*, such as the hadith, "Begin with yourself," and the one who told the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that he had one *dinaar* and the Prophet (peace be upon him) told him, "Give in charity upon yourself" ...²

What One Should One Love for His Brother?

Some people love things for themselves that are not even permissible according to the *shareeah*. Does this hadith apply to acts of this nature, where one wishes those same things for his brother? This question has been discussed by the commentators on this hadith. Before getting to their response, this author would like to note that it is difficult to conceive of a person who has

¹ Quoted in al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 146.

² Quoted in al-Sanoosi, p. 148.

reached this level of complete faith desiring such things for himself. Assuming that could be the case, the response to this question is found in one of the other narration of this hadith that was mentioned earlier.

In a narration in *Musnad Ahmad*, it states,

وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَا يُؤْمِنُ عَبْدٌ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ

“By the One in whose hand is my soul, a servant does not truly believe until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself of goodness.” Commenting on the additional words, “of goodness,” al-Albani wrote,

Know that this addition of the words, “of goodness,” is very important as it defines what is meant by this hadith in detail. This is because the word “goodness” is a comprehensive term that covers all acts of obedience, permissible deeds of this world and the Hereafter and it excludes everything that is prohibited, because the word “goodness” clearly does not entail them. Therefore, it is from the completeness of a Muslim’s behavior that he loves for his brother Muslim whatever goodness and good things that he loves for himself. At the same time, he hates for his brother Muslim any evil that he hates for himself. This is implied by the hadith, even though it is not mentioned explicitly in the hadith. This is because to love one thing requires that one hates its opposite.¹

Who is One’s Brother?

Al-Nawawi, al-Haitami and al-Mudaabaghi say that this hadith is in reference to both one’s Muslim brethren in faith and one’s non-Muslim brethren in humanity. That is, according to them, one should love for the non-Muslims to be guided to Islam in the same way that he has been guided to Islam.² There is no question that every Muslim should have a desire to see everyone embrace Islam and submit to Allah. This desire should be very strong in the heart of the believer. In fact, this was the way of all of the Prophets.

However, to understand the meaning of, “his brother” in this hadith to mean both Muslims and non-Muslims is far-fetched indeed. In his commentary to this hadith, al-Sanoosi is adamant that it is not conceivable that “brother” here refers to both Muslims and non-Muslims. He wrote,

If the word “brother” is stated unconditionally in the *shareeah*, like in this case, the first thing that comes to mind is brother in the faith. In fact, Allah has confirmed such brotherhood

¹ Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth al-Saheeha* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1979), vol. 1, hadith #73, p. 114.

² Al-Nawawi is quoted in Sultaan, p. 127; Al-Haitami, p. 146; al-Mudaabaghi, p. 146.

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between the believers when He said, “Verily the believers are but a single brotherhood” [*al-Hujuraat* 10]. It is understood by this description that the non-believers are not brethren... [Furthermore,] the hadith stresses the compassion, mercy, aid and complete assistance for every good [as part of *Imaan*] and that is why the word brother is mentioned, as such brotherhood requires that the believers be like one building... The relationship toward the disbelievers in the *shareeah* is the exact opposite of that, one of opposition and enmity... [He then quotes some Quranic verses that give that meaning.] The Quran and sunnah are filled with evidences that [disbelief] cuts off ties of brotherhood, to the point that the *shareeah* cuts off relations between believers and their blood relatives of the disbelievers, even if they are the closest to them, such as the child and father [such is the case with the laws of inheritance]... The word “brother” makes it clear that it is referring only [to brothers in the faith].¹

Indeed, it is not considered proper to call a non-Muslim one’s brother, as is common among many people today. Abdul Azeez ibn Baaz was once asked the following question, “I live with a Christian who calls me his brother and we are like brethren, we eat and drink together. Is this kind of deed permissible?” His response was,

A disbeliever is not a Muslim’s brother. Allah has said, “Verily the believers are but brethren” (*al-Hujuraat* 49:10). The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said, “A Muslim is a brother to a Muslim.”² A disbeliever, whether he be Jew, Christian, Magian, Socialist or whatever, is not a brother to a Muslim. It is not allowed to take him as a companion and close friend. However, if one eats with him sometime, without taking him as a companion, due to a general invitation or specific gathering, there is no harm in that. But to take him as a companion, close friend and dining associate, this is not allowed. Allah has cut off such ties of love, loyalty and friendship between Muslims and disbelievers. Allah says in His Noble Book, “Indeed, there is an excellent example for you in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, ‘Verily, we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allah, we have rejected you, and there has started between us and you, hostility and hatred forever— until you believe in Allah alone ’” (*al-Mumtahina* 60:4). Allah has also said, “You (O Muhammad) will not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day making friendship with those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their

¹ Al-Sanoosi, vol. 1, pp. 147-148.

² Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

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fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kin. For such He has written faith in their hearts and strengthened them with proofs from Himself. And We will admit them to gardens through which rivers flow, to dwell therein (forever). Allah is pleased with them, and they with Him. They are the party of Allah. Verily, it is the party of Allah that will be the successful” (*al-Mujaadilah* 58:22).

Therefore, it is obligatory upon a Muslim to be free of the people of infidelity and to hate them for the sake of Allah. However, one must not harm them, hurt them or oppose them without justice and rights to do so, as long as they are not fighting us. At the same time, though, one does not take them as comrades or brothers. If one coincidentally eats with them at a general invitation or specific event, without companionship, loyalty or love for them, then there is no harm in that act.

It is obligatory upon Muslims to deal with disbelievers in an Islamic fashion with proper behavior, as long as they are not fighting the Muslims. One must fulfill one’s trusts to them, must not deceive them, must not betray them or lie to them. If there is a discussion or debate between them, one must argue with them in the best manner and be just with them in the dispute. This is in obedience to Allah’s command, “And argue not with the People of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians) unless it be in a way that is better, except with such of them as do wrong” (*al-Ankaboot* 29:46). It is sanctioned for the Muslim to invite them to the good, to advise them and to be patient with them at the same time being neighborly and polite to them. This is so because Allah has stated, “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom (of the Quran) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better” (*al-Nahl* 16:125). Allah has also said, “Speak good to people” (*al-Baqara* 2:83). The Prophet (peace be upon him) has also said, “The one who guides to good will have the same reward as the one who does that good.”¹ Actually, there are numerous verses and hadith with the same meaning.²

Therefore, this hadith does not imply that to be a true believer one must love for non-Muslims what he loves for himself— with the possible exception of wanting them to embrace Islam. However, this hadith does apply to all other Muslims. That means regardless of a Muslim’s nationality, language, race, economic status, and so forth, to be a true believer one must

¹ Recorded by Muslim and others.

² This response was from Ali Abu Lauz, compiler, *Answers to Common Questions from New Muslims* (Ann Arbor, MI: Islamic Assembly of North America, 1995), pp. 41-42.

Hadith #13: “None of You [Truly] Believes Until...”

love for that brother what he loves for himself. If a person is not yet at that stage, this means that he is not yet at the stage of true and complete faith.

Al-Sindi pointed out that at that stage one loves only for the sake of Allah. All believers are equal to him, whether they be close relatives or distant folk. He then says that very few people reach that state. However, if a person cannot reach that state completely, he should reach the highest level he can with respect to that goal.¹

Other Points Derived from This Hadith

- If a believer sees his brother lacking in his religion, he strives his best to improve the plight of his brother— as piety is the best that he can achieve for himself and it is what he should wish for his brother also. One of the early pious people said, “Those who love each other for the sake of Allah look by the light of Allah. They, for the sake of Allah, have compassion for those who commit sins. They hate their deeds but have compassion for them. They try to change their ways by admonishing them to stop their deeds and they show pity for them to keep their bodies away from the Fire.”²
- The implementation of this hadith is not with words only. That is, a person does not simply claim to love his brother and to love for his brother what he loves for himself. It cannot be a case of mere lip service. Instead, as is the case with all true love, that love must be translated into action. In this case, it means action on behalf of one’s brother when one has the means to help him or improve his situation.³
- If a person sees his brother possessing a virtue that he does not possess, it is permissible for him to wish that he also had that virtue himself. It is permissible for one to wish he had the same virtue but it is not permissible for one to wish that the virtue be removed from his brother. It is recorded in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself wished he could attain martyrdom. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) also said,

¹ Al-Sindi, *Sharh*, p. 58.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 308.

³ Al-Baitaar, p. 91. Al-Sanoosi gives many reasons for why the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Love” instead of “Does for his brother what he does for himself.” One of the reasons he states was that the Prophet (peace be upon him) went to the root of the matter and the real key. It is possible that one may do for others while not really loving them. In the long run, this may not be beneficial. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned the source that will always lead to positive results. For other reasons, see al-Sanoosi, vol. 1, p. 150.

لَا حَسَدَ إِلَّا فِي اثْنَتَيْنِ رَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا فَسُلِّطَ عَلَيْهِ هَلَكَتِهِ فِي الْحَقِّ وَرَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ
الْحِكْمَةَ فَهُوَ يَقْضِي بِهَا وَيُعَلِّمُهَا

“There is no jealousy except with respect to two people: A man whom Allah has given wealth and he uses it up for the sake of the Truth and a man whom Allah has given wisdom and he decides by it and acts accordingly.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) This hadith means that a person should also wish that Allah gives him those characteristics although, at the same time, he does not wish that those characteristics be taken away from the other.

- The true Islamic society— the society of true believers— is one where the relations between its members is built upon love and compassion. This was truly the case among the Companions. Every member works for the good of all of the members of society. Peace and tranquillity is spread throughout such a society. This only comes about when people truly love for each other what they love for themselves.¹
- This hadith lays down a general principle of behavior towards all other Muslims. However, there are specific Muslims that have even more rights upon a Muslim. These would include one’s parents, relatives and wife. Sometimes a person may apply this hadith in general when it comes, for example, to his brothers in the mosque. He will love for them what he loves for himself. But when it comes to his own wife he does not apply this principle, even though his wife has more rights upon him than the general masses. He will not, for example, treat his wife in an appropriate manner, in the way that he also likes to be treated by those in authority over him. This is improper behavior and a Muslim should be aware of this type of mistake.²
- If a person finds himself lacking in his piety and religious deeds, he should wish that others would be better than he is and he should also try to improve himself and make himself better than he currently is.³

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 87.

² A common example is where a Muslim man marries a second wife without consultation with or even knowledge of the first wife and even though the man knows that his first wife will be very much hurt by that act. From a *shareeah* point of view, the second marriage is valid. However, if the man were treated in a similar fashion— a brother does something to him that he knows will hurt him— he would become very unhappy. Hence, he should treat his wife in the same manner that he would like to be treated.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 310.

Hadith #13: "None of You [Truly} Believes Until..."

Summary of the Hadith

- The true believer loves for his brother Muslim what he loves for himself of good things. Without possessing this quality, one has not yet reached the level of true and complete *Imaan*.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

Hadith #14 The Sanctity of a Muslim's Blood

عَنْ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا يَحِلُّ دَمُ امْرِئٍ مُسْلِمٍ إِلَّا يَحْدَى ثَلَاثٍ
الشَّيْبُ الزَّانِي وَالنَّفْسُ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالتَّارِكُ لِدِينِهِ الْمَفَارِقُ
لِلْجَمَاعَةِ

رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ وَمُسْلِمٌ

On the authority of ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “It is not legal [to spill]¹ the blood of a Muslim except in one of three cases: the fornicator who has previously experienced legal sexual intercourse, a life for a life and one who forsakes his religion and separates from the community.”

Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary

يحل	- “legal, permissible”
دم	- “blood”
إلا	- “except”
ثلاث	- “three”
الثيب	- “a male or female who has experienced legal sexual intercourse”
الزاني	- “the adulterer, fornicator”
النفس	- “the soul, life”
بالنفس	- this is a compound word, the ب means “for, in compensation,” and النفس is a life or soul, once again.
التارك	- “one who leaves [something]”
المفارق	- “one who separates”

¹ This is another case where *taqdeer* must be made. The hadith literally states that a Muslim's blood is not legal. Obviously, it means the spilling of a Muslim's blood is not legal.

Takhreej

This hadith was recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, ibn Abu Shaibah, al-Daaraqutni, Abu Yala, al-Baihaqi, ibn Hibbaan, ibn Maajah, al-Nasaai, Abdul Razzaaq and numerous others, all on the authority of ibn Masood.

This hadith also has supporting evidence in narrations from other Companions. A similar hadith has been narrated from Aisha, as recorded by Abu Dawood, al-Daaraqutni and others with a *sahih* chain. The hadith has also been narrated from Uthmaan ibn Affan and recorded by Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, ibn Maajah and others. The chain from Uthmaan is also *sahih*. This has also been narrated from Amaar ibn Yaasir, but its chain is not authentic.¹

General Comments about the Hadith

This important hadith discusses the sanctity of Muslim lives according to Islamic law. In general, a Muslim life may not be taken unless he commits a crime so harmful to society that he is deemed no longer deserving to be living. These crimes are described, in a general way, in this hadith.²

This hadith can be considered a partial explanation of Hadith #8 in which a person's life is declared safe except due to the rights of Islam. Ibn Rajab states that the scholars are agreed that if anyone performs and is convicted of any one of these three acts, he is to receive the death penalty.³

About the Narrator: Abdullah ibn Masood

Abdullah ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him) was discussed in the commentary to Hadith #4.

“It is not legal [to spill] the blood of a Muslim except in one of three cases”

It is a must that a Muslim respect the life, honor and wealth of other Muslims, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated during his Farewell Pilgrimage. The life of a Muslim is something very honorable in the sight of Allah. One time ibn Umar looked at the Kaaba and said, “You are very great and your sanctity is very great. However, the sanctity of a believer is even

¹ Ibn Muhammad, pp. 114-118.

² Those societies that do not have a strong belief in the Hereafter often times have trouble grappling with the concept of a death penalty. In Islam, the death penalty simply means the end to a person's worldly life. Such a person may still be rewarded Paradise and have a wonderful life to look forward to. This understanding is why, during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), a woman came forward to confess her sin of adultery and to have the death penalty invoked upon her.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 312.

Hadith #14: The Sanctity of a Muslim's Blood

greater in the sight of Allah.”¹ The rights of a Muslim are protected and cannot be violated. Indeed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also prohibited the frightening of another Muslim, even in jest.² The Prophet (peace be upon him) called the abusing of another Muslim a type of *fisq* (فسق) or grave evil-doing.

However, even though a Muslim is so respected by the law, there are cases in which he may perform an act which is so heinous that he no longer deserves to live. As opposed to today's Western societies, where individual rights take precedence over the rights and concerns of society, in Islamic Law, the concerns of society as a whole take precedence over the wants and desires of a particular individual who has no respect for the welfare of society and is willing to commit the heinous crimes described in this hadith.

“the fornicator who had previously experienced legal sexual intercourse”

The Definition of *al-Thayyib al-Zaani*

In this hadith, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) mentioned *al-thayyib al-zaani*.

A *zaani* is any person who commits *zina*. *Zina* is technically defined as, in the case of the man, “sexual intercourse performed by a man intentionally and knowing that it is forbidden with a woman who is not his wife or slave or whom he had intercourse with not thinking that it was his wife or slave.”³ In essence, it is illegal sexual intercourse or fornication.

Thayyib is defined in the following manner by Lane (note that he defines it with respect to the woman because that is the most common usage of the word),

A woman who has become separated from her husband in any manner; or a woman whose husband has died, or who has been divorced, and has then returned to the marriage state; or one that is not a virgin; or a woman to whom a man has gone in... or a person who has married... The two persons of whom each has previously had carnal intercourse in marriage with one of the other sex shall be stoned if they commit adultery together.⁴

Hence, it is enough to be considered *thayyib* that one had had legal sexual intercourse at one time.

¹ This statement is sometimes narrated as a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, such narrations are weak. See Haay al-Haay, *al-Tahdheer al-Mubeen min Iraaqah Dam al-Mumineen* (Kuwait: Daar al-Nafaais wa al-Athaar, 1992), p. 16.

² See al-Haay, pp. 23-24.

³ Cf., Muteeallah al-Luhaibi, *Al-Uqoobaat al-Muqadirah wa Hikmat Tashreeaha fi Dhau al-Kitaab wa al-Sunnah* (Jeddah: Tihaama, 1983), p. 108.

⁴ Lane, vol. 1, p. 363. Also see Saadi Abu Jaib, *Al-Qaamoos al-Fiqhiyyah: Lughah wa Istilaahaan* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1988), p. 55.

In sum, to say that the punishment for the married fornicator is death by stoning while the punishment for the unmarried fornicator is lashing is not quite correct. A man, for example, may be unmarried but he may still be considered *thayyib*, as in the case of a divorced person or a widower. His punishment will still be death by stoning although he was not married at the present time that he committed the act.¹

The Punishment for *al-Thayyib al-Zaani*

Allah has blessed the married person with legal means to satisfy his natural urges. In addition, the *shareeah* has laid down many laws that prevent one from the avenues that may lead him or her to illegal ways of sexual intercourse.² Adultery is an act that is harmful to society as a whole. Allah has warned Muslims about how evil a deed fornication is and how they must not even go near it. Allah has stated,

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّانِيَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا

“And come not near unto unlawful sexual intercourse. Verily, it is a greatly lewd act and an evil way” (*al-Israa* 32). After all of that, if a person still commits the act of adultery, he deserves a severe punishment.

The punishment for adultery, when it is proven, is stoning until death. This is something agreed upon by the Muslim scholars. It was something enacted during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and afterwards.³ There used to be a Quranic verse stating such a punishment but its reading was later abrogated.⁴ This has been referred to in the following narrative from *Sahih Muslim*:

Abdullah ibn Abbaas reported that Umar ibn al-Khattaab sat on the pulpit of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and said, “Verily, Allah sent Muhammad (peace be upon him) with truth and He sent down the Book upon him, and the verse of stoning was included in what was sent down to him. We

¹ Another term that is commonly used in the books of fiqh instead of *al-thayyib* is *al-muhsin* (المحسن). *Muhsin* means that the person is free, responsible, Muslim and has had sexual intercourse in a legal marriage. See Abu Jaib, pp. 91-92.

² Such as the laws of *hijab*, the prohibition of a man and woman being alone in private and so forth. Fadhl-Ilaahi’s Master’s Thesis is about all of the numerous means by which the laws and practices of Islam should prevent the occurrence of illegal sexual intercourse. See Fadhl-Ilaahi, *Al-Tadaabeer al-Waqiyah min al-Zinaa fi al-Fiqh al-Islaami* (Gujranwalah, Pakistan: Idaarah Tarjumaan al-Islaam, 1988), *passim*.

³ For examples of the Prophet (peace be upon him) enacting this punishment, see Siddiqi, trans., *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, pp. 913-921.

⁴ Abrogation with respect to the Quran applies in different ways. One is a verse whose wording is still read but whose ruling has been abrogated. That is the most common and well-known. A second type is where the wording of the verse has been abrogated, that is, it is no longer read as part of the Quran, but its ruling still applies. This is true for the verse concerning stoning the married adulterer. A third case is where neither the recitation nor the ruling still applies.

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recited it, retained it in our memory and understood it. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) awarded the punishment of stoning to death [to the married adulterer and adulteress] and after him we also awarded the punishment of stoning. I am afraid that, with the lapse of time, the people [may forget it] and say, 'We do not find the punishment of stoning in the Book of Allah,' and thus go astray by abandoning the duty prescribed by Allah. Stoning is a duty laid down in Allah's Book for married men and women who commit adultery when proof is established or if there is pregnancy¹ or a confession.²

The Prophet (peace be upon him), also in a narration in *Sahih Muslim*, mentioned that the non-married fornicator is to be lashed one hundred times and banished for a year. He also stated that the *thayyib* fornicator is to be lashed one hundred times and then stoned to death. Some of the scholars follow this hadith and state that a *thayyib* fornicator is both to be lashed and then stoned. This is how Ali enacted this punishment upon a woman, saying, "I lashed her according to the Book of Allah and I stoned her according to the sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)."³ This was the view of Ahmad, Ishaq, Dawood and ibn al-Mundhir. It was also the view of al-Hasan al-Basri and some other early scholars.⁴

There are some who hold the view that both the lashing and stoning is only for older people who commit adultery while younger people who do so are only to be stoned. This is because, they say, the crime of the older person is much more heinous since he does not possess the same drive that a younger person may possess. This view has also been narrated from Ahmad and Ishaq.⁵

The majority of the scholars state that one does not do both lashing and stoning to the *thayyib* fornicator. They argue that the above referred to hadith has been abrogated. The abrogation is in the authentic hadith concerning Maa'iz who committed adultery and the Prophet (peace be upon him) had him stoned without having him lashed first. This is also true for the other narrations that mention the Prophet (peace be upon him) having someone stoned but never mention him also having them lashed.⁶

¹ There is a difference of opinion whether pregnancy by itself is sufficient to bring about the punishment for fornication. In the case of married women, in particular, which is what this report is referring to, it would be difficult to accept the fact that pregnancy by itself may lead to the punishment of stoning.

² Siddiqi, trans., *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 912.

³ Recorded by Ahmad, al-Baihaqi and al-Haakim.

⁴ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 314-315.

⁵ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 315. Yet another narration from Ahmad shows him holding the opinion of the majority of the scholars that is discussed in the next paragraph.

⁶ See ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 12, p. 119.

This stern punishment for the act of adultery shows how seriously Islam considers family relations. The act of adultery is something that can clearly break apart a family. The family is the foundation for society as a whole. If the family is not safeguarded, then society as a whole will start to crumble. It will not have a strong foundation and, therefore, it itself will not be strong.

Objections to the Death Penalty in the Case of *al-Thayyib al-Zaani*

In the past and unfortunately still from some people today, the following objections had been raised to the death penalty in the case of *al-thayyib al-zaani*: The married adulterer should not be killed because the only penalty mentioned in the Quran for the *zaani* is what is stated in the following verse:

الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ

“For the female *zaani* and the male *zaani*, flog each one hundred lashes” (*al-Noor* 2). The first objection states that if one stones a person to death for adultery, he is then going from a law that is definitively established in the Quran to one that is lesser so established in the hadith. The second objection is that to accept the law of flogging means that one is allowing the sunnah to abrogate the Quran and this is not acceptable.

As for the first objection, Ibn Qudaama notes that there are many hadith that demonstrate that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stoned *al-thayyib al-zaani*. These hadith are so numerous and transmitted by so many means that they reach the level of *mutawaatir* in their meaning. In addition, there was a consensus of the Companions concerning the punishment for *al-thayyib al-zaani*, this further raises the degree of reliability of the evidence for that ruling. Hence, the proofs that the married adulterer is to be stoned are, in fact, as strong as the opposing evidence used to show that he should just be flogged.¹

As for the second objection, this is not a case of the sunnah abrogating the Quran. This is a case of the sunnah particularizing a general statement of the Quran—and particularization of the Quran by the sunnah is something accepted by all the respected scholars. The Quran has mentioned *zaani* in a general sense and the sunnah has restricted that *zaani* to be only the *zaani* who is not *thayyib*.²

This issue of not allowing the sunnah to explain the Quran has been the cause of straying for many a people, both in the past and the present. One of the earliest groups to stray concerning this matter was the Khawaarij. It is narrated that they debated with the *khaleefah* Umar ibn Abdul Azeez concerning this issue. They told Umar that the Quran only mentions flogging

¹ Ibn Qudaama, *al-Mughni*, vol. 10, p. 121; also see al-Luhaibi, p. 111.

² Cf., ibn Qudaama, *al-Mughni*, vol. 10, p. 121; al-Luhaibi, p. 1112.

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and does not mention stoning. Umar said to them, “Do you only take what is found in the Quran?” They said, “Yes.” He said to them, “Inform me about the number of the obligatory prayers and the number of its essential acts, *rakats* and their timings. Where do you find those matters in the Book of Allah? Tell me about the zakat and its amount and on what wealth it is to be paid.” They asked him to give them some time to find those matters. They returned and admitted that they did not find them in the Quran. Umar then asked them, “Why do you do those things then?” They answered, “Because the Messenger (peace be upon him) did them as did the Muslims after them.” Umar then replied, “Such is the case with the stoning.”¹

“a life for a life”

If an adult, rational person intentionally murders another person, male or female, without due right of law, then that murderer is to be put to death. This is clear from the Quran, as Allah has said,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كِتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلِ الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ
وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأَنْثَىٰ بِالْأُنْثَىٰ فَمَنْ عَفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبَاعُ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ
أَعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَوةٌ
يَأْتِيهِ الْآلِبَابُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O believers! The Law of Equality in punishment is prescribed for you in case of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But if the relatives of the killed person forgive to some extent their brother [the killer], then the relatives should demand blood-money in a reasonable manner, and the killer must pay with handsome gratitude. This is an alleviation and a mercy from your Lord. So after this whoever transgresses the limits, he shall have a painful torment. And there is [saving of] life for you in the Law of Equality in punishment, O men of understanding, that you may become pious” (*al-Baqara* 178-179).

There are some exceptions to this ruling. The first exception is alluded to in the verse itself. The relatives of the deceased have the right to forego the death penalty and accept a blood-money payment instead from the killer.

A second exception is where a father kills his son. According to the majority of the scholars, the father is not to be killed for such an act. This

¹ Cf., ibn Qudaama, *al-Mughni*, vol. 10, p. 122; al-Luhaibi, p. 1112.

opinion has been narrated from Umar ibn al-Khattaab. In fact, there is even a hadith narrated from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in which he said,

لَا يُقَادُ الْوَالِدُ بِالْوَلَدِ

“There is no retribution to be done to the father because of the son.”¹ Malik, perhaps unaware of that hadith, was of the opinion that if it was clear that the father intentionally killed his son, with no mistake involved, then he is to be killed. Al-Laith, a scholar close to Malik, was also of the opinion that the generality of the command of the Law of Retribution also applied to the father killing his son.²

A third exception is where a free man kills a slave. This is the opinion of the majority of the scholars. Abu Hanifah and his companions say that if a man kills his own slave, he is not to be killed; but if a man kills somebody else’s slave, he is to be killed. Yet others hold the view that a free person is to be killed for killing any slave. This was the opinion of al-Thauri and a number of the scholars of “the school of hadith”. This view may be based on the hadith,

مَنْ قَتَلَ عَبْدَهُ قَتَلْنَاهُ وَمَنْ جَدَعَ عَبْدَهُ جَدَعْنَاهُ

“Whoever kills his slave, we shall kill him. And whoever mutilates his slave, we shall mutilate him.” However, Ahmad, who recorded this hadith, doubted its authenticity.³

According to a number of scholars, if a person murders another person’s slave, then, even though the murderer is not to be killed, the murderer may pay the price of that slave to his owner. This price may even exceed the blood-money usually paid, but the murderer must pay it. If a person kills his own slave, he is to be punished in a different way. It is recorded in a hadith in *Sunan al-Daaraqutni* that a man intentionally killed his slave who was tied up. The Prophet (peace be upon him) had him lashed one hundred times, banished for one year, removed from the list of those who receive portions of the war booty and he ordered him to free a slave. This punishment is the view of the

¹ Recorded by al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah, Ahmad, ibn Abu Shaibah, al-Daaraqutni, al-Baihaqi and others. Ibn Rajab seems to doubt the authenticity of this hadith. However, both Shuaib al-Arnaoot and Saleem al-Hilaali conclude that it is *sahih*. See Shuaib al-Arnaoot and Baajis’ footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 315-316; al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, pp. 193-194. This, like in many of the cases to be mentioned later, does not mean that the father receives no form of punishment whatsoever. However, he is not to be killed for that act.

² See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 316.

³ Al-Hilaali also concludes that it is weak. Al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, pp. 194-195.

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majority of the scholars, including Malik, Ahmad and al-Shafi'ee.¹ However, the narration itself seems not to be authentic.²

A fourth exception is where a Muslim kills a non-Muslim. If the non-Muslim was in a state of war or living in a land that is in a state of war against the Muslims, then all scholars agree that the Muslim is not to be killed for that act.

There is a difference of opinion over the case of a Muslim killing a non-Muslim citizen of the Islamic State. The majority of the scholars say that the Muslim is not to be killed as retribution in that case. This is based on the hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

لَا يُقْتَلُ مُسْلِمٌ بِكَافِرٍ

“A Muslim is not to be killed for a non-Muslim.”

Abu Hanifah and the scholars of Kufa state that a Muslim who kills a non-Muslim citizen is to be put to death. They base this on a narration in which the Prophet killed a Muslim for killing a non-Muslim citizen. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

أَنَا أَحَقُّ مَنْ وَفَى بِذِمَّتِهِ

“I am the foremost person to fulfill his pact.” However, this hadith, which was recorded by al-Daraqutni, al-Baihaqi and others, is clearly a weak hadith in the opinion of the scholars of hadith.³

“one who forsakes his religion⁴ and separates from the community”

This is in reference to the apostate. The phrase does not mean one who does both acts. The first characteristic is simply emphasized by the second characteristic. Indeed, the first characteristic automatically implies the second characteristic.⁵ In a hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ بَلَغَ دِينَهُ فَأَقْتُلُوهُ

“Whoever changes his religion is to be killed.”

¹ Sultaan, p. 133.

² See Muhammad Adheemalabaadi's comments on that hadith in Muhammad Adheemalabaadi, *Al-Taleeq al-Mughni ala al-Daraqutni* (Beirut: Aalam al-Kitaab, 1982), vol. 3, pp. 144-145.

³ See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 317.

⁴ A narration in *Sahih Muslim* explicitly states, “forsakes Islam...”

⁵ See al-Haitami, p. 150; al-Mudaabaghi, p. 150.

Included in this category is anyone who rejects what the Muslim Nation has agreed upon. He is truly, “separating from the community.” However, on this point one must be careful. There are some aspects that are agreed upon that are well-known to everyone. It would be difficult to imagine anyone not knowing them, especially those who grew up in a Muslim environment. These could include matters like the obligation of praying five times a day, the prohibition of alcohol and so forth. This category cannot be denied by anyone. There is a second category concerning which there is agreement, especially among the early generations, but many people are not aware of such agreement. Obviously, denial of this type of consensus would not lead to being declared a disbeliever and having one’s blood spilled.¹

If a person commits any of the acts of apostasy, even if he claims to believe in the testimony of faith, he will be killed due to his apostasy— if he persists in his disbelief and refuses to repent. However, if a person apostates from Islam and then repents, he is not to be killed because in that state he is neither forsaking his religion nor separating from the community.²

There is agreement among the scholars that the male apostate is to be killed. There is some disagreement concerning the female apostate. The Hanafis argue that she is not to be killed. They say that she should be imprisoned until she repents or dies. Their reasoning is that women and children are not to be killed during jihad, hence, they are not to be killed for, in essence, joining the ranks of the disbelievers.³ However, the majority of the scholars stick to the general wording of the hadith noted above and say that an apostate woman is also to be killed.⁴

Other Cases that Call for the Death Penalty

Upon studying other hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him), one will note that there are other cases that also call for the death penalty. These cases include the following:

(i) The case of male homosexuality: Ibn Abbaas narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ وَجَدْتُمُوهُ يَعْمَلُ عَمَلَ قَوْمِ لُوطٍ فَأَقْتُلُوا الْفَاعِلَ وَالْمَفْعُولَ بِهِ

¹ See Muhammad ibn Daqeeq al-Eid, *Ihkaam al-Ahkaam Sharh Umdah al-Ahkaam* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiya, n.d.), vol. 4, pp. 84-85.

² Note that the apostate’s repentance means that he will not be killed. However, the same is not true for the murderer or the adulterer. They committed their crime and there is nothing they can do to remove that crime. Hence, even if they feel remorse for their act, they will still be killed.

³ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 93.

⁴ For more details on this point, see Numaan al-Saamuraa, *Ahkaam al-Riddah fi al-Shareeah al-Islamiyah* (Beirut: Daar al-Arabiyyah, n.d.), pp. 213-222.

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“Whoever you find doing the act of the People of Lot, then kill the one doing the act [of sodomy] and the one it is being done to.”¹ There was a general consensus among the Companions that male homosexuals are to be killed. They only differed concerning the exact manner by which their execution is to take place. Furthermore, the male homosexual is to be killed regardless of whether he is married or not.

(ii) The case of one who marries a related woman who is within the prohibited degrees of marriage: A hadith recorded by Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi and others states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had ordered that the one who married his father's wife is to be killed.²

(iii) The case of the magician: A hadith in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* states,

حَدُّ السَّاحِرِ ضَرْبَةٌ بِالسَّيْفِ

“The prescribed punishment for the magician is to strike him with the sword.” However, it seems that this hadith is not authentic. Most likely it was a statement of the Companion Jundub.³ Even though this hadith is not authentic, to kill the magician is the opinion of the majority of the scholars. In reality, though, scholars such as Malik, Ahmad and others consider the magician to be a disbeliever and that is why he is to be killed.⁴

(iv) The case of animal bestiality: A hadith states,

مَنْ وَجَدْتُمُوهُ وَقَعَ عَلَىٰ بَهِيمَةٍ فَاقْتُلُوهُ وَاقْتُلُوا الْبَهِيمَةَ

“For whoever you find [committing sodomy] with an animal, you should kill him and kill the animal.”⁵

(v) The case of the one who does not pray: The details concerning such a person were discussed earlier in the commentary to Hadith #3.

(vi) The one who drinks alcohol and is already punished three times: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

¹ This was recorded by Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah and others. al-Albaani and Al-Hilaali call it *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1121; al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 198.

² According to al-Hilaali, that narration is *sahih*. Al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 198.

³ See al-Arnaoot and Baajis' footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 321; al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 198-199.

⁴ For more details on this question, see Hayah Akhdhar, *Muwaqaf al-Islam min al-Sihr* (Jeddah: Daar al-Mujtama, 1995), vol. 2, pp. 514-558.

⁵ This hadith was recorded by Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah and others. According to al-Albaani and al-Hilaali, it is *sahih*. However, al-Arnaoot seems not to accept it and has quoted ibn Abbaas as saying that there is no prescribed punishment for such an act. See al-Albaani, *Sahih al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1121; al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 199; S. al-Arnaoot's comments to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 199.

مَنْ شَرِبَ الْخَمْرَ فَاجْلِدُوهُ فَإِنْ عَادَ فَاجْلِدُوهُ فَإِنْ عَادَ فَاقْتُلُوهُ

“The one who drinks alcohol is to be flogged. If he repeats it, flog him again. If he repeats it, flog him again. If he [again] repeats it, then kill him.”¹ There is no question that this is an authentic hadith.² Most scholars seem to consider this hadith to be abrogated though. This hadith is found in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. Al-Tirmidhi himself said,

All of the hadith in this book [*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*] are acted upon and followed by some people of knowledge— except for two hadith: the hadith of ibn Abbaas in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) combined the Dhuhr and Asr Prayers in Madinah and the Maghrib and Isha Prayers, without fear, traveling or rain. And the hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “If he drinks flog him; if he repeats it a fourth time, kill him.”³

Ahmad Shaakir has written some thirty pages on this hadith alone. He has tried to prove that the claim that it is abrogated is not a strong claim. In fact, it is an unsupported claim. His arguments seem convincing.⁴

(vii) The case of the thief after being punished four times: There is also a hadith in *Sunan Abu Dawood*, *Sunan al-Nasaai* and al-Baihaqi’s *Sunan al-Kubra* that states that the thief is to be killed if he has already been punished four times for that crime.⁵ This is the opinion of some jurists.

(viii) The case of dividing the Muslims when they are united under the leadership of one caliph: The Prophet (peace be upon him) once said,

¹ This hadith was recorded by Ahmad with this wording. It has also been recorded by al-Tirmidhi and numerous others.

² Cf., Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahaadith al-Saheeha* (Kuwait: al-Daar al-Salafiya, 1979), vol. 4, pp. 347-348.

³ Quoted in Ahmad Shaakir’s footnotes to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Turaath al-Islami, 1994), vol. 9, pp. 52-53. In his commentary to *Sahih Muslim*, al-Nawawi wrote, “As for what he said about the one who drinks alcohol, it is as he said. It is an abrogated hadith. The consensus points to it being abrogated. As for the hadith of ibn Abbaas, the scholars are not agreed upon not acting in accord with it. In fact, they have different statements on that point.” Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, vol. 5, p. 218 (quoted in Shaakir’s notes, vol. 9, p. 53).

⁴ See Shaakir’s notes to ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 9, pp. 40-70. Ibn al-Qayyim was of the opinion that the killing was of a matter of juridical discretion. That is, the judge must have the person flogged but he may also have him killed if he finds that to be the wisest approach. Shaakir does not accept this view either, saying that it is unsubstantiated. Al-Albaani, on the other hand, accepts ibn al-Qayyim’s conclusion. (Al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 3, p. 348.)

⁵ The majority of the scholars seem to consider this a weak or very weak hadith. This was the view of al-Nasaai and ibn Rajab. However, al-Hilaali concludes that it is *hasan*. Allah knows best. See Shuaib al-Arnaoot’s footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 323; al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 200.

Hadith #14: The Sanctity of a Muslim's Blood

مَنْ أَتَاكُمْ وَأَمْرُكُمْ جَمِيعٌ عَلَى رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَشُقَّ عَصَاكُمْ أَوْ يُفَرِّقَ جَمَاعَتَكُمْ
فَأَقْتُلُوهُ

“When you are all united under one leader and someone comes to undermine your solidarity or disrupt your unity, you should kill him.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

(ix) The case of self-defense or defending one's wealth: It is clear from many hadith that it is excusable to kill another Muslim in the case of self-defense. If the person fights in defense of his wealth and is killed, he will be treated by Allah¹ as a martyr. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ قُتِلَ دُونَ مَالِهِ فَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

“The one who is killed while defending his wealth is a martyr.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) Another hadith states,

مَنْ قُتِلَ دُونَ مَالِهِ فَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ دُونَ أَهْلِهِ أَوْ دُونَ دَمِهِ أَوْ دُونَ دِينِهِ فَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

“Whoever is killed defending his wealth is a martyr. Whoever is killed defending his family or his blood or his religion is a martyr.”²

How to Reconcile These Cases with the Meaning of this Hadith

The hadith under discussion here from ibn Masood definitely gives the impression that it is only under one of those three cases that a person receives the death penalty. How is it then that there are all of these other cases just described? Does this not contradict the hadith of ibn Masood?

Some answer this question by saying, “Yes, there is a clear contradiction” and, therefore, the hadith of ibn Masood abrogates the rulings for all of the other cases mentioned. However, this is an untenable position. To prove abrogation, one would have to demonstrate that the hadith of ibn Masood was stated after all of the other hadith that prescribe the death penalty for the acts stated above. This is something that no one has been able to prove. A better approach is to consider ibn Masood's statement to be general and a general statement cannot abrogate more particular statements, even if the general statement came later in time.

¹ He is treated by Allah as a martyr but he is not treated in this world as a martyr. That is, he is still washed and buried like any non-martyr who passes away.

² Recorded by Abu Dawood. According to al-Albaani, a hadith with virtually the same wording is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1100.

Ibn Rajab has responded to this question in a different way. He stated that this hadith of ibn Masood makes it clear that the death penalty is in any of three cases: (1) when a person leaves the religion, (2) when a person wrongfully spills the blood of another, (3) and when the person engages in illegal sexual intercourse.

Ibn Rajab then goes on to say that the stated punishment for the married adulterer is simply an example of the type of crime that leads to the death penalty. If a person has legal means to sexual intercourse and then he still insists on committing illegal sexual intercourse, he has committed such a heinous crime that he no longer deserves to live. If that is true, what about those people who indulge in sexual practices that are not allowed under any circumstances, such as homosexuality and animal bestiality. These cases are even worse and more deserving of such punishment than adultery. Hence, the stated punishment for adultery implies that these other cases should also be dealt with in the same way.

The second category is the one who sheds another's blood unlawfully. Certainly, causing civil commotion and disruption among the Muslim nation also leads to the same result. Hence, the one who does the act that would lead to the same result is to receive the same punishment, as mentioned in the hadith above. The same holds true for the alcoholic. His actions may certainly lead to the wrongful spilling of blood. Hence, he is deserving of that same punishment.

The third category is the one who apostates. This includes all forms of apostasy. In fact, some scholars even say that those who are calling to clear innovations that contradict the basis of Islam are to be killed, based on this hadith. In fact, the Prophet (peace be upon him) even stated that the Khawaarij should be killed. The scholars though differ about whether they should be killed due to their heresy or due to their revolt against the Muslim rulers.¹

Finally, al-Sindi argues that this hadith from ibn Masood is simply stating the majority of the cases in which a person's blood may be spilled. It was not intended to mention all cases. Hence, there is no difficulty with there being a death penalty in cases not explicitly mentioned in this hadith.² However, ibn Rajab's discussion is more convincing because the Prophet's speech is made up of a general negation followed by an exception. This is one of the strongest forms of all-inclusiveness. Therefore, it is hard to accept al-Sindi's argument that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was just mentioning the most common cases.

Other Points Related to this Hadith

- Those who are to implement the death penalty are the rightful government leaders or rulers. One is not allowed to implement such a penalty without

¹ See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 326-330.

² Al-Sindi, *Sharh*, p. 59.

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their approval or authority. For example, if a person is murdered, the victim's brother is not allowed to go and execute his murderer. First, the case must be proven and the government authorities must make the decision to have the person executed. However, al-Bugha and Mistu state, if a person does carry out the death penalty without governmental authority, then that person is also to be punished but he is not to receive the death penalty himself, since he killed someone who legally deserved to be killed.¹

- The above point leads to another very important question: Is the death penalty and other prescribed punishments to be implemented in non-Islamic lands?² That is, if a Muslim commits, for example, adultery in a non-Islamic state, are the Muslims there supposed to execute him? On this opinion, there is a difference of opinion among the scholars.³

The first opinion to be presented here is that of ibn al-Qayyim. His opinion is somewhat unique but it is strongly rooted in the evidences related to this question. According to ibn al-Qayyim, if a person commits a crime for which there is a prescribed punishment in a non-Islamic state, then he is not to be punished by the Muslims for that crime until he returns to the Islamic state. Furthermore, if that took place during jihad and the person afterwards does acts of bravery against the disbelievers and he shows signs of repentance, then the punishment may be dropped completely from him.

The opinion of Ahmad, Ishaq, al-Auzaa'ee and others is that the prescribed punishment is not to be carried out in the non-Islamic lands but will be carried out when the people return to the Islamic land. One of the reasons that they give for that is that the prescribed punishment may drive the guilty Muslim to leave the Muslims and join the ranks of the disbelievers. That is, there is more harm than good in enforcing such penalties in non-Islamic lands. Hence, they do not allow such an act in the lands of the non-Muslims. One of the proofs for this position is the following hadith from *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* and elsewhere, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

لَا تُقَطَّعُ الْأَيْدِي فِي الْعَزْوِ

“Do not cut the hands [of the thieves] in battle.”⁴ This hadith is understood by some scholars to imply that in all of the lands of the enemies, the prescribed punishments are not to be implemented. This was the

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 94.

² Non-Islamic lands are known in the literature as *Daar al-Harb* (دار الحرب) or *Daar al-Kufr* (دار الكفر). These are the lands where Islamic law is not being enforced and the affairs of the state are not in the hands of Muslims.

³ For this question, the author greatly relied upon Bakr Abu Zaid, *Al-Hudood wa al-Taziraat ind ibn al-Qayyim* (Riyadh: Daar al-Asimah, 1415 A.H.), pp. 39-68.

⁴ According to al-Albani, this hadith is *sahih*. Al-Albani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1233.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

application by the Companions of this hadith. In fact, according to al-Maqdisi, there is a consensus on this point.

The Hanafis are of the view that the prescribed punishments are not to be executed in non-Islamic lands unless the caliph is actually present with the Muslims. They argue that without the ability and authority to implement the penalties, they may not be performed. However, if the caliph is actually with them, they will have the ability and authority to do it. Note that they do not consider it sufficient that the caliph's governor or military ruler is present with them.

The Malikis (and one narration from Imam al-Shafi'ee¹) are of the view that the prescribed punishments must be implemented no matter where or when the crime takes place. They say that the commands to implement them are general and must be applied anywhere. However, they themselves admit that the general commands may be specified in many cases. In particular, they are strong advocates that if an act leads to more harm than good, it should not be performed.

The conclusion for today's world is that the prescribed punishments are not to be carried out in non-Islamic lands— although the acts themselves, obviously, are still not permissible for Muslims. The Muslims neither have the authority, true Islamic leadership or ability to carry them out. Furthermore, the harm of performing such punishments greatly outweighs the benefit of them. If a person commits such heinous crimes as these described, the Muslim community should make him realize how great the crime he committed is and do their best to guide him to the road of repentance and reform. Allah knows best.

Summary of the Hadith

- The life of a Muslim is inviolable and protected by law. No one has the right to take his life unless he commits a crime that calls for the death penalty.
- The committing of adultery, murder and apostasy are such heinous crimes that Islamic Law, which otherwise safeguards life, has deemed that those who commit such crimes no longer deserve to live.
- One of the purposes of the death penalty is to protect the sanctity and lives of all Muslims. As Allah states about the Law of Retribution, quoted above, "And there is [saving of] life for you in the Law of Equality in punishment, O men of understanding, that you may become pious" (*al-Baqara* 178-179).

¹ The other view accredited to al-Shafi'ee is that the prescribed punishment is only performed in non-Islamic lands if the caliph or ruler is present with them. Otherwise, they are not carried out.

Hadith #15

"Whoever believes in Allah should..."

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ جَارَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ

رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ وَمُسْلِمٌ

On the authority of Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him), the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good things or keep silent. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should be courteous and generous to his neighbor. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should be courteous and generous to his [traveling] visitor."

Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary

- فليقل - "he should speak", the ل makes the form that of the imperative or command. The same is true for the ل in the next three words of this selected vocabulary.
- ليصمت - "he should be silent"
- فليكرم - "he should be courteous and generous." Both courteous and generous have been used to try to capture the true meaning of the Arabic word. Wehr, for example, has defined the word *karam* (كرم) in the following manner: "noble nature, high-mindedness, noble-mindedness, noble-heartedness, generosity, magnanimity, kindness, friendliness, amicability, liberality, munificence."¹
- جاره - "his neighbor," the ة is for "his"
- ضيفه - "his visitor"

¹ J. M. Cowan, ed., *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Ithaca, NY: Spoken Languages Services, Inc., 1976), p. 821.

Takhreej

Ten Followers narrated this hadith from Abu Huraira. Their narrations may be found in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan Abu Dawood*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, *Musnad Ahmad*, *Sunan al-Kubra* by al-Baihaqi and scores of others.

The same hadith has also been narrated by a large number of other Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), including Abu Suraij, Aisha, Abu Ayyoob, ibn Abbaas, Anas ibn Maalik, ibn Masood, Jaabir ibn Samurah, Abu Umaamah, Abdullah ibn Amr, Abdullah ibn Umar, Zaid ibn Khaalid and Abu Saeed al-Khudri. Some of these narrations are authentic but most of them are weak.¹

General Comments about the Hadith

This hadith describes how the one who wishes to be a true believer must behave towards others.

Al-Haitami states that this hadith is deserving to be called one-third of Islam since it covers all of the rulings concerning the tongue. He says that deeds are either of the tongue, the heart, or the physical body. This hadith covers the last third.² He also points out that this hadith is very similar in meaning to the hadith that states, "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." He says that everyone is a neighbor to someone else. Therefore, if this hadith is truly applied, then the society will be filled with love and closeness toward one another.³

About the Narrator: Abu Huraira

Abu Huraira was discussed under Hadith #9.

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day"

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned three characteristics of those who truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. These acts are part of complete *Imaan*. This implies that the one who does not have these characteristics is not a true and complete believer. If someone claims to himself that he is a true and complete believer, then he must possess these characteristics.

If a Muslim finds himself not having these characteristics, it should make him realize that there is room for improvement in his religion. He is not as close to Allah as he should be. He may not be among those people whom

¹ See ibn Muhammad, pp. 119-128.

² Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 155.

³ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 155.

Hadith #15: "Whoever believes in Allah should..."

Allah is pleased with and will enter directly into Paradise without any punishment at all.

Note that in this hadith the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) only mentioned belief in Allah and the Last Day. This is done as a kind of encouragement for people to have those characteristics mentioned in the hadith. It will be on the Last Day that everyone will be held accountable for his deeds. These deeds include what the person ever said, how he treated his neighbor and how he treated his visitors. If he has not behaved properly in these matters, his recompense will be on the Day of Judgment. Hence, the explicit mention of the Last Day should be a reminder and driving factor that will lead every believer to ensure that he truly has the characteristics that the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned in this hadith.

Note that the deeds that make up faith are sometimes related to the "rights of Allah" and sometimes related to the "rights of human beings". The "rights of Allah" include fulfilling the obligatory deeds and avoiding the forbidden deeds. This includes speaking only good things and remaining silent instead of speaking evil or harmful things. The "rights of other humans" includes honoring and being generous to one's visitors and being generous to one's neighbors. All of these deeds are a must for the true believer. This shows the emphasis that Islam has not only on the ritual acts of worship but also on the relationship and interaction between humans themselves.

"should speak good things or keep silent"

The first characteristic that the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned in this hadith concerns the tongue. The person who believes in Allah and the Last Day is to be careful about his speech. Allah has stated a fact in the Quran that should serve as a clear warning to all believers about their speech:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعَلْمَا تَوْسُوسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَحَنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ
حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ ﴿١٨﴾ إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيَانِ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ ﴿١٧﴾ مَا
يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"And indeed We have created man, and We know what his oneself whispers to him. And We are nearer to him [by Our knowledge] than his jugular vein. [Remember] that the two receivers [recording angels] receive [each human after the age of puberty], one sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter but there is a watcher by him ready [to record it]" (Qaaf 16-18).

As was briefly mentioned while discussing Hadith #12, a person's tongue is something that quite often leads the person to commit sins and, may thereby, lead him to Hell. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِالْكَلِمَةِ مَا يَبِينُ فِيهَا يَزُلُّ بِهَا فِي النَّارِ أَبْعَدَ مِمَّا بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ

“Verily, a servant [human] makes a statement and he does not realize what [harm] it contains and because of it he is lowered in the Fire a distance which is greater than what is between the East and the West.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

However, one’s speech does not always have negative results. It can also be a key to pleasing Allah. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) also said,

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِالْكَلِمَةِ مِنْ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ لَا يُلْقِي لَهَا بَالًا يَرْفَعُهُ اللَّهُ بِهَا دَرَجَاتٍ وَإِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِالْكَلِمَةِ مِنْ سَخَطِ اللَّهِ لَا يُلْقِي لَهَا بَالًا يَهْوِي بِهَا فِي جَهَنَّمَ

“A servant makes a statement that is so pleasing to Allah, although he himself does not give it much concern, that Allah raises him levels due to it. And a servant makes a statement that is so displeasing to Allah, although he himself does not give it much concern, that he is thrown because of it into Hell.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

The true believer recognizes this fact. He realizes that what he says may either be pleasing or displeasing to Allah. Therefore, he weighs his statement before he says it. If it finds that it is good, then he says it. If he finds that it is evil, he refrains from saying it. Even if he finds that it is of no benefit, he still remains silent and does not speak. Hence, if they are good words, he speaks. If what he was thinking of saying was either evil or of no benefit, what one could call neutral, he remains silent and does not speak. This means that there is no in between. Either the speech is good and he should speak it or it is not good, including neutral, and therefore he should not speak it.

The *Salaf* were very careful about speaking too much. They realized that if one is not careful about his tongue, it may lead him to commit many sins. In fact, Umar once said, “The one who speaks a lot commits lots of mistakes. The one who makes lots of mistakes commits lots of sins. The one who commits lots of sins will have the Hell-fire as the first place for him.”¹

This hadith also implies that if there is some good thing that needs to be said, then one should say it. In that case, it is better to speak than to be quiet. Indeed, this act is preferred over a person being quiet because the benefit of it goes not only to himself but also to others. When one is silent when he should speak, this could be a great sin. Such is the case with the person who sees an evil and has the *shareeah* means to speak about it but he does not do so. Abu al-Diqaaq once said, “Whoever is silent concerning the truth is a mute Satan.”²

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 339.

² Quoted in al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 152.

Hadith #15: "Whoever believes in Allah should..."

Thus, silence is not always to be preferred. However, silence is always to be preferred to speech that is not beneficial or good.

Hence, there are two extremes that one must avoid with respect to speaking: (1) one should not speak beyond what is needed or good (this is the "speaking devil") and (2) one should not remain silent when there is a need to speak (this is the "mute devil").

Speaking Good Things

There are numerous types of speech that fall under this category of speaking good things. The most obvious examples of beneficial speech is speech which consists of reciting the Quran, remembrance of Allah and supplications. Herein just a few other examples shall be mentioned— those that merit great reward in the sight of Allah.

(i) Putting things right between people who are differing from one another for some reason: A hadith in *Sunan Abu Dawood* states,

أَلَا أُخْبِرُكُمْ بِأَفْضَلِ مِنْ دَرَجَةِ الصِّيَامِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَالصَّدَقَةِ قَالُوا بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ
إِصْلَاحُ ذَاتِ الْبَيْنِ وَفَسَادُ ذَاتِ الْبَيْنِ الْحَالِقَةُ

"Shall I not inform of you a deed which is more virtuous than fasting, prayer and giving in charity?" They said, "Certainly, O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)." He said, "It is that you make things right between people. Spoiling the relations between people is the cutter [that destroys]."¹

(ii) Ordering good and eradicating evil: This is one of the most important responsibilities upon the Muslim nation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned one particular method which is clearly related to one's speech:

سَيِّدُ الشُّهَدَاءِ حَمْزَةُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ وَرَجُلٌ قَامَ إِلَى إِمَامٍ جَائِرٍ فَأَمَرَهُ وَنَهَاهُ فَقَتَلَهُ

"The leader of the martyrs is Hamzah ibn Abdul Mutalib and a man who stands up to an unjust ruler and orders him [to do what is right] and forbids him [to do what is evil], so he [the ruler] kills him."²

(iii) Guiding others to what is best for them, whether it be related to a religious or a worldly matter: The Prophet (peace be upon him) once said,

مَنْ دَلَّ عَلَى خَيْرٍ فَلَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ فَاعِيهِ

¹ Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and al-Tirmidhi. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 506.

² Recorded by al-Haakim and Dhiya al-Maqdisi. According to al-Albaani, it is *hasan*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 685.

“The man who guides to what is good shall have the same reward as the one who performs that [good].” (Recorded by Muslim.)

(iv) Striving and making *jihad* against the disbelievers by one’s speech: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

جَاهِدُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ

“Strive (make *jihad*) against the polytheists with your wealth, your hands and your tongues.”¹

Remaining Silent

This is the second option for the true believer. Either he will speak the good things or he will remain silent. This is his second option because if a speech is not clearly positive and beneficial, it can easily lead to something very negative and harmful. Even the permissible speech may often times lead to indulging in speech which is no longer simply permissible. It may be hard for some people, once they start speaking, to realize where they should stop as they move from the neutral to the harmful speech.

Furthermore, when one considers all of the many ways by which one’s speech could be harmful and sinful, one will be very careful in his speech. Above was noted some of the beneficial types of speech. The list of negative or harmful types of speech is quite long. People may easily fall into anyone of them. They include backbiting, lying, false witness, ridiculing others, spreading harmful tales, arguing for no beneficial purpose, joking in ways that are not permissible, cursing, abusing others, spreading others’ secrets, breaking promises and so forth.

Here is more detail about some of the most commonly found forms of harmful speech:²

(i) Backbiting: Backbiting is to say something truthful behind one’s brother’s back that the brother would not like to have said about him. This is one type of harmful speech that perhaps everyone realizes its evil, yet very few— those whose hearts Allah has guided— truly and completely remain away from it. It is sufficient to mention the verse of the Quran dealing with

¹ Recorded by al-Nasaai, Abu Dawood and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 593.

² Other great sins committed that are the result of one’s speech that are not discussed here include: forging hadith, slandering innocent women, cheating or deceiving others, making false oaths, giving false testimony, reminding people of one’s kindness, cursing others, arguing or quarreling for show and not for seeking the truth and reviling any of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). For a discussion of these and other great sins, see Muhammad Tahlawi, *The Path to Paradise* (Ann Arbor, MI: Islamic Assembly of North America, 1994), pp. 54-83.

backbiting to realize how harmful this is to a person's relationship with Allah. Allah has said,

وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا
فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَحِيمٌ

"And do not backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it [so hate backbiting]. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is the One who accepts repentance, Most Merciful" (*al-Hujuraat* 12).

(ii) *Al-Nameemah* (this is the spreading of information about others with the purpose of causing dissent and evil): A hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* describes a person as being punished in the grave because of his act of *nameemah*.

(iii) Lying: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

عَلَيْكُمْ بِالصِّدْقِ فَإِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ وَإِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَمَا يَزَالُ الرَّجُلُ
يَصْدُقُ وَيَتَحَرَّى الصِّدْقَ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ صِدْقًا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالْكَذِبَ فَإِنَّ الْكَذِبَ
يَهْدِي إِلَى الْفُجُورِ وَإِنَّ الْفُجُورَ يَهْدِي إِلَى النَّارِ وَمَا يَزَالُ الرَّجُلُ يَكْذِبُ وَيَتَحَرَّى
الْكَذِبَ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَذَابًا

"You must adhere to honesty, for honesty leads to righteousness. And, verily, righteousness leads to Paradise. A person continues being honest and seeking honesty until he is recorded with Allah as an honest person. You must remain away from lying for lying leads to wickedness. And, verily, wickedness leads to the Fire. A person continues lying and seeking falsehood until he is recorded with Allah as a liar." (Recorded by Muslim.)

(iv) Speaking about Allah or His religion without knowledge: This is one of the greatest sins. Almost all *kufr* and *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) emanate from speaking about Allah without knowledge. In the following verse, Allah goes from the lighter to the greater sins and leaves speaking about Allah without knowledge last:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ
الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا
لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Say [O Muhammad]: The things that my Lord has forbidden are evil, lewd acts, whether committed openly or secretly, sins [of all kinds], unrightful oppression, joining partners [in worship] with Allah for which He has given no authority and saying things about Allah of which you have no knowledge” (*al-Araaf* 33). Allah also says,

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُم بِالسُّوْءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“He [Satan] commands you only what is evil and lewd, and that you should say about Allah that which you do not know” (*al-Baqara* 169).

Ibn Hajr states that before a person speaks, he should think about what he is going to say. If he knows that there is no harm, forbidden or disliked aspect about what he is going to say, he may speak. However, if he finds that his speech is of a permissible nature, even then it is better for him to be quiet in order to make sure that the permissible speech does not lead to some disliked or forbidden speech.¹

“should be courteous and generous to his neighbor”

This hadith demonstrates the relationship between true belief (*iman*) in Allah and the Last Day and how one treats his neighbor.² Being courteous and generous to one’s neighbor includes helping him when they need assistance, visiting them when they are ill and general checking on their welfare. Abu Bakr al-Jazairi wrote,

One should demonstrate goodness towards one neighbor by: helping them when they seek help, assisting them if they seek assistance, visiting them when they fall ill, congratulating them if something pleasing occurs to them, giving them condolences upon afflictions, helping them if they are in need, being the first to greet them, being kind in speech to them, being gentle in one’s speech to the neighbor’s children, guiding them to what is best for their religion and worldly life, overlooking their mistakes, not attempting to look into their private matters, not constraining them with one’s building or renovations or along the walkway, and not harming them by letting one’s trash onto their property or in front of their household. All of those actions form part of the goodness that one is ordered to

¹ Quoted in Sultaan, p. 138.

² According to Abdul Rahman al-Ubaid, the word “neighbor” also applies to the “neighbor” at work, in the mosque, along the road, in a gathering and so forth. However, this interpretation seems to go beyond the well-known and understood meaning of the word. [Al-Ubaid was quoted in Abdullah al-Jarallah, *Tadhkeer al-Abraar bi-Huqooq al-Jaar* (Riyadh: Dar al-Samee’, n.d.), p. 15.]

Hadith #15: "Whoever believes in Allah should..."

perform in Allah's command [in the verse to be quoted shortly].¹

The Quran and sunnah place great emphasis on treating one's neighbor well. Indeed, in the following verse, the order to treat neighbors well comes shortly after the command to worship Allah alone:

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ
بِالْجُنُبِ وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ
مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا

"Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the poor who beg, the neighbor who is a near of kin, the neighbor who is a non-relative, the companion by your side, the wayfarer [you meet], and what your right hands possess. Verily, Allah does not like such as are proud and boastful" (*al-Nisaa* 36).

In this verse, Allah has combined His rights over His servants with the servants' rights over each other. Among the servants, a person must treat the following five classes especially well: (1) those that are related to him, especially his parents; (2) those who are weak and in need; (3) those with whom he mixes and sees on a regular basis, such as neighbors; (4) those who come upon a person on a temporary basis, such as a wayfarer; and (5) the slaves that one possesses. In this last category, some of the *Salaf* also included what one possesses of animals.²

There is a difference of opinion concerning the meaning of the words الجار ذي القربى and الجار الجنب. Khan and al-Hillali have translated these phrases as, "neighbor who is a near of kin," and, "neighbor who is a stranger," respectively.³ One of the interpretations is that the first phrase means a neighbor who is also a relative while the second phrase means a neighbor who is not a relative. This is the majority opinion. Another interpretation is that the first phrase means a neighbor who is close in physical proximity while the second phrase means neighbors who are further away. Yet a third interpretation says that the first phrase means a neighbor who is a Muslim while the second

¹ Abu Bakr al-Jazaairi, *Minhaaj al-Muslim* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1992), p. 107.

² Ibn Rajab, *Jami*, vol. 1, p. 346-348.

³ Muhammad al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Quran in the English Language* (Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 1993), p. 128.

phrase refers to non-Muslim neighbors.¹ A fourth interpretation is that the first phrase means one's wife² while the second phrase means one's companion while traveling.³

In any case, the scholars have concluded that there are three types of neighbors: (a) a neighbor who is also a relative and a Muslim. This type of neighbor has three types of rights over the person (that of being a neighbor, a relative and a brother Muslim). (b) a neighbor who is not a relative but is a Muslim. This neighbor has two types of rights over the person. (c) a neighbor who is neither a relative nor a Muslim. This neighbor only has the right of a neighbor, and none other.⁴

The *Shareeah* Definition of Neighbor

Before mentioning other hadith about the importance of treating one's neighbor well, the *shareeah* definition of "a neighbor" should be given. The jurists have differed concerning the exact definition of "neighbor."

One opinion is that a person's neighborhood extends forty houses in each direction. This was the opinion of al-Hasan, al-Zuhri and al-Auzaai. According to the Shafi'ees, it is the correct opinion and most of the Hanbalis also hold this opinion.

A second opinion is that one's neighbors are only those whose houses are adjoining, either from the back or front. This was the view of Abu Hanifah and his student Zufar. This is also the view of the Malikis. Some add the house that is facing a person's house.

A third opinion is that it is the adjoining houses and others in an area, all of whose inhabitants pray in the same mosque. This was the opinion of Abu Yusuf and Muhammad of the Hanafi school. It is also an opinion held by some of the Malikis.

A fourth opinion is that the term refers to everyone who lives in a district or a city. A fifth opinion is that it refers to a person's tribe. Qataada even stated that it refers to one or two houses next to a person.

In his master's thesis, Abdul Rahman Faayi reviewed all of the above opinions and the evidences presented for them. He found that their evidences were lacking. Indeed, many times those opinions were based on weak hadith.

Faayi's conclusion is the opinion of ibn Qudaamah, the Hanbali jurist and Sideeq Hasan Khan. He defines neighbor as those people who live close to

¹ See Sideeq Hasan Khaan, *Fath al-Bayaan fi Maqaasid al-Quran* (Daar al-Fikr al-Arabi), vol. 2, pp. 274-275. There are some narrations that define who exactly is a neighbor (such as, forty houses to this side and to that side of the house). However, these narrations are not authentic.

² This is additional evidence showing the importance of treating one's wife properly. If a person is to treat his neighbor well, he must treat his wife just as well as she lives even closer to him than his neighbor.

³ Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 10, p. 441.

⁴ See ibn Uthaimin, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 5, p. 205.

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each other. The *shareeah* did not lay down any strict definition for who exactly is or is not a neighbor— this is why there are so many varied opinions on the definition of neighbor. In cases like that, then, the final decision is based on language and custom. Who is considered a neighbor according to a people's language and custom is a neighbor. Who is not such considered a neighbor is not a neighbor.¹ Faayi's conclusion seems to be the proper conclusion, Allah willing.

Other Hadith Related to Kind Treatment to One's Neighbors

There are a number of other hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) stressed the importance of treating neighbors well. In some of them, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also mentioned the relationship between being a true believer and behaving well towards one's neighbor.

For example, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَا زَالَ يُوصِينِي جِبْرِيلُ بِالْجَارِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ سَيُورِثُهُ

"Gabriel kept advising me concerning the neighbor to the point that I thought he would inherit [from his neighbor]." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يُؤْذِ جَارَهُ

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbor." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.²)

Another hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* states,

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ وَاللَّهِ لَا يُؤْمِنُ وَاللَّهِ لَا يُؤْمِنُ وَاللَّهِ لَا يُؤْمِنُ قِيلَ وَمَنْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ الَّذِي لَا يَأْمَنُ جَارُهُ بَوَائِقِهِ

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "By Allah, he is not a believer. By Allah, he is not a believer. By Allah, he is not a believer." It was said to him, "Who is that, O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)?" He said, "The one from whose affairs his neighbor is not safe."

One time the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about a woman who performed lots of prayers, fasted and gave charity but she used to harm her neighbor by her speech. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that she is in the

¹ See Abdul Rahman Faayi, *Ahkaam al-Jiwaar fi al-Fiqh al-Islami* (Jeddah: Daar al-Andalus al-Khudra, 1995), pp. 31-43; Sideeq Khan, vol. 2, pp. 274-276.

² This is actually a different narration of the same hadith that is currently being discussed.

Hell-fire. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about a woman who did not fast, pray or give in charity much [more than what was obligatory upon her] but she would not harm her neighbors. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that she is in Paradise.¹

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also demonstrated specific ways by which one is generous or courteous to his neighbor. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) once said to Abu Dharr,

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ إِذَا طَبَخْتَ مَرَقَةً فَأَكْثِرْ مَاءَهَا وَتَعَاهَدْ جِيرَانِكَ

“O Abu Dharr, when you prepare stew, increase its water and deliver it to some of your neighbors.” (Recorded by Muslim.)

Actually, a Muslim can know if he is fulfilling the condition of true faith mentioned in this hadith. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about how one could tell if he was treating his neighbors well, he said,

إِذَا سَمِعْتَهُمْ يَقُولُونَ قَدْ أَحْسَنْتَ فَقَدْ أَحْسَنْتَ وَإِذَا سَمِعْتَهُمْ يَقُولُونَ قَدْ أَسَأْتَ فَقَدْ
أَسَأْتَ

“If you hear them saying, ‘You have done well,’ then you have done well. If you hear them saying, ‘You have done evil,’ then you have done evil.”²

If a Muslim is harmed by his neighbor, he should try his best to be patient. By doing this, Allah will love him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once said,

ثَلَاثَةٌ يُحِبُّهُمُ اللَّهُ... الرَّجُلُ يَكُونُ لَهُ الْجَارُ يُؤْذِيهِ جَوَارُهُ فَيَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ أَذَاهُ حَتَّىٰ يُفْرَقَ
بَيْنَهُمَا مَوْتٌ أَوْ طَعْنٌ

“There are three people who Allah loves... [One of them is] a man who is being harmed by his neighbor but he is patient until they are separated by death or

¹ This hadith was recorded by Ahmad, ibn Maajah and al-Haakim. Ali Hasan al-Halabi states that its chain is *sahih*. Ali Hasan Abdul Hameed, *Huqooq al-Jaar fi Saheeh al-Sunnah wa al-Athaar* (Amman, Jordan: al-Maktaba al-Islaamiya, 1993), p. 31. This hadith is sometimes misused. Obviously, the second woman fulfilled her requirement of prayer, fasting and so forth but she did little voluntary deeds of that nature. There are people today who do not even perform the five daily prayers and they claim to be better than those who do pray just because they are good to their neighbors or others. What they claim for themselves cannot be concluded from this hadith.

² Recorded by Ahmad. According to Ali Hasan Abdul Hameed, its chain is *sahih*. Abdul Hameed, p. 33.

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one moves away."¹ Al-Hasan al-Basri once said, "Being good to one's neighbor does not [just] mean keeping from harming him but being good to a neighbor means putting up with [his] harm."²

However, if the person is not able to be patient or if the problem is too much for him to bear, he may take some polite steps to remedy the situation. A man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to complain about his neighbor and the Prophet told him to be patient. The third or fourth time he complained, the Prophet (peace be upon him) told him to put his belongings in the path. He did so and when the people tried to pass by it, they would ask why he did that and he would say that his neighbor had harmed him. They would then curse that neighbor until the bothersome neighbor said to him, "Take back your belongings to your place as, by Allah, I will never harm you again."³

"should be courteous and generous to his [traveling] visitor"

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) then mentioned that the believer in Allah and the Last Day is generous to his visitors. He is kind and courteous to his visitor. This also means that one prepares food for the visitor and takes care of his other needs, making sure that he is comfortable without extravagance or waste.⁴

This implies that anywhere a Muslim travels, he will feel right at home when he comes upon his Muslim brethren. They will take him in and give him his full rights. This increases the feeling of brotherhood and love among the Muslim *Ummah* as a whole.⁵

The first point that must be discussed concerning this portion of the hadith is the meaning of the word, *dhaif* (ضيف). It is usually translated as "guest". That is definitely one of the meanings of the word *ضيف* but it may not give its proper connotation here. In this hadith, however, the reference is to visitors that come from out of town to a person's home or city.⁶

One of the evidences for this opinion is another narration of this hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* which states,

¹ Recorded by Ahmad. Shuaib al-Arnaoot says that it contains an unknown narrator. According to Abdul Hameed, it is *hasan*. Al-Arnaoot's footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 353. Abdul Hameed, p. 32.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 353.

³ Recorded by Abu Dawood and al-Haakim. According to Ali Hasan Abdul Hameed, its chain is *hasan*. See Abdul Hameed, p. 22.

⁴ Sultaan, p. 142.

⁵ Al-Baitaar, p. 101.

⁶ See al-Shaukaani, *Nail*, vol. 8, p. 179; Hasan Ayyoob, *Al-Sulook al-Ijtamaai fi al-Islam* (Kuwait: Daar al-Buhooth al-Ilmiyah, 1983), p. 408.

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ حَائِزُهُ يَوْمٌ وَلَيْلَةٌ وَالضَّيْفَةُ ثَلَاثَةُ أَيَّامٍ
فَمَا بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَهُوَ صَدَقَةٌ وَلَا يَجِلُّ لَهُ أَنْ يَثْوِيَ عِنْدَهُ حَتَّى يُحْرِجَهُ

“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should be generous to his guest. His *jaaizah*¹ [special gift] is one day and night. He is to be entertained for three days. Whatever is beyond that is an act of charity. It is not lawful for a guest to stay with his host to the point that he makes things difficult for him.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) This is not in reference to a “guest” that one invites from the same town. It is in reference to visitors who have come from out of town.

Is This Obligatory or Voluntary?

There is a difference of opinion about whether or not this hosting of a guest is obligatory or a greatly recommended voluntary act. Some scholars say that the one day *jaaizah* is obligatory. They deduce this the following hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari*:

عَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ قُلْنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ تَبْعُنَا فَنَنْزِلُ بِقَوْمٍ فَلَا يَقْرُونَنَا فَمَا تَرَى فَقَالَ لَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنْ نَزَلْتُمْ بِقَوْمٍ فَأَمَرُوا لَكُمْ بِمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلضَّيْفِ فَاقْبَلُوا فَإِنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلُوا فَخُذُوا مِنْهُمْ حَقَّ الضَّيْفِ الَّذِي يَنْبَغِي لَهُمْ

On the authority of Uqbah ibn Amir who said: We said, “O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), you send us out and it happens that we have to stay with such people who do not entertain us. What is your opinion of that matter?” The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said to us, “If you stay with some people and they entertain you as they should do a visitor, accept it. But if they do not do so, then you should take from them the right of the visitor, which they ought to give.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)²

Ahmad and al-Laith are of the opinion that this one day hosting is obligatory. If a people do not give it to visitors, they have the right to request it.

¹ There is a difference of opinion concerning the meaning of this phrase. The strongest meaning seems to be that the guest should be given the best type of food on the first day and night and then after that he eats what the host would usually eat. See ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 12, p. 166. Furthermore, that first day is considered one of the three days mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this hadith. Hence, the total is three days.

² According to al-Khattaabi, this law applied before there was a Public Treasury. After that time, it was no longer applied because the Public Treasury would assist the travelers in need. See al-Shaukaani, *Nail*, vol. 8, p. 178.

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According to this view, if a people do refuse this one day hosting, do the visitors have the right to take it from their hosts or must they refer the matters to the authorities? On this point, there are two narrations from Ahmad, one saying they may take it and the other saying that they can only refer it to the authorities.¹ According to Humaid ibn Zanjuwaih, the hosting of one night is an obligation. However, the guest may not take his right by force unless he is traveling for the sake of the Muslim community, such as jihad, and not if he is traveling for his own benefit.² In the hadith from Uqbah above, it is clear that they were sent out by the Prophet (peace be upon him). In other words, they were traveling on behalf of the Muslim community and not for their own personal interest.

However, the majority of the scholars are of the opinion that the hosting, in general, is recommended and not obligatory. It is a noble and great act but it is not obligatory upon the Muslim. They say that the hadith of Uqbah was in relation to the early periods of Islam, when there was a stress on sharing all that one had. After that, when the situation got easier on the people, such was no longer an obligation. One of the arguments they present is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used the word *jaaizah*. This implies a kind of voluntary gift or present to the other person. They argue that such a word would not be used in the context of something being obligatory.³ Also, the word فليكرم, "be generous," has the implication that the action is not obligatory.

Al-Shaukaani has presented a number of arguments to prove that the opinion stating that the hosting is voluntary and not obligatory is an incorrect opinion. First, he indicated that there is no evidence that the hadith of Uqbah was related to the early periods of Islam only. Second, he said that if the people can take the provisions themselves or request it, this is a clear sign that it is obligatory. Third, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has made this a sign of true belief in Allah and the Last Day. This implies that one who does not do it is not a true believer. Fourth, the fact that what is beyond those three days is called *sadaqa* or charity is a clear sign that the previous days were not *sadaqa* but an obligation.⁴ Furthermore, the word فليكرم (be generous) is actually in the form of an imperative or command. This further lends evidence that it is obligatory.⁵

Although it is the opinion of a small minority of the scholars, it seems that the strongest opinion is the view that hosting is an obligation, in particular for the first day and night, upon the one who has the excess means to do so. Allah knows best.

In any case, it is certain that the one who truly believes in Allah and the Last Day will be generous and courteous to his visitor.

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 356.

² Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 356.

³ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 154.

⁴ Al-Shaukani, *Nail*, vol. 8, pp. 178-179.

⁵ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 99.

The Length of the Stay

As noted above, Ahmad and al-Laith consider the first day hosting to be obligatory. As for the second and third days, they are what can be called the completion of one's act of hosting. According to Ahmad, only the first day is obligatory as the *jaaizah* is more stressed in the texts than the other days. However, some scholars, including al-Amidi, consider all three days to be obligatory.

Some people are of the opinion that the total number of days are actually four: one day for the *jaaizah* and then three more days of hosting. However, this seems to be a weak opinion. Ibn Umar, for example, would refuse to consume anything of his host's wealth after three days. After three days, he would spend his own money on himself.¹ In fact, the owner of the house can order the person to leave after three days.² He has fulfilled his obligation and the visitor is not allowed to be a burden on him.

The hadith quoted above states, "And it is not lawful for a guest to stay with his host to the point that he makes things difficult for him."³ If a visitor is requested or it is clear that there is no problem for him to stay for more than three days, then he may stay for more than three days. However, if a visitor is staying with a host for more than three days and causes him difficulty, there is no question that such a visitor is sinful. This is clear from the hadith.

However, there is a difference of opinion about whether or not this also applies to the first three days. That is, even if it is the guest's right, must he forego that right if he would be causing his host difficulties and hardship? Many scholars are of the view that if the host is not able to accommodate the visitor, then he is not obliged to do so and he is not sinful on that account.

Salmaan al-Faarsi stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade them from going beyond what they can easily provide to a visitor.⁴ Therefore, if a host does not have anything beyond what he or his family needs, then he is not obliged to host the visitor. However, if he sacrifices his own needs for the sake of the visitor, this is a virtuous deed and a great kindness on his part. Such was the case with some of the Ansar residents of Madinah who sacrificed their food and their children's food for the sake of their guests. Obviously, though,

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 358.

² If a person continues to host another after three days it is called *sadaqa* or charity. Ibn Hajr states that it has been called that to discourage people from accepting it. This is because there are many people, especially the wealthy, that would never accept anything call *sadaqa*. Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 12, p. 166.

³ A narration in *Sahih Muslim* states, "Until he causes him to sin." This is because if the visitor stays too long, it may cause the host to curse him, not treat him well or have bad thoughts about the guest. All of these would be sins and they would all be caused by the visitor overstaying his welcome. See Ibn Hajr, *Fath*, vol. 12, p. 167.

⁴ This was recorded by Ahmad and al-Tabaraani. According to al-Hilaali, it is *sahih*. Al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 220.

Hadith #15: "Whoever believes in Allah should..."

this is a great voluntary deed but it cannot be considered obligatory upon the host.

Other Points Related to this Hadith

- In general, human beings are social creatures. Out of necessity, they have certain relationships with other members of society. Islam seeks to make sure that these relationships are guided by sound principles. Islam teaches that one should restrain one's tongue from harmful speech. Islam also teaches that one should be generous and kind to one's neighbor and visitors. These principles go a long way in making sure that society as a whole is a united, cooperative society.¹
- The restraining of one's tongue is truly a sign of complete faith. Al-Fudhail once said, "There is no Hajj, no guarding the enemy lines and no jihad which is more difficult than restraining the tongue."²
- A person is always either silent or speaking. If he is speaking good things, it is beneficial for him. If he is speaking useless or harmful things, then it is a loss for him. If he is silent when he should be speaking good things, this is also a loss for him. However, if he is silent when he could be speaking useless or harmful things, this is beneficial for him.
- One of the guidelines that will help a person know what he should or should not say is that a person should refrain from saying anything that he feels like he will have to apologize for in the future. One time a man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) to advise him in a succinct and concise manner. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him three things, one of which was,

لَا تَكَلِّمْ بِكَلَامٍ تَعْتَدِرُ مِنْهُ غَدًا

"Do not say any word that [you believe] you will have to apologize for tomorrow."³

- There is no source whatsoever for being silent as an act of worship, as some Sufis and Christian monks do. Such an act is a heresy and cannot be considered pleasing to Allah.
- Ibn Abdul Barr once said, "If a person has three qualities, then there can be no doubt about his intelligence and virtue. [These three qualities are] that he is praised by his neighbors, relatives and companions."⁴

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 96.

² Quoted in al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 152.

³ Recorded by Ahmad and ibn Maajah (ibn Maajah without the word "tomorrow"). According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Sahih al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 190.

⁴ Quoted in Abdul Hameed, p. 18.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

- According to many scholars, the obligation of hosting does not extend to evildoers and heretics. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

لَا تُصَاحِبُ إِلَّا مُؤْمِنًا وَلَا يَأْكُلُ طَعَامَكَ إِلَّا تَقِيٌّ

“Do not be a companion except to a believer and do not have anyone eat your food except a pious person.”¹ It is not allowed to show support and mercy for them as this increases their ease in doing the wrong they are doing. Others say that this ruling also applies to such people.² Probably, Allah knows best, the correct view is to look at the overall benefit or harm of treating such people in a kind or harsh manner.

Summary of the Hadith

- Those people who are true and complete believers can be described by specific characteristics. If one does not have those specific characteristics, it means that in those matters he is not completing his faith and there is room for improvement.
- A true believer will only speak when it is good and beneficial to speak. Otherwise, he would remain silent.
- If a Muslim is not treating his neighbors well, even his non-Muslim neighbors, then he is not fulfilling that condition of faith. That is, he has a shortcoming in his *Imaan*.
- If a Muslim is not being generous and courteous to his visitors from out of town, he is not fulfilling one of the obligatory parts of his faith.

¹ Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Hibbaan and al-Haakim. According to al-Albaani, it is *hasan*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1226.

² Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 154.

Hadith #16
"Do not become angry"

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَجُلًا قَالَ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَوْصِنِي قَالَ لَا تَغْضَبُ فَرَدَّدَ مِرَارًا قَالَ لَا
تَغْضَبُ

رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ

On the authority of Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him): A man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and said, "Advise me." He [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] said, "Do not become angry." The man repeated [his request] several times and he [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] said, "Do not become angry."

Recorded by al-Bukhari.

Selected Vocabulary

رجلا	- "a man"
أوصني	- "advise me," the <i>ني</i> portion represents, "me"
تغضب	- "get angry"
فردد	- "then he repeated"
مراراً	- "several times"

Takhreej

This hadith was recorded through a number of chains from Abu Huraira. It is recorded by al-Bukhari, al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, al-Baihaqi and others.

It is also narrated from a number of other Companions, including Jariyah ibn Qudaama, Abdullah ibn Amr, Abdullah ibn Umar, Anas ibn Maalik, Abu al-Darda, Abu Saeed al-Khudri, Sufyaan ibn Abdullah al-Thaqafi, Muawiyah ibn Haidah and one narration from "a man from the Companions". Unfortunately, many of these narrations are weak.¹

¹ See ibn Muhammad, pp. 129-133.

General Comments about the Hadith

As shall be noted shortly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked to advise someone. He was asked to give a brief, easy to remember advice. Not only that, he was repeatedly asked to give advice and he responded with the same advice each time. This aspect by itself should turn every Muslim's attention to this hadith. What is the short, easy to remember advice that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave and repeated three times? It would be expected that such advice is going to be far-reaching and very comprehensive. Indeed it was. According to some, anger is the key to every evil. Although that must be considered an exaggeration, there is no question that much evil has as its root anger. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was showing a basic way to remain away from much evil.

Al-Haitami states that one cannot count the amount of good this advice can bring about and the amount of evil that this advice can prevent.¹ If one stops to think about how many problems anger brings about, between brothers, between husband and wife, between parents and children, one will realize the truth in what al-Haitami stated. For example, physical abuse and fisticuffs are often the result of anger. Cursing and abusing others is often the result of anger. Even a man divorcing his wife is often the result of anger only.²

About the Narrator: Abu Huraira

Abu Huraira was discussed under Hadith #9.

“Advise me”

In a narration in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, a man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said, “Teach me something that will not be heavy upon me so that I will be able to keep it and memorize it.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him, “Do not get angry.”³

Hence, this is a very short, easy to keep in mind advice. However, its importance is great. In fact, in the narration in al-Bukhari, it is clear that the person himself did not realize how comprehensive and far-reaching this advice is. For that reason, he kept asking the Prophet (peace be upon him) to advise him some more, as if what he stated was not enough. He was looking for more. Had he pondered the implications of what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had told him, he would have realized that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave him a very comprehensive and important advice.

¹ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 156.

² This is ignoring the possible negative health effects that also may come about when a person gets angry often. Allah knows best.

³ According to al-Albaani, this narration is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, vol. 2, p. 197.

Hadith #16: “Do not become angry”

Some people say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) knew that the questioner used to get angry a lot and that is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave him this advice.¹ There is no need for such a supposition. If one truly understands the harm of anger, one will realize that the advice the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave that man is very important and far-reaching and applicable to all.

“Do not become angry”

There are three possible interpretations for this statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Two of these interpretations are based on the assumption that anger is something natural and beyond the control of human beings.² Given that assumption, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is advising the person to do something that is not within his ability. Obviously, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the *shareeah* as a whole would never request something of that nature. Therefore, one has to seek a different interpretation of what the Prophet (peace be upon him) said. These are given below.

Note that this advice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is only concerning the blameworthy anger. There is such a thing as praiseworthy anger and that shall also be discussed below. There are also cases when anger is justified and one has the right to have his issue resolved. This would be the case, for example, when, according to the *shareeah*, a person’s rights have been violated.

The First View

The first interpretation of this hadith is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is ordering the person to follow those means that will keep the person from getting angry. That is, a person should learn how to change his character and adopt the characteristics of generosity, kindness, calmness, modesty, patience, forbearing, forgiveness, easygoing nature and so forth. If a person adopts these qualities and he becomes used to such behavior, then he will be able to control his temper at the time he is about to get mad.³

The Second View

The second view is that what the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant by that statement is that one should not act based on one’s anger or one should not act while angry. That is, if a person becomes angry, he should fight himself

¹ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 156.

² In one of the few footnotes to their translation, Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies wrote (p. 62), “An-Nawawi, in his commentary, points out that anger is a natural human trait and that the Hadith is an exhortation not to act when in a state of anger.”

³ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 364.

and not do the deed that his anger would lead him to do. This is similar to how Allah describes the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) who did not act until his anger was over,

وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَن مُّوسَىٰ الْغَضَبُ

“And when the anger of Moses was appeased...” (*al-Araaf* 154).

Ibn Rajab states that if a person gets upset and his anger “tells” him to do something, but then he struggles against himself and repels what his anger is driving him to do, to the point that his anger might even go away, then it is as if he did not get angry in the first place. Hence, this is an apt description of what the Prophet (peace be upon him) was saying in this hadith when he said, “Do not get angry.”¹

There is no question that if a person does get angry he must do what he can to restrain himself from acting upon that anger. This type of behavior is also greatly praised in the *shareeah*. The Prophet (peace be upon him) once said,

لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرْعَةِ إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ

“The strong person is not the one who is strong in wrestling. But the strong person is the one who is able to restrain himself when he is angry.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

مَنْ كَظَمَ غَيْظًا وَهُوَ قَادِرٌ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُنْفِذَهُ دَعَاهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَىٰ رُءُوسِ الْخَلَائِقِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حَتَّىٰ يُخَيِّرَهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْحُورِ الْعِينِ مَا شَاءَ

“Whoever restrains his anger while he has the ability to implement and act on it will be called by Allah from the head of the creation on the Day of Resurrection and Allah will then give him a choice of any of *al-hoor al-ain* that he wishes.”²

The person who restrains his anger has fulfilled one of the characteristics of the people of *taqwa* and the true *muhsineen* (those who have *ihsaan*). Allah has said in the Quran,

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 364.

² Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi and ibn Maajah. According to al-Albaani, it is *hasan*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1111. *Al-hoor al-ain* (الهور العين) are the special spouses that one has in Paradise.

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ
 أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ
 الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for the pious (*al-muttaqeen*)—those who spend [for the sake of Allah] in prosperity and adversity, who repress anger, and who pardon men. Verily, Allah, loves the good-doers (*al-muhsineen*)” (*ali-Imraan* 133-134).

The Third View

Al-Baitaar has a much more literal understanding of the hadith. He says that when a person is about to get angry, he must remain patient, control himself, calm himself down and not get angry. He says that this is the meaning that comes to mind when one hears this advice of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The person should remain calm and he should handle the matter with wisdom and rationally.¹

This Author's View

The presumption that anger is something natural and cannot be controlled must first be questioned. In the same way that a believer must think before he speaks, he must also think before he acts— and getting angry is one of his acts. As soon as the feeling of anger comes to him, he should ask himself, “Why am I getting angry? Is this really something worth getting angry over?” When he asks himself these questions, remembers Allah and thinks about the Hereafter, he will not get angry at all. Instead, he should remain calm. He will realize that the event is not anything worth getting angry about. There are much more important things. And by not getting angry, he is pleasing Allah.

In most cases, there is no need for a person to get angry. Anger is often exhibited in the most petty of occasions. People get angry when participating in sports. People get angry just because somebody has a differing opinion, even about what kind of potato salad is best. People get angry when they do not get their way, regardless of how trivial the matter might be. Spouses get angry with each other for very minor matters, such as when the wife burns a dinner.

In all of these cases, is there truly any need to get angry? Is the issue so great that a person should get angry and ignore these words of advice from the

¹ Al-Baitaar, p. 105.

Prophet (peace be upon him)? No, the issue is rarely, if ever, that great and, therefore, a rational person or a faithful person, would not get angry under these kinds of situation and this is exactly what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had advised the man to do.

Some people claim that it is in their nature to get angry often and they cannot do anything about it. Again, it seems that this is also not true. As ibn Rajab stated, a person can learn how to be calm, patient and forbearing. In reality, it is a matter of *Imaan*. It is a matter of increasing the aspects of *Imaan* in one's heart. When this is done, anger shall leave. In fact, this author personally knows of cases where people before embracing Islam were very quick to get angry and then after embracing Islam they rarely ever got angry. This is because they now realize the insignificance of this world. This makes them realize that the things they used to get angry about are simply not worth getting angry over. This is especially true when viewed in comparison to the importance of the Hereafter and pleasing Allah by not getting angry.¹

One may argue that this is a difficult level to reach. Well, then, true and complete *Imaan* may be a difficult level to reach. It will only be reached by those who put the Hereafter first before this life. It will only be reached by those who put Allah's commandments before the lust of their souls and their own egos. But it can be accomplished. If a person is sincere in reaching that goal, Allah will help him and guide him.

Therefore, this hadith can be understood literally. A person should not get angry. It can also be understood to mean that the person should take the steps that keep him from getting angry, which includes changing his character, if needed, and remaining away from the things that get him angry. And, finally, the hadith may also mean that one should not act upon one's anger. All of these may be included in this general and comprehensive advice of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

The Example of the Prophet (peace be upon him)

Perhaps the greatest example of controlling one's anger and not getting angry can be found in the one who is the example *par excellence* for this *Ummah*, the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) would never get angry or take revenge for his own personal interest.² He never struck any servant or anyone, except while fighting for the sake of Allah.³

Anas ibn Malik served the Prophet (peace be upon him) for ten years and the Prophet (peace be upon him) never once said to him, "Uff."⁴ In fact, he

¹ This does not mean that such a person will never get angry. Those will not be often occurrences though. However, personal losses to him, for example, of this world will not be of great concern to him.

² Recorded by al-Bukhari from Aisha.

³ Recorded by Muslim on the authority of Aisha.

⁴ This is a very slight word of rebuke in the Arabic language.

Hadith #16: "Do not become angry"

never asked him, when he did something, "Why did you do that?" or "Why didn't you do such and such."¹

When he would get angry, he would only get angry for the sake of Allah. However, he was very bashful. Whenever he saw anything he disliked, they would know his displeasure by the expression and color of his face. (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) Once he distributed some wealth and a person said, "This distribution was not done for the sake of Allah," the Prophet's face became red but he (peace be upon him) simply said,

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى لَقَدْ أُؤْذِيَ بِأَكْثَرَ مِنْ هَذَا فَصَبَرَ

"May Allah have mercy on Moses. Verily, he was harmed by more than this and he remained patient." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

How to Remove One's Anger

The Prophet (peace be upon him) has given the advice not to get angry. Anger is still going to occur though. The Prophet (peace be upon him), by the grace and mercy of Allah, also showed the steps that one should follow when one does get angry. These steps may even bring an end to one's anger or they will keep one's anger from having any major damaging effect.

One of the important points to realize is that Satan is very happy when a believer gets angry and that anger is not for the sake of Allah. He knows very well how much evil results from a person getting angry. Therefore, one of the keys to removing one's anger or controlling oneself while one is angry is to seek refuge in Allah from the influence and effect of Satan. One time, a person reviled another in the presence of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The other man got very upset. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said,

إِنِّي لَأَعْلَمُ كَلِمَةً لَوْ قَالَهَا لَذَهَبَ عَنْهُ مَا يَحْدُ لَوْ قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

"I know a statement that if he were to say it, what he is experiencing would leave him. If he were to only say, 'I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan.'" (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Allah knows best, but the position that one is in also affects how a person is going to act upon his anger. There are some positions that build up more energy and give one more of a chance to act. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِذَا غَضِبَ أَحَدُكُمْ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ فَلْيَجْلِسْ فَإِنْ ذَهَبَ عَنْهُ الْعُزْبُ وَإِلَّا فَلْيَضْطَجِعْ

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim from Anas himself.

“If one of you gets angry while he is standing, he should then sit down. This should remove his anger from him. Otherwise, he should then lie down.”¹ Some scholars understand this hadith to mean that in the sitting position one has less ability to fight or carry out an action in anger. A person even has less ability while lying down.²

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also gave another very important command to the one who is angry. When one is angry, he usually makes the situation worse by the words that come out of his mouth while in a state of anger. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِذَا غَضِبَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَمْكُتْ

“If one of you becomes angry, he should be silent.”³

Finally, there is yet another hadith. Al-Albani and other modern day scholars have declared this hadith to be weak.⁴ Shuaib al-Arnaoot, on the other hand, has declared its chain to be *hasan*.⁵ Allah knows best. This hadith states,

إِنَّ الْعُضْبَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَإِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ خُلِقَ مِنَ النَّارِ وَإِنَّمَا تُطْفَأُ النَّارُ بِالْمَاءِ فَإِذَا غَضِبَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَتَوَضَّأْ

“Verily, anger is from Satan. And, surely, Satan was created from fire. And only water puts out fire. Therefore, if one of you gets angry, he should make ablution.”⁶ (Recorded by Ahmad and Abu Dawood.)

The Virtues of Forgiveness and Kindness

In many cases, the source of one’s anger is somebody else’s wrongdoing or mistake in behavior. The person who is about to get angry must realize that everyone is apt to make mistakes or do something wrong, including

¹ Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and others. According to al-Albaani, this hadith is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, 180.

² Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 365.

³ Recorded by Ahmad and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 180.

⁴ Muhammad Naasir al-Deen Al-Albaani, *Dhaeef al-Jaami al-Sagheer* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaami, 1988), p. 217.

⁵ Al-Arnaoot’s footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 366. Al-Arnaoot said that those “who presume to have knowledge of hadith during our times” are mistaken when they call it weak.

⁶ Some writers commented that Satan is created from fire which is an unstable, burning substance, very much akin to a person while he is angry. On the other hand, humans have been created from clay which brings to mind stability and calmness. Hence, when one gets angry, he starts taking on the characteristic of his arch enemy Satan. This, in itself, should be a strong enough message to keep Muslims from getting angry. Cf., Jamaal al-Deen al-Qasimi, *Mahaasin al-Taweel* (Cairo: Dar Ihyaa al-Kutub al-Arabi. n.d.), p. 310.

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himself. Therefore, one approach to such occurrences is, in essence, the antithesis to anger: forgiveness¹ and kindness.

When a Muslim realizes the importance and great virtue of these characteristics, he should work to develop them within himself. When he becomes someone who is forgiving, kind and calm, he will probably find very few circumstances in which anger will overtake him.

The Quran guides people to being forgiving and even to give up some of their rights on behalf of others. For example, Allah has said,

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

"Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good and turn away from the foolish" (*al-Araaf* 199). Allah also said when describing the believers,

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ

"And those who, when an oppressive wrong is done to them, take revenge. The recompense for an evil is an evil like thereof. But whoever forgives and makes reconciliation will have his reward with Allah. He [Allah] does not like the wrongdoers" (*al-Shoora* 39-40).

Allah also says,

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوِّءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلِمَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا ﴿٥٨﴾ إِنْ تَبَدُّوا خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخَفُّوهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوا عَنْ سُوءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيرًا

"Allah does not like that evil should be uttered in public except by him who has been wronged. And verily Allah is ever all-hearing, all-knowing. Whether you disclose a good deed or conceal it or if you forgive a wrong, verily Allah is ever oft-pardoning, all-powerful" (*al-Nisaa* 148-149).

Allah praises those who restrain their anger and also forgive others. Allah has said,

¹ The Arabic word for forgiveness, *al-afu* (العفو), implies either erasing something as if nothing of it remains or leaving something, as in not punishing an act. Among humans, the real act of forgiveness is where one person does another wrong and the wronged person has the ability to avenge the act but, instead, decides to leave it or forget about it. Cf., Ahmad al-Shirbaasi, *Mausooat Akhlaaq al-Quran* (Beirut: Daar al-Raaid al-Arabi, 1985), p. 34.

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ
 أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يَنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَبِيرِ
 الْعَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And head toward the way of forgiveness from your Lord and for Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for the pious, those who spend [for the sake of Allah] in prosperity and adversity, who repress anger, and who forgive the people. Verily, Allah loves the doers of good” (*ali-Imraan* 133-134).

Praiseworthy Anger

With respect to anger, people have a tendency to go to extremes—and, as in almost all cases, both extremes are wrong. Some people get angry over the pettiest matters for which there is no call for a Muslim to get angry about. On the other hand, others do not get angry when there is a real reason for anger, a reason that is sanctioned by *shareeah*. These people do not seem to realize that not all anger is blameworthy. There is some anger that is praiseworthy. A person is not always supposed to be loving and accepting no matter what occurs. Allah says in the Quran,

يَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ جَهْدِ الْكُفَّارِ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَأَغْلَطُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَأْوَهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ
 وَبئسَ الْمَصِيرُ

“O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh with them. Their abode is the Hell-fire and worst indeed is that destination” (*al-Taubah* 73).

This praiseworthy anger is the anger that is for the sake of Allah. This is the anger that comes about when Allah’s teachings are ignored or treated with disdain. In fact, if a person has true belief, he must demonstrate this anger. It is inconceivable that a person could witness the words of Allah being ignored, sometimes even ridiculed, and he feels nothing inside. This would truly be a sign of a diseased heart. On this point, there is a hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) told Abu Dharr that the strongest bond of faith is:

الْمُوَالَاةُ فِي اللَّهِ وَالْمُعَادَاةُ فِي اللَّهِ وَالْحُبُّ فِي اللَّهِ وَالْبُغْضُ فِي اللَّهِ
 “Having loyalty for the sake of Allah, disassociating from others for the sake of Allah, love for the sake of Allah and hatred for the sake of Allah.”¹

¹ Recorded by al-Tayaalisi, al-Haakim, al-Tabaraani and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 497.

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However, some people seem to think that this is how Muslims should be: If someone sees something wrong in the mosque, he should just accept it in the name of brotherhood. If someone sees the sunnah being ignored and heresies being practiced, he should be accepting. But this approach is definitely wrong. This was not the approach of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) never got upset for any personal motives but if the laws of Allah were being violated, then he would get upset.

One time the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to Aisha's apartment and she had a sheet that had pictures on it. The Prophet's face changed color due to his anger and he grabbed the sheet and tore it apart.¹ He said that the people who made those pictures would have the greatest punishment on the Day of Judgment.²

Unfortunately, many people deal with anger in exactly the opposite of the proper manner. They get upset if anything touches them personally, this is when a person should restrain his anger. By doing so, he will please Allah. These same people do not get upset when the laws of Allah are violated. They do not get angry when they see forbidden acts or if they hear things that go clearly against the Quran and sunnah, such as heretical views and so forth. By getting angry for those matters, one will also please Allah. Anyone who behaves in this fashion must realize that the way he is behaving is the reverse of the correct and proper situation.

If, from the *shareeah* point of view, a person's rights are violated or he is wronged, he then has the right to get angry. He has the right to attempt to rectify that situation. However, during that time he does not have the right to do forbidden acts, such as cursing others, simply out of anger.

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- As stated above, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that when one gets angry, he should remain silent. This demonstrates that an angry person is still responsible for his deeds. What he does and what he says while angry will be held against him. If he damages someone else's property, he will be held responsible for that. If he divorces his wife while in a state of anger³, that is a true and legal divorce. This has been the clearly expressed opinion of ibn Abbaas and Aisha. And there is no question that it is the correct

¹ Some people today are claiming that the prohibition of images refers only to idols and three-dimensional objects. This incident concerning the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself is a clear refutation of their false claims.

² Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

³ Some people say that divorce while in a state of anger is not a divorce. Obviously, the only time a person divorces his wife, in general, is when he is angry about something that is related to her. It is hard to imagine a person divorcing his wife while he is in a state of felicity and happiness with her.

opinion: a divorce stated while in anger is still a legal divorce with all of its necessary ramifications.¹

- Al-Hasan al-Basri once stated, “There are four characteristics that if one possesses them, Allah protects him from Satan and forbids him from the fire. [These four are found in] the one who controls himself while in a state of craving, fearing, desiring [or lusting] and being angry.” Ibn Rajab states that those four are the path to every evil. When a person craves something, he believes that that thing is beneficial for him and he wants it. However, he begins to want it by any means. He even begins to disregard whether the means he is following to achieve that goal are permissible or forbidden.² Indeed, if a person truly wants to achieve or attain something, he should turn to Allah and ask Allah for help— instead of ignoring Allah’s laws and seeking the goal by any means. When a person fears something, such as poverty or losing a job, he often time seeks any means to flee from it and protect himself from it. He may even lie and cheat to protect himself from what he fears. So the means that he follows are forbidden means. Again, he should once again turn to Allah and ask Allah to protect him from any harm. That will be the best for him in both this life and the Hereafter. When a person desires or lusts after something, he gets great joy and pleasure from it. For many people, these acts are the forbidden acts, such as fornication, consuming alcohol and even polytheism. If the person cannot control those desires, he goes directly to the forbidden acts. Finally, when one is angry and does not try to control himself when he is angry, his anger leads him to acts that are not permissible. It leads him to physically

¹ See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 374-377. There is a hadith that states, “There is no divorce or freeing of slaves during *ighlaaq* (إغلاق).” Ibn Rajab doubts the authenticity of this hadith. However, assuming it is authentic, as other scholars have stated, the term إغلاق here is understood to mean “coercion” and not anger. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 376; al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 159. Another interpretation is that it is referring to a case where a person’s anger becomes so great that he has no idea what he is saying. In that case, his statement of divorce will not be considered a divorce. However, according to al-Mudaabaghi, such an explanation that the act should not be considered a divorce will only be accepted as an excuse for the person if he had, prior to that incident, on occasion gotten to that level of anger. Otherwise, his act would be considered a divorce and that argument cannot be used as an excuse to escape a divorce that he has stated. See al-Mudaabaghi, p. 159.

² A classic example of this nature nowadays concerns marriage, as was alluded to earlier. A young, religious man may meet a young, religious sister and they decide that they want to get married. This will keep them chaste. They are both religious, so they will bring up religious children and so forth. A very praiseworthy goal. However, perhaps the woman’s guardian disagrees. Sometimes he may disagree on good grounds or on acceptable grounds. However, the point is that the two have decided to get married and they will do so at all costs. They might even start to lie about the family or do some acts to get around the *shareeah* rulings. All the while, they claim that they are getting married for the sake of Allah. However, “Allah is pure and only accepts what is pure.” Perhaps, Allah knows best, due to the means that they followed, Allah will not be pleased with their praiseworthy act and goal and may make it devoid of any blessings whatsoever.

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or verbally harming others. Hence, as ibn Rajab stated, these four aspects described by al-Hasan are truly the roads to every evil.¹

- The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to make the following supplication,

أَسْأَلُكَ كَلِمَةَ الْحَقِّ فِي الرِّضَا وَالْعُضْبِ

"I ask You for truthful speech during [times of] pleasure and anger."² This is an important supplication of the Prophet (peace be upon him). When people get angry, it is very difficult for them to control their tongue. Many times they will even lie simply out of anger. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) made this supplication and his followers should do so also.

- In general, a person is afflicted with anger often when he possesses non-Islamic qualities. Pride, arrogance, stubbornness, joking around, mutual ridiculing, competition over wealth or authority in this world, refusal to submit to the truth are some of the most common causes that needlessly lead people to get angry and upset.³ Hence, getting angry often may be a clear sign that one's heart is diseased and one's *Imaan* is not in the state that it should be in. The person who finds himself getting angry often should consider this fact and try to find what really causes him to get so angry. He may find that it is some disease that he has in his heart. Allah willing, when he notices that and then works to remove his disease, his problem with anger will also be removed. For example, if pride or arrogance is the source of his problem, he should try to understand who he really is and become more humble toward Allah and, therefore, toward Allah's creatures. If he finds that he gets angry due to sitting around with others and joking with or ridiculing each other, he should try to spend his time on more important pursuits or with people who are not into such bad habits. If his anger is due to competition over material things or authority, he should make himself realize that all of those things are actually according to the decree of Allah and whatever Allah has decreed is according to His wisdom and divine plan.
- Keeping in mind the great negative effects that anger leads to should help one control his anger and make him do something about his problem with anger. Al-Qaasimi points out that one of the end results of anger, when it is not quelled or put under control, is rancor and hatred between people or *al-hiqd* (الحقد). This may lead to a great deal of other sins, such as envy in which one hates for the other to have any good, cutting off ties of friendship or brotherhood, speaking evil about the other or backbiting the other, ridiculing or making fun of the other, injuring the other in some

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 368-369.

² Recorded by al-Nasaai and Ahmad. According to al-Hilaali, it is *sahih*. Al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 229.

³ Al-Qaaimi, *Mauidhah*, p. 314; Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 104.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

manner or refusing to give the other his due right, for example, if he owes him some money or he is deserving of charity and so forth. If a person allows his anger to get to this level, it means that his anger has been the cause of a number of sins and, eventually, Allah's anger. If he keeps himself from getting angry, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) advised his companion in this hadith, he may save himself from all of these possible sins.¹

Summary of the Hadith

- A Muslim must realize the petty nature of most of the things that he gets angry about. He must weigh getting angry with pleasing Allah. This will keep him from getting angry, Allah willing.
- A Muslim must remain away from those things that usually lead him to get angry.
- A Muslim must not act upon his anger when he gets angry. Instead, he should follow those means that will extinguish his anger.

¹ Cf., al-Qaasimi, *Mauidhah*, p. 319.

Hadith #17

"Verily, Allah has prescribed excellence..."

عَنْ أَبِي يَعْلَى شَدَّادِ بْنِ أَوْسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنْ رَسُولِ
اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَتَبَ الْإِحْسَانَ عَلَى
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَإِذَا قَتَلْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا الْقِتْلَةَ وَإِذَا ذَبَحْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا
الذَّبْحَ وَلْيُحِدَّ أَحَدُكُمْ شَفْرَتَهُ فَلْيُرِحْ ذَبِيحَتَهُ
رَوَاهُ مُسْلِمٌ

On the authority of Abu Yala Shaddaad ibn Aus (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who said, "Verily, Allah has prescribed excellence in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill in a good manner. If you slaughter, slaughter in a good manner. Each of you should sharpen his blade and spare suffering to the animal he is slaughtering."

Recorded by Muslim.

Selected Vocabulary

- كتب - literally, "he wrote," here it means, "prescribed, obligated." It either means something made obligatory by the *shareeah* or something that must occur. For example, Allah says in the Quran, "Fasting is prescribed (*kutiba*) for you" (*al-Baqara* 182).
- كل - every
- شيء - thing
- قتلتم - "you killed." This literally is in the past tense. However, its meaning is, "when you intend to kill." This usage is the same as in the Quran, *surah al-Nahl* verse 98, which literally means, "When you have read the Quran, seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan." According to the majority of the scholars, this means, "When you intend to read the Quran..."¹
- القتلة - "the killing"

¹ There are some scholars who take that verse literally and, therefore, they say that one should seek refuge in Allah from Satan before reading the Quran as well as after finishing from reading the Quran.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

ذبحتم	- "you sacrificed," again, this is in the past tense like "you killed" above.
الذبيحة	- "the sacrifice"
شفرته	- "his blade"

Takhreej

This hadith was recorded by Muslim, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasaai, ibn Maajah, Ahmad, ibn Abu Shaiba, al-Daarimi, ibn Hibbaan, al-Tayaalisi, al-Tabaraani, al-Baihaqi, Abdul Razzaaq and others.¹

According to ibn Rajab, al-Bukhari did not record this hadith because its chain contains Abu al-Ashath al-Sanaani. Al-Bukhari did not record any hadith wherein he was a transmitter. However, he is a trustworthy narrator.²

General Comments about This Hadith

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated a principle that one would want to have permeate every aspect of his person's life. Every act he performs should be done with *ihsaan*. Even the executing of a soul or the slaughtering of an animal should be done with *ihsaan*.

About the Narrator: Shaddaad ibn Aus

Shaddaad ibn Aus ibn Thaabit al-Ansaari al-Khazraji was a Companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from the Ansar. He was the nephew of the Companion Hassaan ibn Thaabit. It is said that he took part in the Battle of Badr but this is a mistake. Actually, it was his father who took part in the Battle of Badr.³ He was well-known for his knowledge and wisdom. He relocated to Jerusalem. It is not clear what year he died in but it may have been around 60 A.H.

He narrated fifty hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Al-Bukhari has recorded one hadith from him while Muslim has this particular hadith and one other.

"Verily, Allah has prescribed excellence in all things" ⁴

These words may either mean, "Allah has prescribed *ihsaan* in all actions" or "Allah has prescribed *ihsaan* towards all things." Both of these meanings are possible and both of them seem to be proper. The word *kataba*, as mentioned earlier, means that the act is an obligation. Hence, Allah is

¹ Ibn Muhammad, pp. 134-135

² Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 379.

³ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 159.

⁴ An apparent meaning of these words is that upon every created thing, Allah has recorded *ihsaan* upon it. However, that is not a strong interpretation of this hadith and, therefore, it will be ignored.

ordering that there be *ihsaan* in all things and toward all things. This order has also been made in the Quran. Allah says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَايَ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ
وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

"Verily, Allah enjoins *al-adl* ('justice') and *al-Ihsaan*, and giving help to kith and kin, and forbids all evil lewd deeds and sinful acts and all kinds of oppression. He admonishes you, that you may take heed" (*al-Nahl* 90).

There are a number of narrations concerning the meaning of the words *al-adl* and *al-ihsaan* in this verse. What *al-adl* seems to imply is justice and equity, giving everyone his due rights and not wronging or oppressing anyone. *Al-Ihsaan*, then, goes beyond that. It is to respond to a kind act with even more goodness or to respond to evil with forgiveness.¹ Al-Raazi states that this is also in relation to the acts of worship. To perform the obligatory deeds is a kind of *adl* but to go beyond that to perform the voluntary deeds is *al-Ihsaan*. Furthermore, to perform the deeds in the best fashion and with the utmost quality is going beyond the minimum necessary and is also considered *ihsaan*.²

As was alluded to in the commentary on the hadith of Jibreel, *Ihsaan* is a very vast concept and is difficult to translate into English. It embodies both the concept of perfecting a deed in itself as well as doing excellence towards others. (In the transitive case, it will be used in connection with a ب.) The following is an excerpt from Lane's discussion of the meaning of this word,

He did that which was حسن (meaning good, comely or pleasing; he acted well); he did a good deed;... إحصان is the contr. [opposite] of إساءة [to cause someone harm]... it surpasses عدل [*adl*, being just and equitable] inasmuch as it means the giving more than one owes, and taking less than is owed to one, whereas the latter [عدل] means the giving what one owes, and taking what is owed one. You say به أحسنت إليه or به (I acted, or behaved, with goodness, well, or in a good or comely or pleasing manner, towards him; did good to him; benefited him; conferred a benefit, or benefits, upon him)... الإحصان is also explained as meaning الإخلاص (i.e. the being sincere, or without hypocrisy; or the asserting of oneself to be clear of believing in any beside God)... as denoting watchfulness and good obedience; and as meaning the continuing in the right way, and following the way which those (of the righteous) who have gone before have trodden...³

¹ Jamaal al-Deen al-Qaasimi, *Mahaasin al-Taweel* (Cairo: Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabi, n.d.), vol. 10, p. 3750.

² Al-Raazi, vol. 20, p. 103.

³ Lane, vol. 1, p. 570.

In this particular hadith, it seems that Allah is requiring both types of *ihsaan*. However, the more apparent meaning, as is clear from the examples given in this hadith, is the concept of performing an act in the best way possible. But this also implies doing well to others, beyond the minimum expected, as this is the best way to treat others.

The order of *Ihsaan* is sometimes an obligatory order and sometimes a recommended order. For example, the order to have *ihsaan* towards one parents or one's visitors is an obligatory type of *ihsaan*. The order to give voluntary charity is also an order for *ihsaan* but, obviously, in this case, it is only a recommended form and not a required one.

This hadith demonstrates that it is obligatory to have *ihsaan* in every deed. Ibn Rajab states that this obligation, again, differs depending on what is being described. For example, one must perform the obligatory acts with both inward and external attention. To perform such acts in a complete sense is an obligatory type of *ihsaan*. However, to go beyond that to the recommended aspects and deeds is merely a recommended form of *ihsaan*.¹

The important point that should be emphasized is that *ihsaan* is sought after. Allah has requested it and it is very pleasing to Him. Hence, regardless of which level it is, obligatory or recommended, every true believer should seek the quality of *ihsaan* in all of his deeds. If he feels that he has performed some deeds but their quality is missing or he has not gone beyond the minimum requirements, he should not feel satisfied. He should realize that there is a level of *ihsaan* that is beyond that which he should strive for in all of his deeds.

Al-Ihsaan is not simply in matters of worship. Instead, this concept should rule a person's behavior in every realm of his life. When dealing with others, the principle of *ihsaan* should dominate how he works and deals with others. He must fulfill their rights, this is the obligatory level of *ihsaan*. However, he should also try to go beyond that and be, for lack of a better phrase, "better than them". He should treat them beyond the minimum that is required of him.

The Prophet (peace be upon him), in this hadith, has demonstrated that even when killing another human being or when slaughtering an animal, one should have this concept in mind. One should kill in the best way possible, without causing any undue suffering to the one he is killing. Allah knows best, but it seems that the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned these two cases simply as examples where *ihsaan* must be kept in mind. If *ihsaan* is to be kept in mind in those kinds of cases, for example, when one is executing a murderer, what about when one is dealing with his wife, family, friends, associates and others. Obviously, *ihsaan* must be even more so relevant in those situations.

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 381.

Hadith #17: "Verily, Allah has prescribed excellence..."

"Thus, if you kill, kill in a good manner"

This portion of the hadith is talking about the legal execution of human beings. When a person is about to be executed for a crime that he has committed, such as murder or apostasy, then, even then, one should carry out the deed in the most benevolent manner possible. One should bring the person to his death in the quickest way possible without any form of torturing or suffering.

According to most scholars, the best way to execute a person is by striking his neck off with a sword. This has been the manner prescribed by Allah in the Quran (*Muhammad* 4; *al-Anfaal* 12). Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has prohibited any kind of mutilation. (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

This brings up a question related to the law of retribution and capital punishment. If a person murders another person in a specific way, is he now to be put to death in the same manner or is he to be put to death by the sword regardless of how he committed the murder? On this point there is a difference of opinion among the scholars. The view of Malik, al-Shafi'ee and Ahmad is that he is to be killed in the same manner in which he did the killing if the relatives desire that. This opinion is supported by the following incident, as recorded in *Sahih al-Bukhari*,

عَنْ أَنَسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ يَهُودِيًّا قَتَلَ جَارِيَةً عَلَى أَوْضَاحٍ لَهَا فَقَتَلَهَا بِحَجَرٍ فَجِيءَ بِهَا إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَبِهَا رَمَقٌ فَقَالَ أَقْتَلِكِ فُلَانٌ فَأَشَارَتْ بِرَأْسِهَا أَنْ لَا تُمَّ قَالَ الثَّانِيَةَ فَأَشَارَتْ بِرَأْسِهَا أَنْ لَا تُمَّ سَأَلَهَا الثَّلَاثَةَ فَأَشَارَتْ بِرَأْسِهَا أَنْ نَعَمْ فَقَتَلَهُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِحَجَرَيْنِ

Anas narrated that a Jew killed a girl so that he may steal her ornaments. He struck her with a stone. She was brought to the Prophet (peace be upon him) while she was still alive. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked her, "Did so and so strike you?" She gestured with her head, "No." He asked her a second time and she again gestured with her head, "No." He asked her a third time and she gestured, "Yes." So the Prophet (peace be upon him) had the Jewish man killed with two stones.

The view of the Hanafis, Abu Thaur and one narration from Ahmad is that the only form of execution is with the sword. Actually, there is a hadith with this meaning but it is not an authentic hadith.¹

¹ That hadith was recorded by ibn Maajah. Ibn Rajab and Ahmad both stated that it is a weak hadith, as did Shuaib al-Arnaoot. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 385-386, along with al-Arnaoot's footnote.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

A third narration comes from Ahmad which states that a person is supposed to be killed in the same way that he murdered unless he mutilated a person or burned a person to death. These latter two are not to be done because they have been explicitly prohibited by the Prophet (peace be upon him). In those cases, the person is to be beheaded by the sword. This last opinion is, perhaps, the only opinion that takes into consideration all of the different evidences related to the question at hand.¹

A Possible Question

Given that one is supposed to execute in the best manner, someone might ask about the adulterer. According to the *shareeah*, he or she is to be stoned to death, doesn't that go against the principle mentioned in this hadith? Ibn Uthaimen answered this question in the negative. He stated that there are two possible explanations for this. The first explanation is that what is meant by *ihsaan* is what is correct according to the *shareeah*. Hence, the *shareeah* categorizes this manner of execution as *ihsaan*. A second possible explanation is that this is an exception to the general ruling that is proven by the sunnah. This exception is special in the case of a person who has a spouse and then still goes out and commits the heinous crime of adultery. This person is to be taken and stoned with small rocks until he (or she) dies. In fact, the people throwing the rocks should try to avoid hitting him in places that cause sudden death. Instead, they should aim for all the parts of the body. The wisdom behind this is that the body that enjoyed that lustful, forbidden act is the same body that is to be punished all over for that act. This is part of the wisdom of this Divine *shareeah*.²

Finally, it should be noted that if a person is legally executed, such as in the case of murder or adultery, he still has the funeral prayer performed for him and the people should still pray for him and ask for mercy and forgiveness for him and all Muslims. However, if he is legally executed as a result of apostasy, then no funeral prayer is to be said for him as it is forbidden for Muslims to ever pray for his forgiveness after he has died. (This is clearly demonstrated in *surah al-Tauba* verse 113.)

¹ The scholars also discussed the case of a person who cuts off another's fingers, for example, and then kills him. According to Abu Hanifah, al-Shafi'ee and Ahmad, that murderer should have his fingers cut off and then he should be executed. According to al-Thauri and another narration from Ahmad, all that is to be done is that the person is executed. Malik said that if the person cut off the fingers as a means of torturing his victim, then he should also be tortured in the same manner. Otherwise, for example, if it just happen to occur while he was murdering the other, he is just to be executed without any further punishment. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 386.

² Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 6, pp. 309-310.

Hadith #17: "Verily, Allah has prescribed excellence..."

"If you slaughter, slaughter in a good manner..."

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated that even when slaughtering an animal, one must do so in the best manner possible.¹ The *shareeah* has prescribed the most compassionate manner of slaughtering. It is a manner in which the animal is killed promptly and suffers the least.

In order for an animal to be properly slaughtered, the animal must be slaughtered in such a way that it allows the blood to gush forth from the body. This condition is based on the hadith,

مَا أَنتَهَرَ الدَّمَ وَذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ فَكُلْ

"Whatever causes the blood to flow and has had Allah's name mentioned [upon it], you may eat." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and others.)

There is a difference of opinion among the four schools of *fiqh* as to exactly what must be cut while slaughtering an animal. The difference involves the following parts around the animal's throat:

al-wajdain - the two external jugular veins

al-hulqoom - the windpipe

al-maree - the esophagus

All of the schools agree that it is best to cut all four of these. However, there is a difference concerning the minimum of these that must be cut.

According to the Shafi'ees, for a legal slaughtering, one must cut the windpipe and the esophagus. The majority opinion among the Hanbalis is the same as that of the Shafi'ees. However, there is also one narration that all four of the above must be cut on an animal. A third narration from Ahmad states that at least one of the jugular veins must be cut along with the windpipe and esophagus. The most famous opinion from Malik is that the jugular veins and windpipe must be cut. Another narration from him says that all four must be cut while a third narration says that only the two jugular veins need to be cut. Abu Hanifah states that minimum requirement is to cut at least three of the four bodily parts mentioned above.²

In his Ph.D. dissertation, al-Tiraiqi has discussed all of the views, each with its evidence, in some detail. He came to the following conclusion,

The strongest opinion is that one must cut the windpipe, esophagus and at least one of the jugular veins. This is because

¹ There are two words in Arabic that would be translated as, "slaughtered," for animals that are permissible to eat. One word is *al-nahr* (النحر). This would be done in the case of camels and other large animals. In this case, the person cuts the neck on its lower portion, close to the chest. The other word is *al-dhabh* (الذبح). This is where the animal is slaughtered by cutting across the top portion of the neck, closer to the head. Many times, though, the words are used interchangeably.

² For ibn Uthaimen, the only condition is that the jugular veins are cut. However, it is best if the windpipe and esophagus are also cut. Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 6, p. 307.

cutting the windpipe and esophagus ends the life of the slaughtered animal. One of the jugular veins must be cut in order for the blood to gush forth, otherwise it will coagulate. Everyone of the parts has a different purpose from the other parts. The windpipe is the source of life while the esophagus is the place for food and drink. And the jugular veins is where the blood flows. If just one of the jugular veins is cut, the goal is met. If the windpipe is not cut than one does not achieve the goal that is met when it is cut.¹

Hence, one is supposed to kill the animal in the most humane way by striking its windpipe, esophagus and jugular veins. This will bring about a quick death to the animal and it will also cause the blood to gush forth from the animal.

The scholars have also mentioned other aspects that one should tend to while slaughtering an animal. The person should sharpen his knife. In this way, the cut is quick and swift. The animal will not feel the knife cutting through its skin that much as would be the case if the knife were dull. The knife should be thrust with force so that all of the necessary parts may be cut in one swift movement.

The scholars also state that the animal should be taken in a calm fashion to the place of the slaughtering.² It is considered improper to slaughter other animals in view of the animal one is about to slaughter. Indeed, one should not even sharpen the knife in front of the animal. One time a person had put his animal down on the ground and was sharpening his knife in front of the animal. The Prophet (peace be upon him) saw him and said,

أَتُرِيدُ أَنْ تُمَيِّتَهَا مَوْتَاتٍ هَلَا حَدَدْتَ شَفْرَتَكَ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُضَجِعَهَا

“Do you want it to die two deaths? Why didn't you sharpen your knife before you laid [the animal] down?”³

In general, one should be merciful to all creatures, humans and animals. If a person hopes to have Allah being merciful to him, he should then be merciful to Allah's creatures. This was specifically mentioned in a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him). A person once told the Prophet (peace be upon him) that when he slaughters a sheep, he shows mercy to it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him,

وَالشَّاءُ إِنْ رَحِمْتَهَا رَحِمَكَ اللَّهُ

¹ Al-Tiraiqi, *Ahkaam*, p. 240.

² This has been narrated from Umar ibn al-Khattaab by al-Baihaqi.

³ Recorded by al-Haakim. Al-Tabaraani has something similar. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, p. 32, hadith #24.

Hadith #17: "Verily, Allah has prescribed excellence..."

"And even a sheep, if you show mercy to it, Allah has mercy on you." The Prophet (peace be upon him) repeated it twice.¹ In another hadith, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

مَنْ رَحِمَ وَلَوْ ذَبِيحَةً عُصْفُورٍ رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

"Whoever shows mercy, even while slaughtering a sparrow, Allah will have mercy on him on the Day of Resurrection."²

These are all aspects of slaughtering in the best manner possible, as ordered by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this hadith.

The Mercy Found in Islamic Slaughtering

Al-Jumuah magazine reported that two professors, Professor Schultz and Hazim, "conducted an experiment to compare the Islamic slaughtering with the stunning required in the so-called humane slaughter." The results of their experiment were reported as follows:

Islamic Method: 1. During the first three seconds after slaughtering, the EEG [electroencephalograph] did not record any change, thus indicating that the animal did not feel any pain during or immediately after the incision. 2. For the following three seconds, the EEG recorded a condition of deep sleep-unconsciousness. This is due to the large quantity of blood gushing out of the body. 3. After this total of six seconds, the EEG recorded zero level, showing no feeling of pain at all. 4. As the brain message (EEG) dropped to zero level, the heart was still pounding and the body convulsing vigorously (a reflex action of the spinal cord) driving maximum blood out of the body.

Stunning: 1. The animals were apparently unconscious soon after stunning but the EEG showed severe pain immediately after stunning. 2. The heart of the stunned animal stopped beating earlier than the one slaughtered the Islamic way thus resulting in the retention of more blood in the meat.³

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*. Al-Tabaraani has something similar. According to al-Albaani, it is authentic. Al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, p. 33, hadith #26.

² Recorded by al-Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*. According to al-Albaani, its chain is *hasan*. Al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, p. 34, hadith #27.

³ Hassen Laidi, "Meat in America: Considering the Production Process," *al-Jumuah* (Volume 9, Issue 3, Rabi al-Awwal 1418), p. 11. Laidi adds, "It should be noted that this so-called humane act [of stunning] may be based more on economics than on humanness. The main purpose of stunning has less to do with causing a painless death to the animal than with rendering the animal motionless thus allowing the production line to go at a faster pace and achieving higher efficiency and profits for the meatpacking company."

The Significance of The Two Examples Mentioned in This Hadith

Al-Sanaani states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated the least imaginable examples that one would think of when thinking of *ihsaan*: even while killing an animal or a human one must exhibit *ihsaan*.¹ However, there may be a deeper reason as to why the Prophet (peace be upon him) explicitly mentioned these two examples.

One of the points to note is that both of these examples are cases in which the person has the upper hand over another. That is, one is about to execute or kill something. Obviously, this is a position of “authority and power”. Hence, it is noteworthy that explicitly in those settings the Prophet (peace be upon him) stressed that the person must have *ihsaan*. He cannot let his ego or power be his motivating factor. Even in those cases, he must act with kindness and excellence. In other settings, where he is not in such a place of dominance, it is even more so befitting that he acts with excellence and *ihsaan* toward others.

Al-Haitami points out that in *Jaahiliyah* (pre-Islamic ignorance), they would mutilate and torture people when executing them. Similarly, they would also do the same when killing animals. Indeed, they would kill the animal in any way whatsoever. This is also part of the reason why the Prophet (peace be upon him) specifically mentioned these examples in this hadith.²

Related Topics

The Treatment of Animals

There are many hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that prove that Muslims must treat animals in a kind and merciful manner, for one is held responsible for the way he treats animals. A person’s treatment of animals can be a source of reward from Allah or a source of punishment.

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered *ihsaan* to be shown to the animal even when one is about to kill it. This means, even if the goal is to kill the animal, one should not want to bring about harm to the animal. If that is the case when the animal is about to be slaughtered, what about the general case where there is no need to harm the animal in any way? It is clear from many hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that animals are not to be harmed. They are not to be killed unless there is need to do so. Indeed, not only are they not to be harmed but they are to be shown mercy and companion, as this hadith proves.³

¹ Muhammad al-Sanaani, *Subul al-Salaam Sharh Buloogh al-Maraam* (Makkah: Maktaba Nazaar Mustafa al-Baaz, 1995), vol. 4, p. 1854.

² Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 161.

³ Sultaan, p. 157.

A hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* shows how much Allah is pleased with kind behavior towards animals. The hadith states:

بَيْنَمَا رَجُلٌ يَمْشِي بِطَرِيقٍ اشْتَدَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَطَشُ فَوَجَدَ بئْرًا فَنَزَلَ فِيهَا فَشَرِبَ ثُمَّ خَرَجَ فَإِذَا كَلْبٌ يَلْهَثُ يَأْكُلُ الثَّرَى مِنَ الْعَطَشِ فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ لَقَدْ بَلَغَ هَذَا الْكَلْبُ مِنَ الْعَطَشِ مِثْلُ الَّذِي كَانَ بَلَغَ بِي فَنَزَلَ الْبئْرَ فَمَلَأَ حَفَّهُ ثُمَّ أَمْسَكَهُ بِيَدِهِ فَسَقَى الْكَلْبَ فَشَكَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ فَغَفَرَ لَهُ قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّا لَنَا فِي الْبَهَائِمِ أَجْرًا فَقَالَ نَعَمْ فِي كُلِّ ذَاتِ كَبِدٍ رَطْبَةٍ أَجْرٌ

"While a man was walking on the road, he became extremely thirsty. He came across a well and went down into it and drank some water. Then he came out and he found a dog panting. The dog was licking mud due to his extreme thirst. The man said, 'That dog is experiencing the same kind of thirst that I was experiencing.' So he went back down in the well and filled his shoe with water. Then he held it in his mouth and gave water to the dog. Allah thanked him for that deed and forgave him." The people said, "O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), is there any reward for us in [our treatment of] animals?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) answered, "There is a reward [for serving] everything with a moist liver [that is, every living creature]."

On another occasion, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

بَيْنَمَا كَلْبٌ يُطِيفُ بِرَكِيَّةٍ كَادَ يَقْتُلُهُ الْعَطَشُ إِذْ رَأَتْهُ بَغِيٌّ مِنْ بَعَايَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فَنَزَعَتْ مُوقَهَا فَسَقَتْهُ فَعُفِّرَ لَهَا بِهِ

"While a dog was going around a well and was about to die of thirst, a prostitute from the Tribes of Israel saw it. She then took off her shoe and gave it some water. So Allah forgave her for that [good deed]." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

Another hadith shows that a person can be sent to Hell because of his mistreatment of an animal. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

دَخَلَتْ امْرَأَةٌ النَّارَ فِي هِرَّةٍ رَبَطَتْهَا فَلَمْ تُطْعَمْهَا وَلَمْ تَدَعْهَا تَأْكُلُ مِنَ خَشَاشِ الْأَرْضِ

"A woman entered the Hell-fire because of a cat that she tied down. She neither fed it nor let it free to eat the insects of the earth." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)

One time the Prophet (peace be upon him) entered one of the gardens of the Ansaar to relieve himself. A camel saw him and started weeping with a yearning sound. The Prophet (peace be upon him) went to it and wiped its head until it became silent. Then he went to find the owner of the camel. The owner came and the Prophet (peace be upon him) told him,

أَفَلَا تَتَّقِي اللَّهَ فِي هَذِهِ الْبَهِيمَةِ الَّتِي مَلَكَكَ اللَّهُ إِيَّاهَا فَإِنَّهُ شَكَا إِلَيَّ أَنَّكَ تُجِيعُهُ وَتُدْبِيهِ

“Do you not fear Allah with respect to this beast which Allah has put into your possession? It has complained to me that you keep it hungry and load it with heavy burdens which tire it out.”¹

One time the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw an emaciated camel (and in another narration, a camel who had been tied to a certain location all day long without any break) and he said,

اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ فِي هَذِهِ الْبَهَائِمِ الْمُعْجَمَةِ فَارْكَبُوهَا صَالِحَةً وَكُلُوهَا صَالِحَةً

“Fear Allah with respect to these dumb beasts. Ride them when they are in good condition and feed them when they are in a good condition.”²

One can realize how merciful Muslims are supposed to be to animals when he considers that the Prophet (peace be upon him) even forbade staying on a horse’s or camel’s back when there is no need to. He said,

إِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا ظُهُورَ دَوَابِّكُمْ مَنَابِرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ إِنَّمَا سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتَبْلُغَكُمْ إِلَى بَلَدٍ لَمْ تَكُونُوا بِالْغَيْهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ فَعَلَيْهَا فَاقْضُوا حَاجَتَكُمْ

“Do not treat the backs of your animals like pulpits. Surely, Allah has made them subject to you to carry you to a town that you would not have been able to reach [on foot] except with difficulty and hardship. And He made for you the earth [like a floor to travel on]. So fulfill your needs [and do not burden them further].”³

On another occasion, the Companions saw a mother bird with two young ones. They took the two young birds. The Prophet (peace be upon him)

¹ Recorded by Abu Dawood, al-Haakim, Ahmad and others. According to al-Albaani and Abdul Qadir al-Arnaoot, its chain is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, p. 28, hadith #20; Abdul Qadir al-Arnaoot’s footnotes to ibn al-Atheer, vol. 4, p. 527.

² Recorded by Abu Dawood. The narration referred to in parenthesis was recorded by ibn Hibbaan and Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, they are *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, p. 31, hadith #23.

³ Recorded by Abu Dawood. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, p. 30, hadith #22.

came upon them and found the mother bird flapping its wings. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said,

مَنْ فَجَعَ هَذِهِ بَوْلِهَا رُدُّوا وَلَدَهَا إِلَيْهَا

"Who has grieved this one due to her offspring? Return its offspring to her."¹

Part of good behavior towards animals is that one does not use them for target practice. The Prophet (peace be upon him) cursed anyone who used a live animal as a target and he prohibited the tying down of animals to use them for target practice. (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) He also forbade branding on or around the face.

Al-Bugha and Mistu said that a beast of burden should not be made to carry more than it can handle. Also, one should not ride an animal unless there is a need to do so. Similarly, an animal should not be milked to the point that its offspring may be harmed.² It is actually narrated that Umar ibn al-Khattaab had a camel owner beaten because he made his camel carry more than it was capable of. (Recorded by ibn Saad in *al-Tabaqat*.³)

After quoting a number of examples of how kind and gentle the *Salaf* were to animals, al-Albaani stated,

These are some of the reports that I have been able to come across. They show the great concern that the early Muslims under the guidance of the Prophet (peace be upon him) had in taking care of animals. In reality, [what al-Albani presented] is just a drop in the bucket of what exists. This shows that it is actually Islam that gave mankind the principle of kindness and prohibited cruelty to animals. This is opposed to those people ignorant of Islam who think that the European disbelievers were the ones who came up with that principle. Indeed, these are from the manners passed down from the earliest Muslims.⁴

It is permissible, though, to kill harmful animals.⁵ A fiqh maxim states that it is permissible to kill animals that, as part of their nature, cause harm and destruction.⁶ Therefore, if an animal is not naturally harmful, it is not allowed to be killed unless it actually is causing harm. For example, if ants invade a house, then it is allowed to kill those ants— although otherwise it would not be

¹ Recorded by Abu Dawood. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, p. 33, hadith #25.

² Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 112.

³ See al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, p. 35.

⁴ Al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, p. 37.

⁵ Some jurists take the principle of *Ihsaan* to the extent that they say that if a harmful animal that is just about to be killed is thirsty or hungry, one should give it drink or food first before killing it. Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 160.

⁶ Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 6, p. 307. In Arabic, that maxim is a rhyming phrase.

allowed to kill them. Furthermore, they are to be killed only when that is the only way to remedy the situation.¹

Even in this case, one should kill the animal in the best way possible. The life of the animal should be taken immediately without causing it any suffering. For example, it is not proper to set a trap for a mouse that does not kill the mouse but lets the mouse die out of starvation while it is caught in the trap. If someone sets such a trap, he must check it repeatedly to make sure no mouse is caught. If a mouse is caught, he must take it out and kill it promptly. Ibn Uthaimin says that he fears that the one who allows the mouse to starve to death while caught in the trap falls under the meaning of the hadith, quoted earlier,

دَخَلَتْ امْرَأَةٌ النَّارَ فِي هِرَّةٍ رَبَطَتْهَا فَلَمْ تُطْعِمَهَا وَلَمْ تَدْعُهَا تَأْكُلْ مِنْ خَشَاشِ الْأَرْضِ

“A woman entered the Hell-fire because of a cat that she tied down. She neither fed it nor let it free to eat the insects of the earth.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)²

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- One should exhibit *ihsaan* toward all of Allah’s creatures, including His angels and even the vegetation of this earth. With respect to His angels, for example, one should not do acts that cause harm to them nor should one perform deeds that are displeasing to them. As for the vegetation, one should do what it takes to make them grow. In fact, it is considered reprehensible to neglect watering a parcel of land until its vegetation dies.³
- *Ihsaan* is even to be demonstrated toward the disbelievers, most notably by praying to Allah to guide them to the Straight Path.⁴
- This hadith gives a strong indication as to what the personality and deeds of a Muslim should be. There should be *ihsaan* in everything that he does. That is, he is a person of quality and dignity. When he does something, he does it well and is not satisfied with anything other than a quality job. He knows that Allah has prescribed *ihsaan* in all deeds and for all things. In the West, they talk about “taking pride in one’s work.” This concept, without the improper manifestations of “pride”, is what a Muslim should be all about—for the sake of Allah and pleasing Allah. He should be able to look at everything he does and say, “I did that and I did that well, to the best of my ability. And I did it well for the sake of Allah.” Unfortunately, this is something that is missing from the Muslim *Ummah* today. Whether

¹ See ibn Uthaimin, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 6, p. 308.

² Ibn Uthaimin, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 6, p. 308.

³ Al-Mudaabaghi, p. 160.

⁴ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 160.

one is talking about the way Muslims deal with each other or the quality of the work that they do, for many Muslims today, this concept of *ihsaan* is something very foreign. They do not treat each other with politeness and kindness. They do not do their work in the best way possible and make sure that it is of a quality nature. It seems that many of them have even lost their self-respect and dignity. If this hadith were to be understood and applied properly throughout the Muslim world, one would find the lives and plight of the Muslims to be very different, Allah willing.

According to al-Haitami, the deed that is performed in this manner, even if it is a small deed, will have a much greater reward with Allah due to the intention and *ihsaan* behind it. One should not discount or be lazy concerning any act that he performs. He should always do every act in the most complete manner possible.¹

- There is a level of *ihsaan* which is obligatory in every deed, namely that the deed be done according to the *shareeah* and with the proper intention. This is necessary for it to lead to rewards from Allah. But even beyond that, every true believer should demonstrate *ihsaan* in every deed he performs.
- When a person slaughters an animal, he should realize that it is a creation and a possession of Allah that he is slaughtering. One cannot act in any way he wishes toward that animal. He may only act in the way that its true Owner allows and requires. Therefore, he should slaughter the animal in the way that is most beloved to its real Owner.²
- Shaikh Abdullah Jibreen was asked about testing drugs on animals before giving them to humans. His reply was that the basic ruling is that one is not allowed to harm an animal, and then he quoted the hadith under discussion here. He said that if those drugs cause some illness or defect in the animal, it is not allowed to test them on animals, due to the harm that it creates for the animal. He says that if the testers are certain that the drug will not harm the animal's life after testing or if the animal has some illness that this drug is being used to cure, and one fears trying it on a human, then one may first use it on an animal if he is certain that no harm will come to the animal.³ If that is the ruling with respect to drugs, obviously bringing harm to animals for the sake of cosmetics or something less important than drugs would not be considered permissible in Islam. It is not allowed to harm the creatures that Allah has created except when necessary, as allowed and sanctioned by the *shareeah*, such as the case of slaughtering them for the sake of food and subsistence.
- With respect to jihad and the killing of the enemy, the Muslims should not use the kinds of weapons that cause mass destruction and misery— and

¹ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 160.

² Al-Sindi, *Sharh*, p. 65.

³ Abdullah ibn Jibreen, "*Fataawa*," *al-Dawah* (No. 1665, October 29, 1998), p. 38.

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which also kills those who are not combatants in the war. This is not the best way to kill or fight. However, if the enemy uses such weapons against the Muslims, then they may use them in response.¹ Perhaps, also, if the leader of the Muslims finds it to be a necessity, he may also resort to it. Allah knows best.

- If a person shows *ihsaan* to other humans and to animals, Allah willing, Allah will also shower him with *ihsaan*, as was discussed under Hadith #2.

Summary of the Hadith

- Allah has prescribed excellence and goodness towards everything and in every act.
- Even while carrying out an execution, it should be done in the best way possible.
- One must slaughter an animal with gentleness and compassion.

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 109. For a detailed discussion of this kind of issue, see Muhammad Haikal, *al-Jihaad wa al-Qitaal fi al-Siyasah al-Shariyyah* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Kulliyat al-Imaam al-Auzaai li-l-Dirasaat al-Islaamiyah), vol. 3, pp. 1343-1363.

Hadith #18
"Fear Allah wherever you are..."

عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ جُنْدُبِ بْنِ جُنَادَةَ وَأَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ مُعَاذِ بْنِ
جَبَلٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
قَالَ: اتَّقِ اللَّهَ حَيْثُمَا كُنْتَ وَأَتَّبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ تَمْحُهَا
وَخَالَقِ النَّاسَ بِخُلُقٍ حَسَنٍ
رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ وَقَالَ حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ وَفِي بَعْضِ النُّسخِ حَسَنٌ
صَحِيحٌ

On the authority of Abu Dharr Jundub ibn Junada and Abu Abdul Rahman Muaadh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with both of them) from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who said, "Fear Allah wherever you are. And follow up a bad deed with a good deed and it will wipe it out. And behave towards the people with a good behavior."

Recorded by al-Tirmidhi who said it is a *hasan* hadith. And in some of the copies [of *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, it says it is] *hasan sahih*.

Selected Vocabulary

اتَّقِ	- This is a command to have <i>taqwa</i> , discussed in detail below.
حَيْثُمَا	- "wherever," possibly, "whenever," as some say this is an adverb of place while others say it is an adverb of time; it could also mean, "whatever condition or state" ¹
كُنْتَ	- "you are"
أَتَّبِعِ	- "follow it up directly"
السَّيِّئَةَ	- "a sin, an evil act"
الحَسَنَةَ	- "a good deed"
تَمْحُهَا	- "it wipes it away"
النُّسخِ	- "written copy"

¹ Al-Mudaabaghi, p. 163.

Takhreej

Al-Nawawi mentions that this hadith is recorded from Abu Dharr and Muaadh ibn Jabal. Actually, he is referring to two completely different hadith that may be found in separate works of hadith.

The hadith of Abu Dharr is recorded by al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, al-Haakim, al-Daarimi, ibn Abu Shaibah and others. It is with the chain of Sufyaan on the authority of Habeeb ibn Abu Thaabit on the authority of Maimoon ibn Abu Shabeeb from Abu Dharr. This chain, as recorded by al-Tirmidhi, is actually a weak chain. It has two defects. The first is a problem with Habeeb ibn Abu Thaabit. He committed *tadlees* and in this narration he used a vague term (*an*) to describe how he received the hadith. The second problem is that Maimoon ibn Abu Shabeeb never heard hadith from Abu Dharr. Hence, the chain is broken at that link.

The hadith of Abu Dharr has been narrated through other chains. However, the meaning of those narrations, which are sometimes quoted as supporting evidence for this hadith, are quite different from the hadith presently being discussed.

The narration from Muaadh ibn Jabal has been recorded by al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, ibn Abu Shaibah, al-Tabaraani and others. It is recorded through a number of chains from the same Habeeb ibn Abu Thaabit on the authority of Maimoon ibn Abu Shabeeb on the authority of Muadh ibn Jabal. This chain has the same problems as those mentioned above concerning the narration from Abu Dharr.

However, Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal has a narration from his father from Waki' from Maimoon from Muadh. Waki, though, pointed out that Sufyaan would sometimes narrate it from Abu Dharr.

Ibn Abdul Barr records another chain through Hamaad ibn Salamah from Thaabit from Anas ibn Malik who said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent Muaadh ibn Jabal to Yemen and told him, "O Muaadh, fear Allah and behave with the people in a good manner. And if you do an evil deed, follow it up with a good deed..." All of those narrators are trustworthy.

Most of the chains of these hadith, which include the above as well as a number not discussed here, are not greatly defective. They do not contain rejected narrators, liars or people of that sort. Hence, together they can support each other to raise this hadith to the level of *hasan lighairihi*. This is the conclusion of al-Dhahabi, al-Haitami, al-Albaani, ibn Muhammad, Shuaib al-Arnaoot and Abdul Qaadir al-Arnaoot.¹ Saleem al-Hilaali, however, concluded that the hadith is *sahih lighairihi*.²

¹ See al-Munaawi (for al-Dhahabi's statement), vol. 1, p. 121; al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 169; al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 81; ibn Muhammad, pp. 136-139; Shuaib al-Arnaoot's footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 395; Abdul Qaadir al-Arnaoot's footnotes to ibn al-Atheer, vol. 11, p. 694.

² Al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 241.

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

Al-Haakim recorded this hadith in his book *al-Mustadrak ala al-Sahihain*. This is supposed to be a collection of hadith that meet al-Bukhari's and Muslim's standards for their *Sahih* collections but which they did not include in their collection. Unfortunately, many times al-Haakim's judgment on the hadith does not seem to be proper. For example, after recording this hadith, al-Haakim stated, "It is *sahih* according to both al-Bukhari's and Muslim's standards." Ibn Rajab points out that this is not correct. First, ibn Abu Shabeeb is not to be found in *Sahih al-Bukhari* at all and he has only one hadith in the introduction to Muslim's work. Furthermore, it is confirmed that ibn Abu Shabeeb had never narrated any hadith directly from any of the Companions. Hence, to say that this hadith is *sahih* according to al-Bukhari's and Muslim's standards is incorrect.¹ The important point is that one must not be misled when reading al-Haakim's statements about hadith. His statements make the hadith sound very authentic but many times that is simply not the case.

General Comments about the Hadith

This is one of the hadith wherein the Prophet (peace be upon him) gives a Companion some advice, although it is for all Muslim, in reality. In this particular case, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated advice whose meaning covers all of the rights that an individual must attend to. In one short statement, the Prophet (peace be upon him) covered the rights of Allah over an individual, the rights of an individual upon himself and the rights of other individuals over a person. By fulfilling Allah's rights, one becomes beloved to Allah. By fulfilling the rights of human beings, one also becomes beloved to them. It could even be argued that this is an all-encompassing advice, beyond which one really needs no other advice.

About the Narrator (I): Abu Dharr

Abu Dharr Jundub ibn Junaadah al-Ghifaari was of the tribe of Ghifaar. He was one of the earliest converts to Islam. He was perhaps as early as the fifth person to become a Muslim. From him, his brother Unais and the other members of his tribe became Muslim. He moved to Madinah after the *Hijra*. However, he was not present at the Battle of Badr. He participated in many of the other battles of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was well respected for his knowledge and austerity.

He lived for some time in Damascus. However, he moved back to Madinah. Uthmaan ordered that he move to Rabadha, a location outside of Madinah, due to his criticizing the wealthy because of their riches.

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 395-396.

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He died in exile outside of Madinah in the year 32. Abdullah ibn Masood performed the funeral prayer for him.

He narrated approximately 281 hadith.

About the Narrator (II): Muaadh ibn Jabal

Muaadh ibn Jabal was an Ansaari of the Khazraj tribe. He was known for his gentleness, generosity and modesty. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that he was the most knowledgeable of this Nation concerning what is permissible and what is forbidden. The Prophet (peace be upon him) sent him as a teacher and guide to the people of Yemen.

He was present at al-Uqbah and the Battle of Badr. He also participated in a number of the other battles of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was one of the people who had memorized the entire Quran during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and from whom the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) recommended that people learn the Quran.

He died due to pestilence, while traveling for the sake of jihad in Greater Syria, in the year 17 A.H., at the age of 34.

He narrated 157 hadith.

“Fear Allah wherever you are”

Taqwa emanates from the root *wagaaya*, which means, “he protected,” or “to protect.” When the word *taqwa* (“fear”) is used with respect to Allah, as in this hadith, it means that one must fear or protect himself from Allah’s anger and punishment. This is the greatest thing that one must protect oneself from. It is the source of Allah’s punishment in both this world and the Hereafter. Allah says in the Quran,

وَيَحْذَرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ

“And Allah warns you about Himself [that is, His punishment]” (*ali-Imraan* 28). Hence, the person must do what he can to avoid and protect himself from earning the anger of Allah. He does this by being sincere to Allah, by performing what Allah has ordered and remaining away from what Allah has prohibited. This is, in essence, *taqwa*.

This portion of the hadith may be understood in different ways. However, they are all somewhat compatible and may all be meant by these words.

One implication is that a person should “fear Allah” when he is with others as well as when he is all alone. Allah knows everything that everyone does as well as what anyone even considers in their hearts. Under all circumstances, one must be on his best behavior and avoid what may displease Allah, for Allah is watchful of all things. Allah has stated,

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

"Fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights) and [do not cut off the ties of] the womb. Surely, Allah is ever an All-Watcher over you" (*al-Nisaa* 1). The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to supplicate to Allah,

أَسْأَلُكَ خَشْيَتِكَ فِي الْعَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ

"I ask of You to give me fear of You in matters that are not seen as well as those that are witnessed."¹ If a person realizes that Allah sees him at all times and knows what he does in secret, he will then avoid committing sins even when he is in complete privacy. This is a sign of complete *Imaan* in his heart. However, constantly failing to obey Allah when one is alone is a sign of a diseased heart, like the heart of the hypocrites.² Allah says about them,

يَتَخَفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّنُونَ مَا لَا يَرْضَى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطًا

"They may hide [their crimes] from men, but they cannot hide them from Allah—for He is with them [by His knowledge] when they plot by night in words that He does not approve. And Allah ever encompasses what they do" (*al-Nisaa* 108).

A second implication is that one must "fear Allah" while in a state of blessings or trial. A third implication—which is the only meaning given to this expression by Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi in his commentary to *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*—is that one must "fear Allah" while one is alone or while one is among any group of people, whether they be pious or impious. The person must tend to himself and cannot use others as an excuse for disobeying Allah.³

The Concept of *Taqwa*

The words translated here as, "Fear Allah," are اتق الله. That is, one should have "taqwa of Allah." *Taqwa* is one of the most important concepts found in the Quran and sunnah. Indeed, al-Mubaarakfoori calls it the

¹ Recorded by al-Nasaai and ibn Hibbaan. According to Shuaib al-Arnaoot, it is *sahih*. See Shuaib al-Arnaoot's footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 407. Although the word used by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in that hadith is *khashya* (which is closer to a direct meaning of fear), such fear is one of the components of *taqwa* and the two words are many times close in significance.

² Sultaan, p. 162.

³ Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi, *Aaridhat al-Ahwadhi bi-Sharh Saheeh al-Tirmidhi* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), vol. 8, pp. 154-155.

foundation of the religion.¹ In numerous hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) advised Muslims to have *taqwa*. Whenever he sent an army out, he would advise them to have *taqwa* of Allah.

Indeed, this has been the command of Allah for all of the messengers. Allah says,

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰتٰوْا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَاِيَّاكُمْ اَنْ اَتَّقُوْا اللّٰهَ

“To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. We have advised the people of the Scripture before you and you also [O Muslims] to have *taqwa* of Allah [fear Allah and keep your duty to Him]” (*al-Nisaa* 131). Commenting on this verse, al-Ghazzaali wrote,

Does not Allah have more knowledge than anyone concerning what is best for the human? Is He not their most sincere adviser and the more merciful and compassionate than anyone? If there were any characteristic that is better for a human, more comprehensive in its goodness, greater in its reward, more important for worship, weightier in its measure, more important in its substance, more rescuing in the long-run than this characteristic of *taqwa*, then Allah would have ordered His servants to have that other characteristic. Allah has advised His most dear servants to have this characteristic out of His Perfect Wisdom and Encompassing Mercy. When He advised this one characteristic, and combined together his previous and later servants upon that characteristic and mentioned that characteristic only, you then know that it is the final goal beyond which there is none other and for which there is no other purpose. Allah has combined together every advice, direction, guidance, instruction, teaching and rectification in that one advice, as is becoming His wisdom and mercy. And you also know by that fact that this one characteristic of *taqwa* combines together all of the good of this life and the Hereafter, that is sufficient for all of the important matters that leads one to the highest ranks [in Paradise]. This foundation cannot be

¹ Al-Mubaarakfoori, *Tuhjah*, vol. 6, p. 122. One may note an emphasis in the *shareeah* on the concept of “protection” and “guarding,” that is, “guarding against *shirk*, evil, sins and so forth”. Jaafar Sheikh Idris explained this concept by stating that the true nature of humans (the *fitra*) is one of obedience to Allah. This nature simply needs to be guarded and protected from straying and it will be led to Paradise. That is the reason for the emphasis on protection, guarding and *taqwa*. (Jaafar Sheikh Idris, Personal Interview, Fairfax, VA, @ Feb. 1996.)

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

increased upon. It is sufficient for the one who sees the light, is guided and acts upon that light.¹

Furthermore, in numerous places in the Quran, Allah has quoted different prophets and messengers as advising their people and telling them that they must have *taqwa* of Allah. These are the most sincere of all who give advice. Such was the example of Saalih, Lot, Moses and others. For example, Allah says about Noah,

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

"The People of Noah belied the Messengers. When their brother Noah said to them, 'Will you not have *taqwa* of Allah?'" (*al-Shuaraa* 105-106).

A lexical understanding of the word *taqwa* will help in having a complete picture of this very important concept. In the supplement to Lane's *Lexicon*, it defines اتقى in the following manner,

He preserved, or guarded, himself exceedingly, or extraordinarily; he put a thing between him and another to preserve him, or guard him. In the conventional language of the law, He preserved, or guarded, himself exceedingly, or extraordinarily, from sin, of commission or of omission... It may often be rendered, He was pious, or careful of his religious duties- اتقى عليهم وحذر (He guarded himself against them in an extraordinary degree, and was cautious, or wary)...²

The essence, therefore, of *taqwa* is to put some kind of barrier or guard between oneself and what one fears, in order to protect oneself from what is feared. A form of this word was used, in its linguistic sense, in a hadith in *Sahih Muslim*. Al-Baraa was describing the Battle of Hunain in which many Muslims fled but the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not flee. At one point in the hadith, he said,

كُنَّا وَاللَّهِ إِذَا أَحْمَرَ الْبَأْسُ نَتَّقِي بِهِ وَإِنَّ الشُّجَاعَ مِنَّا لِلَّذِي يُحَاذِي بِهِ يَعْنِي النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

"By Allah, if the fighting became hot, we would seek a barrier or protection (*nattaqi*) in the Prophet (peace be upon him). And the brave one among us was the one who was next to him, that is, next to the Prophet (peace be upon him)." That is, they would put the Prophet (peace be upon him) between themselves and the enemy in order to protect themselves from the enemy, due to the Prophet's courage and bravery.

¹ Quoted in Ahmad Fareed, *Al-Taqwa: Al-Ghaayah al-Manshuwudah wa al-Durrah al-Mafqoodah* (Riyadh: Dar al-Samee', 1993), p. 18.

² Lane, vol. 2, p. 3059.

As was noted above, the word *taqwa* is sometimes followed by the name of Allah (have *taqwa* of Allah). This is the case with this particular hadith and with numerous verses of the Quran (such as *al-Maaidah* 96 and *al-Hashr* 18). Again, in this sense, it means one should fear or protect himself from Allah's anger and punishment. This can only be done by obeying Him and not disobeying Him. This is the minimum aspect of *taqwa*.¹

Furthermore, if someone puts some kind of distance between himself and disobeying Allah, then he has fulfilled what this concept of *taqwa* really implies. Abu al-Darda and al-Hasan both have stated that the people of *taqwa* even leave permissible deeds out of fear that there might be something harmful in them. These doubtful or permissible acts are that barrier that they have put between themselves and the acts of disobedience.

Sometimes the word is followed by the place of Allah's punishment, such as Hell, or to the time of Allah's punishment, the Day of Resurrection. The meaning is once again the same: One must protect himself from the harm related to those times or places. Here are two examples from the Quran,

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

“And fear² (*ittaqoo*) the Fire, which is prepared for the disbelievers” (*ali-Imraan* 131). Another verse states,

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفْعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

“And fear a Day [the Day of Judgment] when a person shall not avail another, nor will intercession be accepted from him nor will compensation be taken from him nor will they be helped” (*al-Baqara* 48).

Who are the True *Muttaqeen* (Possessors of *Taqwa*)?

To have complete *taqwa* or protection from Allah's anger and punishment, one must perform all of the obligatory deeds that he is capable of and remain away from all of the forbidden acts and doubtful matters. Some scholars also state that the person must also perform the recommended acts and remain away from the disapproved acts. This, obviously, is the highest level of

¹ Al-Baghawi wrote, “It is as if the person of *taqwa* places the implementation of Allah's command and avoidance of what He has forbidden as a kind of barrier between himself and the punishment.” Al-Husain al-Baghawi, *Tafseer al-Baghawi: Maalim al-Tanzeel* (Riyadh: Daar Taiba, 1409 A.H.), vol. 1, p. 60.

² This is the translation of Khan and al-Hilaali. Fear is definitely the essence of *taqwa*. However, it implies acting upon that fear. That is, based on one's great fear of the fire, a person should seek some means of protection from that fire. Obviously, the means of protection is by believing in Allah, obeying Him, not disobeying Him and so forth.

taqwa. These are the people who truly deserve the title *muttaqeen*, "the people possessing *taqwa*". In the same way that a true believer is only the one who fulfills all of the obligations of *Imaan*, the only ones who deserve the title of *muttaqeen* are those who fulfill all of the requirements of *taqwa*. These requirements include both mental as well as behavioral acts. These are the true *muttaqeen* who are described in the verse of the Quran,

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قَبْلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ
 ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَعَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى
 حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَبْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي
 الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَعَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا
 وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي آسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا
 وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East or the West, but righteousness is [the quality of] the one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, the Prophets and gives his wealth, in spite of love for it, to the kinsfolk, to the orphans, and to the poor who beg, and to the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and to set slaves free, and who establish the prayers and gives the zakat, and who fulfill their covenant when they make it, and who are patient in extreme poverty and ailment and at the time of fighting [during battles]. Such are the people of the truth and they are the *muttaqeen*" (*al-Baqara* 177).

This ultimate level of *taqwa*, which is the true and complete *taqwa*, has been described in a number of statements from the early scholars. For example, Talq ibn Habeeb once profoundly stated, "*Taqwa* is to act in obedience to Allah, upon light from Allah, hoping for reward from Allah; [it is also to] avoid acts of disobedience to Allah, upon light from Allah and fearing Allah's punishment."¹

From this quote, one can note that it is essential that the obedience to Allah be according to the light or guidance from Allah while hoping for His reward. At the same time, avoiding an act must also be because of what the *shareeah* has stated about that act while realizing that if one were to perform that act, he would be punished by Allah.

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 400.

Al-Thauri said, “They are called *muttaqeen* because they even guard against things that are not to be guarded against.”¹ And in discussing the verse,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O believers, have *taqwa* of Allah as is His right to have *taqwa*. And die not except while you are Muslims” (*ali-Imraan* 102), ibn Masood said that it means, “That He should be obeyed and not disobeyed, He should be remembered and not forgotten and that He should be thanked and be not ungrateful to.”²

Again, like *imaan*, *taqwa* has different levels to it. There is the minimum level that is required to save oneself from eternal punishment in Hell and there is the higher level of those who deserve the title of *muttaqeen*. Al-Aloosi wrote,

Linguistically *wiqaayah* means seeking protection or guarding oneself in general. In the *shareeah*, it is for a person to guard himself from what is harmful in the Hereafter. It is of different levels that correspond to the different levels of possible harm. The first level is to protect and keep oneself from *shirk* [associating partners with Allah]. The second level is to refrain from the great sins, and this includes performing a minor sin on a continual basis. And the third level is what is alluded to in what is recorded by al-Tirmidhi from the Prophet (peace be upon him), “A person will not reach the level of the *muttaqeen* until he leaves something in which there is no harm out of fear that it may contain some harm.”³ This level is reflected in remaining away from even the minor sins.⁴

Al-Raazi states that there is a difference of opinion over whether or not a person who commits minor sins is deserving to be called a *muttaqi* (singular of *muttaqeen*). He stated,

[The scholars] differ about whether or not avoiding the minor sins is considered an aspect of *taqwa*. Some of them say that it is in the same way that there is also a threatened punishment for the minor sins. Others say that it is not included. However, there is no difference of opinion that it is obligatory to repent from such sins. The difference of opinion is only concerning

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 401.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 401.

³ As a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him), this is not considered an authentic hadith. (See al-Albaani, *Dhaeef al-Jaami*, p. 912.) However, it is a statement of one of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It has been narrated as a statement of Abu al-Darda and something similar has also been narrated from Shahr ibn Haushab.

⁴ Mahmood al-Aloosi, *Rooh al-Maani fi Tafseer al-Quran al-Adheem wa al-Saba al-Mathaani* (Cairo: Maktabah Daar al-Turaath, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 108.

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

whether or not a person who does not avoid the minor sins is deserving to be called a person of *taqwa*.¹

According to Ahmad Fareed, for one to have complete *taqwa* and be from the *muttaqeen*, one must also avoid the minor sins, the doubtful matters and the disapproved deeds. The complete *taqwa* is where one strives his best to avoid all sorts of sins, major or minor. He also strives to perform different acts of obedience, both obligatory and recommended. In this way, he will be having the complete and true *taqwa* that is referred to in the verse, explained by ibn Masud above,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

"O believers, have *taqwa* of Allah as is His right to have *taqwa*. And die not except while you are Muslims" (*ali-Imraan* 102).²

This is the concept of *taqwa* that the Prophet (peace be upon him) advised his followers concerning. The final result of having this *taqwa* can be clearly noted in the following verse of the Quran:

وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَى

"And the good end [Paradise] is for the [people of] *taqwa*" (*Taha* 132).

The Importance, Blessings and Benefits of *Taqwa*

A reading of the Quran will demonstrate the great importance of *taqwa*, how pleasing it is to Allah and how Allah responds to the *muttaqeen*. Note in particular the following blessings and benefits from *taqwa*:³

(1) Guidance from the Quran is received by the *muttaqeen*:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

"This is the book concerning which there is no doubt, a guidance for the *muttaqeen*" (*al-Baqara* 2).

(2) Allah's special closeness, help and supports comes to those who have *taqwa*:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا

"Verily, Allah is with those people who have *taqwa*" (*al-Nahl* 128).

¹ Al-Raazi, vol. 2, p. 20.

² Fareed, *al-Taqwa*, pp. 14-15.

³ Cf., Muhammad ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi, *Kitaab al-Tasheel li-Uloom al-Tanzeel* (Beirut: Daar al-Kitaab al-Arabi, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 35-36. Al-Fairoozabaadi adds a few more to those mentioned above, see Muhammad al-Fairoozabaadi, *Basaair Dhawai Tamyeez fi Lataaif al-Kitaab al-Azeez* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 301-303.

(3) Allah gives His loyalty, protection and support (*wilaayah*) to the *muttaqeen*:

وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“Allah is the protector and ally of the *muttaqeen*” (*al-Jaathiyah* 19).

(4) Allah loves the *muttaqeen*:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“Certainly, Allah loves the *muttaqeen*” (*al-Tauba* 4).

(5) Allah gives the *muttaqeen* a criterion or signs (*furqaan*) to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad and what is beneficial from what is harmful:

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ

“O you who believer, if you have *taqwa* of Allah, He makes for you a criterion [to judge between right and wrong] and shall remit from your sins and forgive you” (*al-Anfaal* 29).

(6) Allah provides beneficial solutions and ways out from difficulty and confusion for those who have *taqwa*:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا

“For whoever has *taqwa* of Allah, He makes for him a [beneficial] solution and way out [of difficulties]” (*al-Talaaq* 2).

(7) Allah provides for the *muttaqeen* from avenues that they did not even imagine:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ۖ وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

“For whoever has *taqwa* of Allah, He makes for him a [beneficial] solution and way out [of difficulties] and He provides for him from sources he never imagined” (*al-Talaaq* 2).

(8) Allah makes matters easy for the *muttaqeen*:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا

“For whoever has *taqwa* of Allah, He makes matters easy for him” (*al-Talaaq* 4).

(9 and 10) Allah forgives the sins of the *muttaqeen* and makes their reward greater:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَكْفِرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

"For whoever has *taqwa* of Allah, He will remit his sins from him and will enlarge his reward" (*al-Talaaq* 5).

(11) Allah only accepts deeds from those who have *taqwa*, if a deed is not done with *taqwa* it will not be accepted:

إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

"Allah only accepts deeds from the *muttaqeen*" (*al-Maaidah* 27).

(12) Prosperity and success comes to the *muttaqeen*:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

"And have *taqwa* of Allah so that you may be prosperous and successful" (*al-Baqara* 189).

(13) Allah gives glad tidings in both this life and the Hereafter to the *muttaqeen*, and that, in fact, is the greatest of rewards:

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

"For those who believed and had *taqwa* is glad tidings in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. [That is the word of Allah] and verily there is no changing the word of Allah. And that is the great success" (*Yoonus* 63-64).

(14) The *muttaqeen* will be entered into Paradise:

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٍ النَّعِيمِ

"Verily, for the *muttaqeen* are gardens of delight with their Lord" (*al-Qalam* 34).

(15) The *muttaqeen* will be spared the Hell-fire,

وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا كَانَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا مَّقْضِيًّا ﴿٧٦﴾ ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي
الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا

"There is not one of you but will pass over it [Hell]; this is with your Lord a Decree which must come to pass. Then We will save those who had *taqwa*" (*Maryam* 71-72).

(16) The *muttaqeen* will have the special blessing of being seated in the seat of sincerity, near to Allah, the Omnipotent King:

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ ﴿٥٥﴾ فِي مَقْعَدٍ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ

"Verily, the *muttaqeen* will be in the midst of gardens and rivers, in a seat of sincerity, near the Omnipotent King (Allah)" (*al-Qamar* 54-55).

(17) The *muttaqeen* will be given the honor of being above the rest of creation on the Day of Judgment:

زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ
اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“This worldly life has been made alluring to the disbelievers while they ridicule those who believe. And those who have *taqwa* will be above them [the disbelievers] on the day of Resurrection” (*al-Baqara* 212).

(18) All fear of punishment and grief will be removed from the *muttaqeen*:

فَمَنْ اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

“Those who have *taqwa* and righteousness shall have no fear upon them nor shall they grieve” (*al-Araaf* 35).

The Key to *Taqwa*

Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi states that the key to attaining *taqwa* revolves around ten matters.¹ If a person takes these matters seriously the result should be a true *taqwa* in his heart:

- (1) Fear of punishment in the Hereafter;
- (2) Fear of punishment in this world;
- (3) Hope for reward in this world;
- (4) Hope for reward in the Hereafter;
- (5) Fearing the reckoning and accounting of one’s deeds;
- (6) Feeling shameful that Allah should see oneself performing deeds

that are displeasing to Him;

(7) Being thankful and feeling grateful for all of the bounties that Allah has bestowed on the person;

(8) The true knowledge of reality, of Allah, His names and attributes, as Allah says,

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

“Those who truly fear Allah among His servants are only the people of knowledge” (*Faatir* 28);

- (9) Having a great deal of respect for the greatness of Allah;
- (10) Being sincere and truthful in one’s love for Allah.

¹ Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi, vol. 1, p. 36.

"And follow up a bad deed with a good deed and it will wipe it out"

This portion of the hadith demonstrates that even those who have *taqwa* slip sometimes and commit sins. Being from the *muttaqeen* does not imply perfection. However, the *muttaqeen* do not persist in their sins. When they remember Allah, they change back to their old selves. And they immediately follow up evil deeds with good deeds.¹ This is in accordance with what the Prophet (peace be upon him) has advised them to do. This is the way of the *muttaqeen* as described by Allah in the Quran:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ
 أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِينَ
 الْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا
 فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَن
 يَغْفِرِ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾
 أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
 خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۗ وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ

"And be quick in the race for forgiveness from Your Lord and for Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the *muttaqeen*: Those who spend [for Allah's cause] in prosperity and in adversity, who repress anger, and who pardon men. Verily, Allah loves the doers of good. And those who, when they have committed some evil or wronged themselves, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins— and who can forgive sins except Allah— and who do not persist in what [wrong] they have done, while they know. For such, the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing amidst them, wherein they shall abide forever. How excellent is this reward for the doers [of *taqwa*]" (*ali-Imraan* 133-136).

These verses are very much related to this hadith that is currently being discussed. As ibn Rajab stated,

The *muttaqeen* are described by their dealings with others as they exhibit *ihsaan* [goodness] to others by spending [on their behalf], repelling their anger, and forgiving them. They have been described as giving to others and putting up with [others'] harm. This is the limit [or the goal] of the good character that

¹ Al-Munaawi, vol. 1, p. 120.

the Prophet (peace be upon him) advised Muaadh to have. Then Allah describes them as, “those who, when they have committed some evil or wronged themselves, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins.” They do not persist in their sin. This shows that the *muttaqeen* may even commit a great sin once in a while, such as *fawaahish* [an evil, lewd act, such as illegal sexual intercourse], and even minor sins, such as wronging themselves. But they do not persist in what they are doing. Instead, they remember Allah after doing such and they ask Allah for forgiveness and repent to Him from that deed. And repentance is to avoid being persistent in a deed. They “remember Allah,” they remember His greatness and the harshness of His punishment and retribution. They remember what He has promised as a punishment for sin. This makes them come back from the sinful state and ask for forgiveness and stop their continuation of that act.¹

Some scholars interpret a “bad deed” in this sentence as being a small sin. That is the majority opinion. However, some accept the word in its general sense and say that it applies to both minor and major sins.² Furthermore, some of them also interpret “good deed” here to mean repentance from that sin which was committed. Repentance can wipe away both the major and the minor sins. Therefore, according to al-Munaawi, one does not have to understand “bad deed” to refer to a minor sin only.³

Another understanding of the “good deed” in this hadith is in its general sense. That is, good deeds— not just repentance from that one evil deed— wipe away evil deeds. This will be discussed in more detail shortly.

The good deed will wipe out or remove the evil deed. This is, of course, a figurative attribution. It is actually Allah that either removes the effects of that sin from one’s heart or from the record of one’s deeds. The evil deed may itself be removed from the records of the angels while some scholars say that this hadith simply means that the person will not be held responsible for that evil deed, although the deed itself will still be recorded in the scrolls of the person’s deeds.⁴ It seems that this latter view is the strongest— that the deed will still be recorded, that the person will see it on the Day of Judgment but the punishment for it will be wiped away— because Allah says,

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ﴿٨﴾

“So whoever does good equal to the weight of an atom shall see it. And whoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom shall see it” (*al-Zalzalah* 7-8). Allah knows best.

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 412-413.

² Al-Mubaarakfoori, vol. 6, p. 122.

³ Al-Munaawi, vol. 1, p. 120.

⁴ Al-Munaawi, vol. 1, p. 120.

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

According to Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi, a good deed wipes away an evil deed regardless of whether it is performed before or after the evil deed. He says that deeds come first from the heart and are influenced by it. If a person performs an evil deed, it is rooted in the heart by choice. If it is followed by a good deed, this is the result of that voluntary choice in the heart which wipes away the evil deed and the choice to do an evil deed.¹

However, the meaning of this hadith is clear: one should follow-up the evil deed that he performed with a good deed. There is no sign in this hadith or in any other relevant hadith that good deeds performed now can wipe away evil deeds performed in the future. Allah knows best.

It is important to note that an evil deed that violates the rights of others is not simply wiped away by a good deed. Instead, the sinner must return the right to the person or ask for his forgiveness. If that is not possible, then he must pray for the wronged person and ask Allah to forgive him.²

It should also be noted that in the same way that good deeds wipe away evil deeds, evil deeds can also wipe away good deeds. That is, the reward for the deed is removed due to the evil deed performed after it. This is especially true with respect to the great sins. In fact, it is narrated from Aisha that dealing with interest (*riba*) erases the reward of participating in jihad.³

Ten Ways in Which Allah Removes Sins⁴

This hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) tells of one of the ways by which the effects of one's sin— that is, the punishment for a sin— may be removed. It is a great blessing from Allah that He does not punish every individual for every sin that he commits at the time he commits it. In fact, every soul is going to commit some sins. But Allah has left the door open to many means by which the punishment for a sin may be removed and, therefore, the servant will not have to be punished for that deed in the Hell-fire.

According to the Christians, any sin that one commits is mortal, one should be put to death for it, and that is why God had to send His only son— and refuge is sought in Allah from such *kufir*— as a sacrifice for all of mankind. In the true religion of Islam, it is known that Allah needs no human sacrifice like that in paganism. In Allah's mercy, He has provided many means for escape from punishment in the Hereafter. From the Quran and the sunnah one can note ten ways in which Allah relieves one from some of the punishment in the Hereafter.

¹ Ibn al-Arabi, vol. 8, p. 155.

² Al-Munaawi, vol. 1, p. 120.

³ According to al-Hilaali, that report is *hasan*. See al-Hilaali, *Eegaadh*, p. 266.

⁴ This information has been presented by the author in the form of a *khutbah* in the author's *The Friday Prayer: Part II- Khutbahs (I)* (Aurora, CO: Islamic Assembly of North America, 1994), pp. 32-36.

Praise belongs to Allah for His mercy that many of these acts that remove some of the punishment from a person are actually things that he could not avoid. Yet Allah, in His mercy, will relieve some of the punishment in the Hereafter from the Muslim due to these acts that humans must go through. The ten ways in which Allah removes some of the punishment of the Hereafter from humans are the following:

(1) Sincere repentance: Repentance is where one feels remorse for the sin he committed. The repentant person also has the resolve never to perform the act again. If the sin violated a right of another human, he rectified that person's right.

All of the Muslims agree that through sincere repentance Allah will remove some possible punishment in the Hereafter. Allah says in the Quran,

قُلْ يٰعِبَادِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسْرَفُوْا عَلٰى اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوْا مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ جَمِيْعًا اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ

“O my slaves who have been prodigal to their own hurt, despair not of the mercy of Allah, who forgives all sins. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful” (*al-Zumar* 53).

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا

تَفْعَلُوْنَ

“And He it is who accepts repentance from His bondsmen and pardons the evil deeds and knows what you do” (*al-Shoora* 25). Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said,

التَّائِبُ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ كَمَنْ لَا ذَنْبَ لَهُ

“The one who repents from a sin is like one who has no sin.”¹

Ibn Rajab stated, based on the Quranic verses and hadith related to repentance, that if a person repents to Allah and truly meets the conditions of repentance, then Allah will definitely accept that repentance from him in the same way that Allah accepts a disbeliever embracing Islam. This is the opinion of the majority of the scholars and ibn Abdul Barr even gives some indication that there is a consensus on this point.²

There are some scholars who say that one cannot definitively say that a repentance that meets all of its necessary conditions will be accepted by Allah.

¹ Recorded by ibn Maajah. According to ibn Hajr and al-Hilaali, it is *hasan*. See Shuaib al-Arnaoot's footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 414; al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 251.

² Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 418.

Instead, the person hopes for this. He is under the will of Allah— if Allah wills, He may punish him, and if He wills, He may forgive him. However, ibn Rajab answers their arguments and states that one can definitively say that a true repentance is accepted by Allah.¹

Note that there is a difference of opinion over whether or not one must repent from both major and minor sins. The majority opinion is that one must also repent from the minor sins. Ibn Rajab concludes that this is the strongest opinion and gives numerous arguments in its defense.²

(2) Simply by recognizing that one has committed a sin and recognizing that Allah forgives sins and then asking forgiveness from Allah for that sin: In the *Sahih*s of al-Bukhari and Muslim there is the following hadith: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ عَبْدًا أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا فَقَالَ رَبُّ أَدْنَبْتُ وَرَبِّمَا قَالَ أَصَبْتُ فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَقَالَ رَبُّهُ أَعْلِمَ عَبْدِي أَنْ لَهُ رَبًّا يَغْفِرُ الذَّنْبَ وَيَأْخُذُ بِهِ غَفَرْتُ لِعَبْدِي ثُمَّ مَكَثَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ أَصَابَ ذَنْبًا أَوْ أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا فَقَالَ رَبُّ أَدْنَبْتُ أَوْ أَصَبْتُ آخَرَ فَاغْفِرْهُ فَقَالَ أَعْلِمَ عَبْدِي أَنْ لَهُ رَبًّا يَغْفِرُ الذَّنْبَ وَيَأْخُذُ بِهِ غَفَرْتُ لِعَبْدِي ثُمَّ مَكَثَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا وَرَبِّمَا قَالَ أَصَابَ ذَنْبًا قَالَ قَالَ رَبُّ أَصَبْتُ أَوْ قَالَ أَذْنَبْتُ آخَرَ فَاغْفِرْهُ لِي فَقَالَ أَعْلِمَ عَبْدِي أَنْ لَهُ رَبًّا يَغْفِرُ الذَّنْبَ وَيَأْخُذُ بِهِ غَفَرْتُ لِعَبْدِي ثَلَاثًا فَلْيَعْمَلْ مَا شَاءَ

“A slave committed a sin and said, ‘O Lord, I have committed a sin, so forgive me.’ The Lord said, ‘My slave knows that he has a Lord that forgives sins. Therefore, I have forgiven my slave.’ Then he committed another sin and said, ‘O Lord, I have committed another sin, so forgive me!’ His Lord says, ‘My slave knows that he has a lord who forgives sins, therefore, I have forgiven him.’ And on the third or fourth occurrence Allah says, ‘He may do whatever he wishes.’” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) What this hadith means is that if the person continues to behave in this manner, committing a sin but then realizing his mistake and asking forgiveness, then Allah will continue to forgive him.

Al-Hasan al-Basri was once asked, “Shouldn’t we be shy in front of Allah to ask Him to forgive a sin and then we do it again, then we again ask Him to forgive the sin and we do it again?” Al-Hasan answered, “Satan wishes that he could gain that victory over you. Do not get bored with asking forgiveness.”³

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 418.

² See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 446-451.

³ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 415.

Istighfaar (asking for forgiveness) may be with or without sincere repentance. Ibn Taimiya has argued that in either case the asking of forgiveness may be accepted by Allah and the person may be forgiven for his deed and not punished in the Hereafter although he did not perform the complete repentance.

(3) Good deeds that erase some evil deeds that have been performed: This is the aspect that is specifically mentioned in this hadith from Abu Dharr. Allah also says in the Quran,

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيْ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ
السَّيِّئَاتِ

“Establish worship at the two ends of the day and in some watches of the night. Lo! Good deeds annul ill deeds” (*Hood* 114). It is recorded in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* that a man had kissed a woman. He came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) seeking some way of expiation for the deed that he committed. So then the above verse was revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he read it to that man and indicated to him that the prayer he had just performed behind the Prophet (peace be upon him) had wiped away the sin he had committed.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

الصَّلَاةُ الْخَمْسُ وَالْجُمُعَةُ إِلَى الْجُمُعَةِ وَرَمَضَانَ إِلَى رَمَضَانَ مُكَفِّرَاتٌ مَا بَيْنَهُنَّ إِذَا
اجْتَنَبَ الْكَبَائِرَ

“The five prayers, the Friday prayer until the Friday prayer and Ramadhaan until Ramadhaan, they all act as expiation for what is between them, as long as one did not perform one of the great sins.” (Recorded by Muslim.) And there are many other hadith that give a similar meaning as the above verse and hadith.

Some people say that the good deeds only wipe away the minor sins and that the great sins cannot be erased save by sincere repentance. This opinion has been narrated from Ata and a number of the early scholars. The above hadith, about the five daily prayers, the Friday Prayer and so forth, has been interpreted to mean that the wiping away of evil deeds is conditional upon the person avoiding the major sins. That is, if a person is committing one of the major sins, then his daily prayers, for example, do not wipe away his minor sins. According to ibn Attiyyah, this is the opinion of the majority of the *ahl al-Sunnah*. Ibn Rajab calls this opinion “strange”.

The second view of that hadith is that those acts simply expiate the minor sins but do not expiate the major sins. This is conditional upon the

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

person repenting from those minor sins and not persisting in performing them.¹ According to ibn Atiyyah, this is the stronger opinion and the opinion of the truly learned.²

Some even say that the major sins are wiped away by good deeds. Ibn Rajab himself leaned toward that opinion but then concluded that the correct opinion is that of the majority of the scholars: major sins are not removed but by repentance.³ However, after discussing this question for a number of pages, he says that the major sins will not be wiped away by the good deeds. But he does state that on the Day of Judgment, all deeds will be weighed and at that time some of the good deeds may cancel out the major sins. In fact, a person may be left with a balance of one good deed for which he will be rewarded.⁴

(4) Supplications by the believers for another Muslim may relieve some of the punishment from him in the Hereafter: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

مَا مِنْ مَيِّتٍ تُصَلِّيَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةٌ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ يَبْلُغُونَ مِائَةَ كُلُّهُمْ يَشْفَعُونَ لَهُ إِلَّا شَفَعُوا فِيهِ

"No one dies and then has a group of Muslims, whose number reaches one hundred, praying and interceding for him except that there will be intercession for him." (Recorded by Muslim.)

(5) What is done by a living person for the sake of a dead person: There is some difference of opinion over what deeds may be done on behalf of a dead person. Many say that only fasting may be made up for the deceased or one may give some charity on behalf of the deceased, and so on. According to ibn Taimiya, any action may be done for the sake of a deceased and will relieve the deceased of some of the punishment of the Hereafter.

(6) The intercession by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and others for people of his *ummah* who have committed sins: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

شَفَاعَتِي لِأَهْلِ الْكِبَائِرِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي

"My intercession is for those of my *ummah* who performed the great sins."⁵ In another hadith, he said, "I was given the choice between having half of my *ummah* entering Paradise or me being granted the right of intercession. I chose intercession as it is more general and encompasses more people." He was

¹ If a person persists in performing the minor sins, they are no longer minor sins but they are considered major sins, as ibn Rajab pointed out. Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 427.

² Ibn Atiyyah was quoted in ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 426.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 428-429.

⁴ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 438.

⁵ Recorded by Ahmad, al-Nasaai, Abu Dawood and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 691.

asked, “Is it just for those who fear Allah?” He answered, “No, it is for those who committed sins and mistakes.”

(7) Afflictions in this life by which Allah wipes away some of sins: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

لَا يُصِيبُ الْمُؤْمِنَ شَوْكَةٌ فَمَا فَوْقَهَا إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ بِهَا دَرَجَةً وَحَطَّ عَنْهُ بِهَا حَاطَةٌ

“The believer does not get inflicted by a prick of a thorn or anything greater save that Allah raises his degree due to it and removes some of his sins due to it.”¹

(8) The hardship of the test and the life in the grave will be used by Allah to remove some sins and relieve some of the punishment in the Hereafter.

(9) Similarly, the events of the day of judgment and the hardship of the resurrection will be so great upon the people that, by Allah’s mercy, He will overlook some of their sins simply because He made them go through such a harsh event. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that some people will be up to the ankles in perspiration while others will be in perspiration to their waists or necks, and so on.

(10) Mercy and forgiveness from Allah which is not due to any action of the slave himself but simply due to the overwhelming mercy of Allah.

As was discussed in the commentary to the hadith of Jibreel, all of the true believers in Allah will enter Paradise some day and they will reside therein forever. But it is also true that there will be some Muslims who will be punished in the Hell-fire for some of the deeds that they have performed in this life. But, all praise be to Allah, in Allah’s mercy He has provided many means by which one may avoid this punishment. Some of them one may perform himself, as mentioned above, while there are acts that others perform on behalf of someone else.² There are still other ways in which Allah relieves some of the punishment from a person, yet as human beings, they have no choice but to pass through those events (for example, the trial in the grave, the harshness of the day of resurrection, and so forth). Allah, in His infinite mercy, will also use these events on one’s behalf to remove some possible punishment in the Hereafter. And, finally, Allah may simply forgive any of His servants that He wills to forgive.

One of the essential aspects of faith or *Imaan* is having hope in Allah that He will forgive one’s sins and grant His forgiveness and mercy. This hope in Allah is increased by realizing the many ways by which Allah is willing to forgive sins and remove some of the punishment of the Hereafter. Hence, this

¹ Recorded by al-Tirmidhi. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1278.

² This points to the importance of being a member of the Islamic community such that when a Muslim dies, for example, there will be Muslims who will know about him and who will be able to pray on his behalf, and so on.

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

topic in itself should be a very important factor in increasing one's hope in Allah and, therefore, one's *Imaan*.

"And behave toward the people with a good behavior"

This means that one should deal with and interact with others in a good manner. This includes having a pleasant expression and smile when one greets them. It also includes being calm and gentle with them as well as not having bad thoughts about them. This should be done with respect to all people, for example, both the young and the old. This concept of good behavior is summed up by some people in the statement, "You should treat the others in the way that you would like them to treat you."¹

The word for behavior or manners in Arabic is *al-khuluq*. This is from the same root as *al-khalq*, which refers to a person's being or creation itself. The relation between the two is that one's behavior and manners flow from a person with ease and without any need to ponder over them.² Hence, his character is like his "first nature". Based on this aspect, some people think that a person's character is something that comes about by nature and cannot be changed.

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) advised the person to have a certain behavior. This demonstrates that a person can change and determine his behavior. He can do those acts that are of good behavior and character to the point that he grows accustomed to them. He can grow so accustomed to them that they do become his nature and character. Hence, a person can change his character and, if he is of bad character, then, following this advice of the Prophet (peace be upon him), he must work to change his character.³

The first statements that ibn Rajab makes in his commentary to this part of the hadith are,

[Having good character] is a characteristic of *taqwa*. *Taqwa* cannot be complete without it. It was mentioned here by itself due to the need for explicitly explaining that point. Many people think that *taqwa* implies fulfilling the "rights of Allah" without fulfilling the rights of humans. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) explicitly stated that he must deal with people in a kind manner. He was sending him to Yemen as a teacher, instructor and judge. Especially a person in that

¹ Al-Munaawi, vol. 1, p. 120.

² According to al-Raaghib al-Isfahani, there is a difference between the word *khulq* (character) and *al-takhaluq*. *Al-Takhaluq* implies behavior that is difficult upon a person and requires some external motivation behind it. *Khulq* is what comes easily and naturally to a person and does not require any external motivating force. See al-Munaawi, vol. 1, p. 121. The exact definition of *khuluq* will be discussed in more detail in the commentary to Hadith #27.

³ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 167.

position, more so than others, must deal with the people in a good manner. Many of those who take advantage of fulfilling the rights of Allah, and are attached to love for Him, fear of Him and obedience to Him, neglect the rights of the humans, either completely or partially. There are very few people who combine together the fulfilling of the rights of Allah and of His servants. The only ones who have the strength to do that are those who are complete in their *taqwa* from among the prophets and sincere ones.¹

Actually, in these words of advice, the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave advice that could lead a person to Paradise. This is proven by another hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about the thing which most causes people to enter into Paradise and he stated,

تَقْوَى اللَّهِ وَحُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ

“The *taqwa* of Allah and good behavior.”²

Islam’s Stress on Good Behavior

Every aspect of one’s life must be ruled by the religion of Islam. To put it differently, there is a relationship between one’s belief in *La Ilaaha Illa-llah* and every action that he makes in this world. If one has the correct and true concept of “There is no God but Allah”, this belief will have a complete effect on him. It will change him into that person that reflects the belief in the *shahaadah*. In fact, that is the goal that one must aspire to.

When talking about the purpose for which he had been sent, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) (peace be upon him) stated,

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ صَالِحَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

“I have been sent for the purpose of perfecting good morals.”³ In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has clearly stated that one of the important aspects of his being sent as a prophet was to define, illustrate and teach good morals and manners. That is, he was to show the manners and the behavior consistent with the belief in Allah.

In another hadith, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 454.

² Recorded by al-Tirmidhi and ibn Maajah. According to al-Hilaali, it is *hasan*. Al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 278.

³ Recorded by al-Haakim and others. Graded *sahih* by al-Albaani in *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 464,

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

أَنَا زَعِيمٌ... بَيْتٍ فِي أَعْلَى الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ حَسَّنَ خُلُقَهُ

"I am a guarantor of a house in the highest part of Paradise for the one who makes his behavior good."¹

In yet another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) described piety itself as being good character. Hence, it is an essential aspect of being pious. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

الْبِرُّ حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ

"Piety and righteousness is being of good character." (Recorded by Muslim.) There is yet another hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) made the connection between being a true believer and good character even clearer. He said,

أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا

"The believer with the most complete *Imaan* is the one with the best behavior."²

How pleasing good character is to Allah can be seen by the weight that Allah will give it on the scales on the Day of Judgment. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَثْقَلُ فِي الْمِيزَانِ مِنْ حُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ

"There is nothing heavier in the scales than good character."³ In another hadith that gives a similar impression, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَيَبْدُرُكَ بِحُسْنِ خُلُقِهِ دَرَجَةَ الصَّائِمِ الْقَائِمِ

"A believer reaches, due to his good character, the level of the one who fasts and performs the night prayer."⁴

Allah describes the successful believers by their behavior. Allah says,

¹Recorded by Abu Dawood. Graded *hasan* by al-Albaani in *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 306.

² Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 266.

³Recorded by Ahmad and Abu Dawood. Graded *sahih* by al-Albaani in *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 997.

⁴ Recorded by Abu Dawood. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 391.

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
 عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
 لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ﴿٥﴾ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَرْوَاحِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ
 مَلُومِينَ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَنْ آتَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ﴿٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
 هُمْ لِأَمْنَتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ
 ﴿٩﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا
 خَالِدُونَ

“Successful indeed are the believers. Those who offer their prayers with all solemnity and full submissiveness. And those who turn away from vain talk. And those who pay the Zakat. And those who guard their chastity except from their wives or (the captives) that their right hands possess— for then, they are free from blame. But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors. Those who are faithfully true to their trusts and to their covenants. And those who strictly guard their prayers. These are indeed the heirs. Who shall inherit the *Firdaus* (Paradise). They shall dwell therein forever” (*al-Muminoon* 1-11).

On the other hand, when the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) described the hypocrites, he described them by their actions and behavior. He also stated that whoever possesses any of their characteristics has a characteristic of hypocrisy until he gives it up. Those characteristics include lying, breaking of promises, non-fulfillment of trusts and immoral behavior while arguing. (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

It must also be clear in every Muslim’s mind what the source of one’s behavior— what is defined as proper behavior and what is defined as improper behavior— must be. It is not acceptable to get such standards from the disbelievers and their way of life. Similarly, it cannot be derived from the different *jaahiliyah* (non-Islamic) societies that are spread throughout the Muslim world. Nor can one use his own desires and liking to determine what is proper and good behavior.

A Muslim’s behavior and manners are supposed to be derived from the Quran and sunnah. His life and his behavior should be an actualization and implementation of the Quran and sunnah. This is exactly what the true example and model, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), was like. When

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

Aisha, the Prophet's wife, was asked about the character of the Prophet (peace be upon him), she answered,

كَانَ خُلُقُهُ الْقُرْآنَ

"His character was the Quran." (Recorded by Muslim.)

The Quran and sunnah show how to behave towards one's wives, neighbors, friends, enemies and even one's own soul. As was discussed in a previous hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has even given guidance as to how to behave towards animals.

Therefore, the way to improve one's character is to look at the example of the Prophet (peace be upon him). One should try to emulate his behavior in as many different circumstances as possible. If a person does that, then he will be moving toward the most noble character, as Allah has described the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the following manner,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

"And, verily, you [O Muhammad] are of an exalted standard of character" (*al-Qalam* 4).

"And in some of the copies [of *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, it says it is] *hasan sahih* ."

In this last sentence, al-Nawawi is referring to a problem that is very common with respect to *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, in particular. Al-Tirmidhi made a number of comments after different hadith in his *Sunan*. In general, he would grade the hadith and make a comment like, "It is *hasan*," "It is *hasan sahih*," and so forth. The problem is that a number of different manuscripts of *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* have been in existence since the time of al-Tirmidhi and these manuscripts have different, contradicting statements after particular hadith. This problem exists not for a just a few hadith but it exists for a relatively good number of hadith. Ibn al-Salaah wrote, "The copies of the book of al-Tirmidhi differ in his statements, 'This hadith is *hasan*,' or 'This hadith is *hasan sahih*,' and so forth. Therefore, you must authenticate your source by comparing it with a number of copies and then rely on what they agree upon."¹

In general, although this is an old problem that dates back long before the time of ibn al-Salaah (d. 643 A.H.), this problem of contradicting statements in *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* has not been blamed on al-Tirmidhi himself. In other words, it is not considered the case that he would change his statements about particular hadith. Instead, according to Itr, it was the different

¹ Uthman ibn al-Salaah, *Muqadimah ibn al-Salaah* (Daar al-Kutub, 1974), p. 109.

scribes who recorded *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* that are considered the source of the problem.¹

Many scholars are uncomfortable with al-Tirmidhi's grading of specific hadith.² According to Itr, this is partially due to those scholars relying on an incorrect recording of *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. Itr gives a couple of examples. One example is the hadith of Rukaanah who wrestled with the Prophet (peace be upon him). After presenting the hadith, according to some of the copies of *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, al-Tirmidhi stated, "This hadith is *hasan ghareeb*. Its chain is not standing [strong]. We do not know Abu al-Hasan al-Asqalaani or ibn Rukaanah [two of the narrators of the hadith]." This led later writers to ask how al-Tirmidhi could call this hadith *hasan* when he himself said that the chain is not strong and it contains two unknown narrators. Itr states that this problem is solved when one refers to the other existent copies of *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*. He says that they all state that al-Tirmidhi calls the hadith *ghareeb* without using the term *hasan*.³ Hence, al-Tirmidhi's grading was not questionable since the statement attributed to him was incorrect.

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- The concept and importance of *taqwa* also demonstrates the importance of knowledge. The foundation of *taqwa* is to have knowledge of what one must guard against and how to guard against it. To have fear of Allah requires knowledge of Him—as He is described in the Quran and sunnah. The more that one has such knowledge, the more he may fear Allah and have true *taqwa*. Allah says in the Quran,

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

"It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that truly fear Allah" (*Faatir* 28).⁴

- A true believer is worried about the sins that he has committed. Ibn Masud once said, "The believer looks at his sins as if he were at the foot of a mountain and they were all to fall on him. The evildoer looks at his sins as if they were a fly that landed on his nose. He simply [swats at it as if it were nothing]." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) Therefore, the true believer rushes to repentance and to perform the acts that will expiate or remove those sins.

¹ Noor al-Deen Itr, *al-Imaam al-Tirmidhi wa al-Muwaazinah baina Jaamihi wa baina al-Saheehain* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaalah, 1988), p. 243.

² See the comments, for example, in Muhammad al-Mubaarakfoori, *Muqaddimah Tuhfah al-Ahwadhi bi-Sharh Jaami al-Tirmidhi* (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 347-348.

³ Itr, pp. 242-243.

⁴ Cf., Maryam al-Sibaai, *al-Taqwa baina al-Khulq wa al-Sulook* (Jeddah: Daar al-Mujtama, 1987), p. 17.

Hadith #18: "Fear Allah wherever you are..."

- The pious forefathers of Islam were always worried and afraid that their deeds and repentance would not be accepted by Allah. This drove them to being even more careful and more repentant to Allah.
- There are two separate terms in the *shareeah* that are closely related to the removal of sins. These two terms have slightly different connotations. They are in the following verse of the Quran,

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ ءَامِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَءَامَنَّا رَبَّنَا
فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ

“Our Lord, verily we have heard the call of one calling to faith, [saying,] ‘Believe in your Lord,’ and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive (*aghfir*) us our sins and remit (*kaffir*) from us our evil deeds, and make us die in the state of righteousness along with the pious” (*ali-Imraan* 193).

One of these terms is *al-takfeer* (التكفير). This has the implication of covering one’s sins. However, this occurs after one has been punished for a deed or one has done something as an expiation for the sin. For example, the legal punishments are considered a kind of *takfeer* for the sin committed. This term is usually translated as “remit, expiate.” When expiation is performed, the person receives no reward for the actual deed of expiation performed but he will also face no further punishment for the wrong he committed. If a person breaks an oath and frees a slave, the freeing of the slave expiated his sin of breaking his oath and there is no reward for him in freeing that slave. Hence, one may ask Allah to expiate his sins by the good deeds he performed or by other means.

Al-maghfirah (المغفرة), also implies the covering of one’s sins as well as protection from their harm, but it also implies not being punished or held responsible in any way whatsoever for the deed. Some acts are acts of *maghfirah* and acts of reward in themselves. When a person walks to the mosque, that act removes sins from him and, on top of that, he is rewarded for that act itself.

- Having “good manners” does not mean that one accepts everything that everybody else does and continues to treat them all the same. Some people think that they have good behavior when they accept the sins and heresies of others. They never try to correct others as they fear that such would be impolite behavior. As was stated earlier, the correct good and Islamic behavior is that which is based on the *shareeah* and the example of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) would not be silent if the laws of Allah were violated. Indeed, he would get angry and his anger could clearly be seen. Hence, not speaking out in the presence of wrong, sins and innovations is not a part of correct Islamic behavior. It is only Satan that deceives people into thinking that such is good and nice behavior. Instead, the good and nice behavior towards others is to advise

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them when they are wrong. It is to show them kindly that what they are doing goes against the Quran and sunnah. It is to demonstrate to them that their behavior is not acceptable.

Summary of the Hadith

- One must have *taqwa* of Allah under all circumstances. For example, wherever he may be, whether he be alone or with others, he must have *taqwa*.
- Even a person of *taqwa* may slip and commit sins. However, he should not persist in those sins. Instead, he should follow them up with good deeds that will wipe them away by the grace and mercy of Allah.
- An essential characteristic of *taqwa* is to behave with people in a good manner. One should behave towards them in a manner that he likes for them to behave towards him.

Hadith #19

"Young man, I shall teach you some words..."

عَنْ أَبِي الْعَبَّاسِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ
كُنْتُ خَلْفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمًا فَقَالَ
لِي يَا غُلَامُ إِنِّي أُعَلِّمُكَ كَلِمَاتٍ أَحْفَظُ اللَّهُ يَحْفَظُكَ أَحْفَظِ
اللَّهُ تَجِدُهُ تُجَاهَكَ إِذَا سَأَلْتَ فَاسْأَلِ اللَّهَ وَإِذَا اسْتَعَنْتَ
فَاسْتَعِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ الْأُمَّةَ لَوِ اجْتَمَعَتْ عَلَيَّ أَنْ يَنْفَعُوكَ
بِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَنْفَعُوكَ إِلَّا بِشَيْءٍ قَدْ كَتَبَهُ اللَّهُ لَكَ وَإِنْ اجْتَمَعُوا
عَلَيَّ أَنْ يَضُرُّوكَ بِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَضُرُّوكَ إِلَّا بِشَيْءٍ قَدْ كَتَبَهُ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْكَ رُفِعَتِ الْأَقْلَامُ وَجَفَّتِ الصُّحُفُ
رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ وَقَالَ حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ

وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ غَيْرِ التِّرْمِذِيِّ :

أَحْفَظِ اللَّهَ تَجِدَهُ أَمَامَكَ تَعْرِفْ إِلَى اللَّهِ فِي الرَّخَاءِ يَعْرِفَكَ
فِي الشَّدَّةِ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ مَا أَخْطَأَكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُصِيبِكَ وَمَا
أَصَابَكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُخْطِئَكَ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ النَّصْرَ مَعَ الصَّبْرِ وَأَنَّ
الْفَرَجَ مَعَ الْكَرْبِ وَأَنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

On the authority of Abu al-Abbaas Abdullah ibn Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with both of them) who said: One day I was riding¹ behind the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and he said to me, "O young man, I shall teach you some words [of advice]. Be mindful of Allah

¹ In the narration in *Musnad Ahmad*, it makes it clear that he was riding behind the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the same animal.

and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah, and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, ask of Allah. If you seek help, seek help in Allah. Know that if the nation were to gather together to benefit you with something, they would not benefit you with anything except that which Allah has already recorded for you. If they gather to harm you by something, they would not be able to harm you by anything except what Allah has already recorded against you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.”

Recorded by al-Tirmidhi who said, “It is a *hasan sahih* hadith.”

In a narration other than that of al-Tirmidhi, it states, “Be mindful of Allah, you will find Him in front of you. Become beloved to Allah during times of prosperity, He will know you in times of adversity. Know that what has passed you by was never to befall you. And [know that] what has befallen you was never to have passed you by. And know that victory accompanies perseverance, relief accompanies affliction, and ease accompanies hardship.”

Selected Vocabulary

كنت	- “I was”
خلف	- “behind”
يوماً	- “one day”
غلام	- “young man,” usually used for boys up to about ten years of age. Lanes defines this word as, “A young man, youth, boy, or male child: one whose mustache is growing forth or has grown forth; or one from the time of his birth until he attains to the period termed شباب [meaning young manhood].” ¹
أعلمك	- “I teach you”
كلمات	- “statements”
احفظ	- “be mindful,” see the discussion below for its complete meaning here.
تجدّه	- “you find him”
تجاهك	- “in front of you”
سألت	- literally, “you asked,” as was discussed in a previous hadith, the meaning is, “When you want to ask...”
استعنت	- literally, “you sought help,” again, its meaning, “when you are going to seek help.” العون is “help, assistance, making something easier for somebody else.” The letter س adds the concept of seeking such help.
ينفعوك	- “they benefit you”
كتبه	- “recorded it”
لك	- “for you”
يضرّوك	- “they harm you”

¹ Lane, vol. 2, pp. 2286-2287.

Hadith #19: “Young man, I shall teach you some words...”

رفعت	- “have been lifted”
الأقلام	- “the pens,” singular for “the pen” is القلم
جفت	- “have dried”
الصفحة	- “the pages”
أمامك	- “in front of you”
الرخاء	- “prosperity”
الشدة	- “adversity, hardship”
ليصيبك	- “certainly going to afflict you,” the ل is for stress
النصر	- “victory”
الصبر	- “patience”
الفرج	- “relief”
الكره	- “affliction, hardship,” al-Nawawi defined it as a “harsh trial” ¹
العسر	- “hardship”
اليسر	- “ease”

Takhreej

This hadith has been narrated from ibn Abbaas through a number of different chains with a number of different wordings. For the most part, the wordings are fairly close, with just some additions or deletions.

The conclusion is that the first narration mentioned above is *sahih* due to its numerous different chains and supporting evidences. It has been graded *sahih* by al-Albaani, Ahmad Shaakir, ibn Muhammad, al-Hilaali and Shuaib al-Arnaoot.²

This text has been recorded by Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi, Abu Yala, ibn Abu Asim, al-Tirmidhi, ibn al-Sunni and others. Ahmad’s chain is: Yunus narrated to us, saying: al-Laith [that is, al-Laith ibn Saad] narrated to us on the authority of Qais ibn al-Hajjaaj on the authority of Hanash al-Sanaani on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbaas. A number of narrators narrated this hadith from Qais. This chain itself is a strong or *hasan* chain, according to Shuaib al-Arnaoot, *et al.*, and al-Ajmi. Ibn Muhammad concluded that it is a *sahih* chain,³ but this does not seem to be correct. Qais is an honest, good narrator but not up to the level of *sahih* hadith. The rest of the narrators in the chain are narrators found in both *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, with the exception of Hanash who

¹ Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Matn*, p. 92.

² Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, pp. 1317-1318; Shaakir’s footnotes to ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 4, p. 286; ibn Muhammad, p. 141; al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 280; and Shuaib al-Arnaoot’s footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 459-460.

³ Ibn Muhammad, p. 141.

is only found in *Sahih Muslim*.¹ According to ibn Munduh and others, this is the strongest chain of all of the different narrations of this hadith.²

Ahmad has also recorded this hadith with a slightly different wording. The text of that narration is, on the authority of ibn Abbaas who said:

كُنْتُ رَدِيفَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ يَا غُلَامُ أَوْ يَا غُلِيمُ أَلَا أَعْلَمُكَ كَلِمَاتٍ يَنْفَعُكَ اللَّهُ بِهِنَّ فَقُلْتُ بَلَى فَقَالَ احْفَظِ اللَّهَ يَحْفَظْكَ احْفَظِ اللَّهَ تَحُدَّهُ أَمَامَكَ تَعْرِفْ إِلَيْهِ فِي الرَّخَاءِ يَعْرِفَكَ فِي الشَّدَّةِ وَإِذَا سَأَلْتَ فَاسْأَلِ اللَّهَ وَإِذَا اسْتَعْنَتْ فَاسْتَعِنِ بِاللَّهِ قَدْ جَفَّ الْقَلَمُ بِمَا هُوَ كَائِنٌ فَلَوْ أَنَّ الْخَلْقَ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَنْفَعُوكَ بِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَكْتَبْهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ لَمْ يَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِ وَإِنْ أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَضُرُّوكَ بِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَكْتَبْهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ لَمْ يَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ فِي الصَّبْرِ عَلَى مَا تَكَرَّهُ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَأَنَّ النَّصْرَ مَعَ الصَّبْرِ وَأَنَّ الْفَرَجَ مَعَ الْكَرْبِ وَأَنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

“I was riding behind the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he said, ‘O young man,’ or, ‘O *Ghulaim*,³ shall I not teach you some statements by which Allah will benefit you.’ I said, ‘Certainly.’ He said, ‘Be mindful of Allah and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah and you will find Him in front of you. Become beloved to Him during times of ease and He will know you during times of hardship. If you are about to ask, ask of Allah. If you want to seek refuge, seek refuge in Allah. The pens have been lifted with what will occur. If all of the creation wanted to benefit you with something that Allah had not recorded for you, they would not be able to do so. And if they wanted to harm you with something that Allah had not recorded against you, they would not be able to do so. Realize that there is a great deal of good in having patience over those things you dislike. [Realize also] that victory accompanies perseverance, relief accompanies difficulties and ease accompanies hardship.”

Before presenting this hadith, Ahmad recorded three different chains. Then he said, “I do not memorize the differences in their narrations.” Of the three chains that he mentioned, two of them have broken chains and one of them has an unbroken chain. The first chain is from al-Hajaaj al-Furaafidha from ibn Abbaas. Most of al-Hajaaj’s narrations are from the later Followers.

¹ See Shuaib al-Arnaoot, *et al.*, footnotes to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risaaalah, 1995), vol. 4, pp. 409-411. Also see Muhammad al-Ajmi’s footnotes to Abdul Rahmaan ibn Rajab, *Noor al-Iqtibaas fi Mishkaat Wasiyyah al-Nabiyy li-ibn Abbaas* (Beirut: Daar al-Bashaair al-Islaamiyah, 1989), pp. 31-35. (This work just referred to by ibn Rajab is a book that is entirely a commentary on this hadith of ibn Abbaas.)

² Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 561.

³ “O *ghulaim*” is a diminutive call which also has the meaning, “young man”.

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He never narrated hadith from ibn Abbaas, although he may have seen him when he was young. The second chain is from Humaam ibn Yahya ibn Dinaar on the authority of ibn Abbaas. Humaam comes a little later than al-Hajaaj and, hence, this chain is definitely broken. However, al-Baihaqi records it from him with the chain Humaam from Qais from Hanash from ibn Abbaas. This chain, therefore, is unbroken.

The third chain is Abdullah ibn Yazeed from both Abdullah ibn Laheea and Naafi ibn Yazeed. They narrated this from Qais ibn al-Hajaaj from Hanash al-Sanaani from ibn Abbaas. This chain is unbroken. In general, Abdullah ibn Laheea is not considered a strong narrator but Abdullah ibn Yazeed narrated from him before his books were burned in a fire and his narrations are considered strong. Hence, this is a strong chain for this narration.¹

It is somewhat strange that al-Nawawi presents a different text of this hadith and before it simply says, "In a narration other than that of al-Tirmidhi," without stating where that narration is to be found. The second narration mentioned by al-Nawawi is recorded by Abd ibn Humaid in his *Musnad*. However, its chain is weak due to the existence of a weak narrator, al-Muthna ibn al-Sibaah.² Hence, for this commentary, emphasis will be placed on the first narration al-Nawawi presented and the second narration recorded from *Musnad Ahmad* above.

Hadith with this meaning have also been recorded from Ali ibn Abu Taalib, Abu Saeed al-Khudri, Sahl ibn Saad and Abdullah ibn Jafar. However, the chains of all of these narrations are weak.³

General Comments about the Hadith

Ibn al-Jauzi once said about this hadith, "I pondered over this hadith and it amazed me to the point that I almost became lightheaded... What a pity for the one who is ignorant of this hadith and has little understanding of its meaning."⁴

This hadith is filled with very important advice and guidance. Some of the most important aspects of the religion are covered in these words that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated to the young ibn Abbaas.

If one follows the advice that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave ibn Abbaas, he will find strength in this life and success in the Hereafter.⁵

¹ See Shuaib al-Arnaoot, *at al.*, footnotes to ibn Hanbal, vol. 5, pp. 19-20.

² See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 460.

³ Ibn Muhammad, pp. 143-144; ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 461.

⁴ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 35.

⁵ Al-Baitaar, p. 120.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

About the Narrator: Ibn Abbaas

Abdullah ibn Abbaas ibn Abdul Muttaalib was a cousin of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was born three years before the *Hijrah* during the time when the tribe of Haashim was being boycotted by the rest of the people of Makkah.

Abdullah ibn Abbaas grew up alongside the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet made a special supplication for him to become knowledgeable in the religion. He was an expert in *tafseer* or Quranic commentary.¹ 1,660 hadith have been narrated on his authority. He was the fourth most prolific narrator of hadith. He was one of the “four Abdullaha,” that were referred to earlier.

He did not hear many hadith directly from the Prophet due to his youth but he would go to the houses of the other companions and wait for them to come out in order to hear hadith from them. He related hadith from Ali, Umar, Ubayy ibn Kaab, Muaadh ibn Jabal, Abu Dharr and others. Abdullah ibn Umar, Anas ibn Maalik and Ikrima related hadith from him.

Even though he was younger than the other Companions, Umar ibn al-Khattaab loved him very much and always wanted him to be close to his meetings due to his great knowledge.

In the year 27 A.H. he took part in the *jihād* in North Africa. He was also appointed governor of Basrah during the caliphate of Ali. After Ali's death, he moved to Taif. He had lost his sight before his death. He died in Taif in the year 68, at the age of 71. Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah led his funeral prayer.

“One day I was riding behind the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)”

The narration in *Musnad Ahmad* makes it clear that the two were riding upon the same animal, with the young ibn Abbaas behind the Prophet (peace be upon him). This incident is used as proof that it is permissible for two people to ride on one animal if the animal has the strength to carry them.

Some have interpreted this opening phrase to mean that ibn Abbaas was walking behind the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, this

¹ There is a Quranic commentary that is in wide circulation entitled *Tanweer al-Miqbaas min Tafseer ibn Abbaas*. This *tafseer* was compiled by al-Fairoozabaadi, who was famous for his dictionary. Unfortunately, the chain that he has for much of that work is one of the weakest chains recorded from ibn Abbaas. Another *tafseer* of ibn Abbaas that is published is the *Sahifah* of Ali ibn Abu Talha. This is a much stronger source for ibn Abbaas' *tafseer* except for the fact that Ali ibn Abu Talha never met ibn Abbaas. Hence, the chain is broken. See Raashid al-Rajaal, *Tafseer ibn Abbaas al-Musamma Saheefah Ali ibn Abi Talha an ibn Abbaas fi Tafseer al-Quran al-Kareem* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqafiyah, 1991), pp. 42-55.

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interpretation is clearly contradicted by the narration in *Musnad Ahmad*, as was just noted.¹

An important point from this opening statement of ibn Abbaas is that this hadith is one of the few hadith that ibn Abbaas narrated directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him). He is showing that he heard it directly and recalled exactly what the Prophet (peace be upon him) told him. He even remembered the exact circumstances under which he was told that information.

“O young man”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) called out to ibn Abbaas, “O young man.” This was to get ibn Abbaas’ attention. He now would listen for he knew that this was to be followed by something addressed specifically to him.²

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) made this statement to ibn Abbaas, ibn Abbaas was just about to enter the state of puberty. This is truly a significant aspect of this hadith. The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught ibn Abbaas some of the most fundamental aspects of the religion. He taught them to ibn Abbaas at a time that he could start practicing and implementing them. In this way, he would grow up attached to these fundamentals. By the time he became a man, he already understood what he is doing in this world. He already understood what his purpose was in this life.

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) teaches this young man about patience, victory, hardship, relief and so forth. Commenting on this aspect, al-Baitaar wrote,

What is the relationship between this young man and these teachings? What does he know about victory, the need for victory and what are the means to victory? How does he know what hardships, worries and concerns are or what is difficulty or ease?... But the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was the real teacher. He intentionally taught this person at that age and he intentionally taught him these words because he knew—and he was receiving revelation—that a young person is more in need of these teachings than an older person. This is because these words are a portion of a Muslim’s belief. If a young man grows up with these beliefs, they form part of his being and thinking, they intertwine with his flesh and blood. If he is left without them until his thought and behaviors become rigid, no matter how much one will try to teach him and convince him later, his background that he was brought up upon, of fear, despair and relying upon humans, will drive his

¹ Al-Qaari presents and rejects that alternative explanation. Al-Qaari, vol. 10, p. 53.

² Some scholars have concluded from this that as a teaching method, one should get the students’ attention first, so that the student would be completely attuned to what the teacher was about to say. Cf., Sultaan, p. 178.

thought and actions. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) directed these specific words to a young man who was just about to reach the stage of puberty so that he could live under these teachings and think in this manner without any need for later convincing or teaching.¹

One can see examples of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) teaching youth in many hadith. He took the time to teach ibn Abbaas, Abdullah ibn Masood, al-Numaan ibn Basheer and many of the other young Companions. He taught them essential matters while they were still young. They grew up practicing them and increasing their understanding of them every day. Finally, when they reached manhood and later, they understood those concepts very well. They had become “second nature” to them.

This is how a Muslim child must be brought up in the religion of Islam. He must be taught its essential aspects before he reaches the age of puberty. Children at that age can understand these basics and they can apply them to some extent even at an early age.

This aspect of training young Muslims in the proper beliefs is something that needs to be revived today. Perhaps under the influence of the West, many Muslim children behave as if they are not responsible for their actions or are not adults until they are eighteen or twenty-one years old and so forth. One will find at Muslim conferences, young Muslims who are attending college— and can fathom physics and calculus— sitting in the youth sessions with eight- and nine-year olds, claiming that the lectures are too difficult for them. Muslim children have to realize that at the moment they reach puberty, they are responsible for all of their actions. They are no longer children. They are, in essence, adults.

It is a must that the parents realize this also. They must start teaching their children the essence of Islam at a young age. They must bring them up understanding what it means to believe that there is no god but Allah— in the same way that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave these very important teachings to ibn Abbaas. In this way, by the time they reach puberty, they have an understanding that they are responsible in front of Allah. They have an understanding that they are going to meet Allah and that all of their actions will be presented on that Day. These are not difficult concepts. Children of that age can easily grasp them. However, the adults must take the time to make sure that the students are taught these elementary, yet essential, teachings of Islam.

“I shall teach you some words [of advice]”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) told ibn Abbaas that he would teach him a few statements. The Arabic of the expression gives the impression of a few, not many, statements. Hence, it would be easy for ibn Abbaas to listen to

¹ Al-Baitaar, p. 124.

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them, memorize them and benefit from them. Indeed, in the narration in *Musnad Ahmad*, the Prophet (peace be upon him) told him, "Allah will benefit you by them." This introduction is a very important introduction. Obviously, it put ibn Abbaas' mind at rest, for he knew it would not be something difficult or lengthy for him to comprehend and retain.¹

Second, it shows that what is coming is something by which Allah would benefit him. By this time, ibn Abbaas' ears must have been completely attuned to what the Prophet (peace be upon him) was about to say. Evidence of this is the fact that, although he was still quite young when the Prophet (peace be upon him) told him these words, he remembered them exactly, lived by them and passed them on to others.

And what important words they were. They were a few words but they are such that ibn Abbaas and anyone else could grow with them. As the young person gets older, he will understand more and more of what the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant by these very important words of advice that he gave to ibn Abbaas.

"Be mindful of Allah"

The first meaning that comes to mind of the words used in this hadith, *ihfadh* (احفظ), would be something of the nature, "Guard or preserve Allah." Obviously, such is not the meaning of the phrase. As ibn Uthaimen wrote,

Allah Himself is not in need of anyone to guard Him but the meaning is that one must guard and be mindful of His religion and His Law. This is same as Allah's saying, "O believers, if you help Allah, He will help you" (*Muhammad* 7). The meaning is not that you help Allah Himself as Allah is self-sufficient and not in need of anyone.²

The meaning of the phrase, احفظ الله, translated here as "be mindful of Allah," although that may not be the best translation, is understood to mean being mindful of the limits set by Allah, minding His rights, minding what He has ordered and minding what He has prohibited.³ This means that the person is to implement whatever Allah has commanded and refrain from whatever Allah has forbidden.

This concept of being "mindful" or "guarding, preserving" what Allah has revealed is found often in the Quran. For example, in the Quran, Allah praises those believers who are,

وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ

¹ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 171.

² Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh al-Saaliheen*, vol. 2, pp. 450-451.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 36.

“those who observe (*haafidhoon*) the limits set by Allah” (*al-Tauba* 112). In another verse, Allah says,

هَذَا مَا تُوْعَدُونَ لِكُلِّ أَوْابٍ حَفِيظٍ ﴿٦٦﴾ مَن خَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَجَاءَ
بِقَلْبٍ مُّئِيبٍ

“[It will be said,] ‘This is what you were promised. [It is] for those oft-returning in repentance and those who preserve (their covenant with Allah) [*hafeedh*], who feared the Most Merciful in the Unseen and brought a heart turned in repentance [to Him]” (*Qaaf* 32-33). The word *hafeedh* in this verse has been explained to mean the one who is mindful of what Allah has ordered or the one repents from the sins he commits.¹

One of the most important deeds that a person must be mindful of and guard is the prayer. Allah has stated in the Quran,

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقَوْمُوا لِلَّهِ قَنِينًا

“Guard strictly the [daily] prayers and especially the middle [best] prayer. And stand before Allah with obedience” (*al-Baqara* 238). Other verses in the Quran talk about guarding one’s private parts and guarding or being mindful of one’s oaths. These are all part of the general characteristic of “being mindful, guarding, preserving” that is referred to in this hadith.

Furthermore, a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) states,

وَلَا يُحَافِظُ عَلَى الوُضُوءِ إِلَّا مُؤْمِنٌ

“And no one guards his ablution except a [true] believer.”² That is, nobody knows when another person is not in a state of ablution. Only the person himself knows that. Hence, his watching and protecting his state of purity is a sign of his true faith as he is tending to something that only Allah is aware of.³

“and Allah will protect you”

If someone guards and protects the rights that Allah has upon him, then Allah will protect him in return. The reward for a deed is often of the same nature of the deed itself. For example, when one protects Allah’s rights, then Allah protects him. In the Quran there are other examples of this nature. Note the following:

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 36.

² Recorded by Ahmad and others. Al-Ajmi concludes it is *sahih*. See al-Ajmi’s footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 38.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 38.

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وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ

“Fulfill [your obligations to] My Covenant (with you) and I shall fulfill [My obligations to] your covenant (with Me)” (*al-Baqara* 40).

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرَكُم

“Therefore, remember Me and I shall remember you” (*al-Baqara* 152).

إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ

“If you help [in the cause of] Allah, He will help you” (*Muhammad* 7).

Allah protects the servant in more than one way. First, He guards and protects the person’s worldly interests and needs, such as protecting his body, wife, children and wealth. It is narrated that Ali once said, “Every person has two angels with him that guard him from everything that is not decreed. When the decree [for his death] comes, they leave, [and it becomes a matter only] between him and it.”¹

Obviously, performing good deeds and having faith are the keys to being mindful of Allah. Concerning such people, Allah says in the Quran,

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً

“Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he [or she] is a believer, verily, to him We will give a good life” (*al-Nahl* 97).

In fact, it is even said that due to a person’s piety, his children and even grandchildren are protected and guarded by Allah. One time Saeed ibn al-Musayyab said to his son, “O son, I increase my prayers for your sake, hoping that you will be preserved due to it.” And then he recited the verse,

وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا

“and their father was a righteous man” (*al-Kahf* 82).² In other words, he understood that it was his obligation to do what he can to save himself and his family from the Hell-fire. Doing what one can do to save one’s children from the Hell-fire includes bringing them up properly, but it also includes making oneself pious as the children will benefit from that according to this example.

Another way of Allah protecting one’s worldly interests is to protect the person from any evil coming from any of jinn or mankind. Allah says in the Quran,

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 43.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 44. The verse states, “And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the town; and there was under it a treasure belonging to them, and their father was a righteous man, and your Lord intended that they should attain their age of full strength and take out their treasure as a mercy from your Lord.”

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا

“And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty)” (*al-Talaaq* 2).

A much more important way that Allah protects a person is by protecting his religion. He guards and protects the person’s religion from the onslaught of misconceptions, lies about the religion, heresies, forbidden desires and so forth. He guards the person’s religion until his death, and he dies in the religion of Islam. This is a much more important type of protection than the first type. Suffering in this world may be difficult but if a person does not have this protection of his religion, it could lead to eternal damnation.

In the Quran, Allah gives an example of this type of protection in the story of Yoosuf. Due to his sincerity to Allah, Allah protected him from evil and temptation. Allah says,

كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ

“Thus it was, that We might turn away from him evil and illegal sexual intercourse. Surely, he was one of Our chosen, guided slaves” (*Yoosuf* 24).

Ibn Rajab states that part of Allah’s protection and preservation of one’s religion is to turn the person away from something he likes because, in the long run, it would be harmful for his religion. This is truly a great blessing from Allah. Only Allah knows where a person’s true welfare or harm may lie. In His mercy, He will turn a human being away from something that he thinks is good for himself because Allah knows that it will actually be harmful for his religion. Ibn Rajab quotes ibn Masud as stating that a person may desire some kind of business or position and may be close to it but Allah will send His angels to turn him away from it as, had he achieved that goal, it would have led him to the Hell-fire.¹

Allah has declared in the Quran that He is the protector and patron for the believers. Allah has said,

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

“Allah is the Protector and Guardian of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into light” (*al-Baqara* 257). In another verse, Allah mentions His angels who protect the people as long as they do not turn to sins and disobedience. Allah has said,

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 52.

Hadith #19: "Young man, I shall teach you some words..."

لَهُ مُعَقَّبَاتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ

"For each [person], there are angels in succession, before and behind him. They guard him by the command of Allah. Verily, Allah does not change the good condition of a people as long as they do not change their state of goodness themselves [by committing sins and so forth]. But when Allah wills a people's punishment, there can be no turning back of it, and they will find besides Him no protector" (*al-Rad* 11).

A good conclusion to this part of the hadith is found in what ibn Rajab stated:

If someone fulfills Allah's rights upon him, then for him, Allah will take care of all of his needs and interests in this world and the Hereafter. The one who wants Allah to protect, guard and look after all of his affairs should tend to Allah's rights upon him. If a person does not want to face anything that he dislikes, he should not do anything that Allah dislikes him to do.¹

One can also conclude from the fact that Allah protects and guards those who fulfill His rights that any harm or evil that comes to a person, in general, is going to be as a result of his own deeds and disobedience to Allah. Allah has clearly stated in the Quran,

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ

"And whatever of misfortune befalls you, it is because of what your hands have earned. And He pardons much" (*al-Shoora* 30).

Finally, this protection and guardianship of Allah is a very dear and important thing. Thus, the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught his Companions that they should beseech Allah to protect them and guard them. For example, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

إِذَا أَوَىٰ أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَىٰ فِرَاشِهِ فَلْيَأْخُذْ دَاخِلَةَ إِزَارِهِ فَلْيَنْفِضْ بِهَا فِرَاشَهُ وَيُسَمِّ اللَّهَ فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَا خَلْفَهُ بَعْدَهُ عَلَىٰ فِرَاشِهِ فَإِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَضْطَجِعَ فَلْيَضْطَجِعْ عَلَىٰ شِقِّهِ الْأَيْمَنِ

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 53.

وَلْيُقَلِّ سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبِّي بِكَ وَضَعْتُ جَنِّي وَبِكَ أَرْفَعُهُ إِنْ أَمْسَكَتَ نَفْسِي فَافْغِرْ
لَهَا وَإِنْ أَرْسَلْتَهَا فَاحْفَظْهَا بِمَا تَحْفَظُ بِهِ عِبَادَكَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“When one of you goes to his bed, he should take hold of the lower end of his loincloth and should clean his bed with it. Then he should mention the name of Allah for he does not know what he has left behind after that on his bed. When he wants to lie down, he should lie down on his right side and say, ‘Glory be to You, O Allah, my Lord. It is with Your [Grace] that I lay myself down on my side and it is by Your [Grace] that I raise it [from the bed]. If you keep my soul [by death], then forgive it. And if You send it back [to keep living], then guard it with that which You protected Your righteous servants.” (Recorded by Muslim; al-Bukhari has something similar.)

“Be mindful of Allah, and you will find Him in front of you”

This sentence emphasizes the previous statement and it sheds some new light on the phenomena that occurs when one is mindful of Allah. This sentence is referring to either a second type of blessing or it is simply emphasizing the result stated in the first portion already discussed.

What this portion of the hadith means is that if a person fulfills Allah’s right upon him, then Allah will be with him in all of his affairs. That is, Allah will support him, protect him, guide him and strengthen him in his actions. He will guide him to what is best for him and steer him away from everything that is harmful to him.

This is, of course, a very special relationship that one may have with Allah. Allah sees and knows all things that exist in this world. Nobody can do anything without Allah being present via His knowledge. Nothing escapes Him. This type of “Allah’s presence” is true for the believers and the disbelievers. That is what is referred to in the verse,

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“And He is with you [by His knowledge] wherever you may be. And Allah is the All-Seer of what you do” (*al-Hadeed* 4). Yet another verse, with a similar purport, states,

وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّنُونَ مَا لَا يَرْضَى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطًا

“But they cannot hide from Allah, for He is with them [by His knowledge], when they plot by night in words that He does not approve. And Allah ever encompasses what they do” (*al-Nisaa* 108).

However, this hadith is describing a special closeness to Allah. This is Allah's closeness to the believers in that He is always close with His help, protection and support. He is in front of them and guiding them. This is the type of closeness and presence of Allah that is described in the following verse of the Quran:

قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَىٰ

"He [Allah] said [to Moses and Aaron], 'Fear not! Verily, I am with you both, hearing and seeing'" (*Taha* 46). Another verse stating this special type of closeness quotes the Prophet (peace be upon him) who was putting Abu Bakr's fears to rest:

إِلَّا تَنْصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيًا أَثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنِّي نَأْتِيكَ اللَّهُ مَعَنَا فَاَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَىٰ وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

"If you help him [the Prophet (peace be upon him)] not, [it does not matter for] Allah did indeed help him when the disbelievers drove him out. The second of two, when they [the Prophet and Abu Bakr] were in the cave and he [the Prophet] said, 'Do not be afraid for, certainly, Allah is with us.' Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon him and strengthened him with forces which you did not see, and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowermost, while it was the Word of Allah that become the uppermost. And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise" (*al-Tauba* 40).

This special closeness and protection from Allah is granted to those who have fear of Allah (*taqwa*) and work righteousness. In other words, this special care from Allah is for those who fulfill His commands and are mindful of Him. Allah has said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

"Truly, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who do good" (*al-Nahl* 128).

This means that the one who obeys Allah and fulfills and guards Allah's rights upon him will have a special recompense from Allah: Allah will be in front of him at all times, with a special protection and care that Allah only gives to those who are mindful of Him. The Muslim, then, like the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the example just described, becomes relaxed and at ease. Allah bestows upon him tranquillity and protection. The Muslim knows that Allah will protect him. When he comes to this realization, he realizes full

well that he is not in need of anyone other than Allah. If Allah is there to protect him, no one can possibly harm him. Hence, his heart and life become fully attached to Allah.

As the person obeys Allah more and more and comes closer to Allah, Allah protects him in an even greater fashion. The extent of this closeness, protection and care from Allah is described in another hadith, wherein Allah says,

مَا تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ عَبْدِي بِشَيْءٍ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا افْتَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ وَمَا يَزَالُ عَبْدِي يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ
بِالتَّوَافُلِ حَتَّىٰ أُحِبَّهُ فَإِذَا أَحْبَبْتُهُ كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ الَّذِي يَسْمَعُ بِهِ وَبَصَرَهُ الَّذِي يُبْصِرُ بِهِ وَيَدَهُ
الَّتِي يَبْطِشُ بِهَا وَرِجْلَهُ الَّتِي يَمْشِي بِهَا وَإِنْ سَأَلَنِي لِأَعْطِيَنَّهُ وَلَئِنْ اسْتَعَاذَنِي لِأُعِيدَنَّهُ وَمَا
تَرَدَّدْتُ عَنْ شَيْءٍ أَنَا فَاعِلُهُ تَرَدَّدِي عَنْ نَفْسِ الْمُؤْمِنِ يَكْرَهُ الْمَوْتَ وَأَنَا أَكْرَهُ مَسَاءَتَهُ

“My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him. And My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it.”¹

Finally, al-Haitami makes the point that “in front” is the only direction mentioned. He says that this is the case because every human being is headed forward, forward to the Hereafter, and is not going to remain in this world. Hence, he is like a traveler who is moving on. He is in need of having Allah in front of him, in the direction that he is moving, in order to protect him and safeguard him in that journey.²

“If you ask, ask of Allah.”

This is an advice to ask only of Allah and not to ask any of His creation.³ In the Quran, also, Allah has ordered His servants to ask from Him. Allah says,

وَسَأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

“And ask of Allah of His bounty” (*al-Nisaa* 32).¹

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari. This hadith is Hadith Number 38 of this collection and shall be discussed in more detail at its proper location, Allah willing.

² Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 172.

³ The Arabic word in this hadith can also mean, “to beg”. Sultaan states, “What is meant by asking here is supplications [*dua*] and supplications are an act of worship.” Sultaan, p. 172.

Hadith #19: “Young man, I shall teach you some words...”

The important point for the Muslim is to realize that Allah and Allah alone is able to truly grant his needs. Therefore, he should turn only to Allah and realize that, even if Allah uses other humans to meet his needs, the one who truly fulfilled his needs is Allah.

Beyond that understanding, a Muslim should do his best never to rely on others but to work for himself and, by the help of Allah, accomplish every deed without the help of any other human. In fact, it is recorded in *Sahih Muslim* that the Prophet (peace be upon him) took an oath from a number of Companions, such as Abu Bakr, Abu Dharr and Thaubaan, that they would never ask for anything from anyone. If any of these Companions dropped their stick or their camel reins, they would never ask anyone to pick it up for them but would get it themselves.

Ibn Rajab points out that both from the *shareeah* texts and rationally speaking, one should only ask of Allah and one should not ask of anyone else. First, a person must degrade himself in front of the one from whom he is requesting something. To do this towards another human, who is no more than a human and equal to the person himself, is not becoming to anyone. Imam Ahmad used to say, “O Allah, in the same way that you have kept my face from prostrating to other than You, protect me from asking of anyone other than You.” Hence, this type of requesting and submissiveness should be towards Allah and Allah alone. Thus, it becomes a form of worship and generates love for Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the only one who meets the needs of the creation.²

Second, ibn Rajab continues, when asking anyone else to meet some need, one is showing his dependence and need on that person to fulfill his wants. To ask another human for such a thing is a kind of wrongdoing. This is because, in reality, a human is powerless to bring about benefit for himself or to ward off evil from himself. Therefore, how can he be asked to do something of that nature for somebody else? In that case, he is being asked to do something that he is not qualified for and this is a type of wrongdoing.³

Furthermore, it simply does not make sense for anyone to turn to or beseech any creature instead of asking Allah. This is because it does not make sense for one to ignore the Rich and the Powerful for one who is himself in need of Allah’s help and bounty.

Not only that, there is a big difference between asking a human for something and asking from Allah. In general, humans do not like to be asked for favors or bounties. They do not like to give up their time and wealth for

¹ There are also numerous hadith encouraging one to ask of Allah. However, the general ones among them seem to be weak. For example, the following are all considered weak hadith: “Ask Allah for your needs, even your salt.” “Ask Allah for everything, even a shoe-string.” “Ask Allah from His bounty for, verily, Allah loves to be asked.” See al-Albaani, *Dhaeef al-Jaami al-Sagheer*, p. 481.

² Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 68.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 69.

others. Ibn Rajab quotes ibn al-Sumaak as saying, “Do not ask one who flees from your [requests] but, instead, ask the One who has ordered you to ask of Him.”¹

How can anyone turn to human beings and neglect turning to and beseeching Allah for help and meeting his needs? How can anyone choose to ask anyone other than Allah if he keeps in mind what is recorded in authentic hadith: that Allah descends during the last part of every night, asking, “Is there anyone asking of Me so I can give to him? Is there anyone supplicating to Me so that I may respond to him?”²

Allah is close to every servant. If the human turns sincerely to Allah and asks of Him, Allah will respond. Allah has said in the Quran,

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ

“And when My slaves ask you [O Muhammad] concerning Me, then [answer them]: I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me” (*al-Baqara* 186). There is no need for any intercessor and there are no doormen or barriers keeping one from asking Allah.

However, when turning to humans, many barriers may be put in front of the person so that the one being asked does not have to face the one asking of him. The Follower Taawoos said to Ata, “Do not seek the response to your needs from one who closes the door in front of you and puts a barrier between you and him. Instead, you must turn to the One whose door is open until the day of Judgment and who has ordered you to ask of Him and who has promised to respond to you.” Maimoon ibn Mahran saw some people outside the door of one of the princes. He said, “The one who has a need from the ruler has a barrier in front of him. But the houses of the Most Merciful are open. So one of you should go to the mosque and pray two *rakats* and ask of Him his needs.”³

Instead of asking any human, one should ask only of Allah. By asking of Allah, the person demonstrates his belief that Allah is able to fulfill his needs. He demonstrates his belief that Allah has control and power over all things. When a person only asks of Allah, it demonstrates his belief that if Allah wills something, it will come to be but if Allah does not will something, it will never occur.

Al-Bugha and Mistu point out that a person becomes closer to Allah by demonstrating his need and reliance upon Allah. A person’s true worship of Allah shines forth through the following actions: (1) Showing his need for Allah by asking and beseeching Allah for all of his worldly and religious needs; (2) Asking Allah to guide him to the straight path; and (3) Complete

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 71.

² Such hadith are recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim and many others.

³ Both quotes are from ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 72.

implementation of what Allah has asked of Him, by performing what is obligatory and avoiding what is forbidden.¹

Asking from Others is of Two Types

As has been demonstrated above, it is best for a human not to ask any other human for anything. Instead, he should turn to Allah and ask only from Allah— as some Companions pledged to the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, people are often in situations where they need to seek assistance from others. Therefore, it is important to recognize that there are two types of asking from other humans. One type is completely forbidden. As for the second type, it is still best for one not to ask of any other human.

The type that is completely forbidden is to ask of another human what is typically not within the ability of a human being. In fact, this can be a type of *shirk* or associating a partner with Allah in something that uniquely pertains to Allah. This would include asking them for guidance, in the sense of putting faith in one's heart, or asking from them things related to the unseen and unknowable, such as the occurrence of future events. This category would also include praying to people who are dead and in their graves. They cannot hear or possibly respond to the prayers of the people. Allah says in the Quran,

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّن يَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَّا يَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ
وَهُمْ عَنْ دُعَائِهِمْ غَافِلُونَ

"And who is more astray than one who invokes other than Allah, such as will not answer him till the Day of Resurrection and who are [even] unaware of their prayers to them?" (*al-Ahqaf* 5).

The second type is where people ask of each other what is normally within the ability of a human being. This is the kind of mutual assistance and help that takes place all the time among mankind. The one who has a complete reliance and belief in Allah even abstains from this type of requests, as was the case with those Companions who pledged to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that they would never ask anyone for anything. This is a special level of reliance upon Allah alone that very few are able to attain.

However, even when turning to other humans for this permissible type of request, one should realize that the request will only be satisfied by them if Allah guides them to that decision. That is, they may refuse to help or they may help— or they may even try to help but not be able to. Everything is in the hands of Allah. Therefore, even when making permissible requests from other humans, one should still turn to Allah and ask Allah to soften their hearts to fulfill the request and ask Allah to help them fulfill the request. Hence, even

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 176.

with respect to this type of request, one still turns to Allah and realizes that everything is in the Hands of Allah and He is the source of all good.¹

Included in this question of asking of others is begging or soliciting financial assistance from others. This is also something that is disapproved in the *shareeah* and should only be resorted to in the case of necessity. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Qabeesa,

يَا قَبِيصَةَ إِنَّ الْمَسْأَلَةَ لَا تَحِلُّ إِلَّا لِأَحَدٍ ثَلَاثَةٍ رَجُلٍ تَحَمَّلَ حَمَالَةً فَحَلَّتْ لَهُ الْمَسْأَلَةُ حَتَّى يُصِيبَهَا ثُمَّ يُمْسِكُ وَرَجُلٌ أَصَابَتْهُ جَائِحَةٌ اجْتَاكَ مَالَهُ فَحَلَّتْ لَهُ الْمَسْأَلَةُ حَتَّى يُصِيبَ قَوْمًا مِنْ عَيْشٍ أَوْ قَالَ سِدَادًا مِنْ عَيْشٍ وَرَجُلٌ أَصَابَتْهُ فَاقَةٌ حَتَّى يَقُومَ ثَلَاثَةً مِنْ ذَوِي الْحِجَا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَقَدْ أَصَابَتْ فُلَانًا فَاقَةٌ فَحَلَّتْ لَهُ الْمَسْأَلَةُ حَتَّى يُصِيبَ قَوْمًا مِنْ عَيْشٍ أَوْ قَالَ سِدَادًا مِنْ عَيْشٍ فَمَا سِوَاهُنَّ مِنَ الْمَسْأَلَةِ يَا قَبِيصَةَ سُحْتًا يَا كُلُّهَا صَاحِبُهَا سُحْتًا

“O Qabeesa, begging is not permissible but for one of three (classes) of persons: one who has incurred debt, for him begging is permissible until he pays that off, after which he must stop; a man whose property has been destroyed by a calamity which has smitten him, for him begging is permissible till he gets what will support life or will provide him reasonable subsistence; and a person who has been smitten by poverty, the genuineness of which is confirmed by three intelligent members of his people, for him begging is permissible until he gets what will support him, or will provide him subsistence. O Qabeesa, besides these three, [every other reason] for begging is forbidden, and one who engages in such consumes that which is forbidden.” (Recorded by Muslim.²)

Instead of asking from others and relying upon others, a Muslim should much rather prefer to work for his own wealth, even if his work is of a very menial nature. In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated,

¹ Cf., al-Nawawi, *Sharh Matin*, p. 91. Al-Nawawi mentions a hadith wherein the Prophet (peace be upon him) heard Ali saying, “O Allah, make me not in need of any of Your creation.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) then told him, “Do not say that for the creatures are in need of one another. Instead, you should say, ‘O Allah, make me not in need of any of the evil creatures.’” Al-Nawawi does not ascribe this hadith to any source, nor do the editors of the work who sometimes add a hadith source. Another edition of this work has been published by Dar al-Arqam. The work states that the hadith have been studied by a group of “students of knowledge”, however, they offer no comment on this hadith either. Furthermore, this author has not been able to find this hadith in any of the hadith references available to him. Allah knows best.

² This translation was taken from Siddiqi, vol. 2, p. 498.

Hadith #19: “Young man, I shall teach you some words...”

لَأَنْ يَحْتَرِمَ أَحَدُكُمْ حُزْمَةً مِنْ حَطَبٍ فَيَحْمِلَهَا عَلَى ظَهْرِهِ فَيَبِيعَهَا خَيْرٌ لَهُ مِنْ أَنْ يَسْأَلَ
رَجُلًا يُعْطِيهِ أَوْ يَمْنَعُهُ

“It is better for one of you to bring a load of firewood on his back and sell it, than to ask of another who might give him or refuse to give him.” (Recorded by Muslim.¹)

Even in cases of need, if a person is able to be patient for the sake of Allah and satisfied with what he has, even if it be little, and refrains from begging, he will earn the pleasure of Allah. Paradoxically, this is the one who truly deserves to be given charity and helped for the sake of Allah. Allah says in the Quran,

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَحْصَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي
الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا
يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

“[Charity is] for the poor, who in Allah’s cause are restricted [from travel], and cannot move about in the land [for trade or work]. The one who knows them not thinks that they are rich because of their modesty. You may know them by their mark, they do not beg of people at all” (*al-Baqara* 273).

Allah Not Responding to One’s Supplication

Before ending this section, the author feels compelled to discuss a matter that many people seem to be confused about. This is where they are promised a “response” from Allah for their supplications and yet they feel that they do not get any such response. In order to remove this confusion, one must realize what it means to say that Allah “responds” to a person’s supplication. This question has been adequately dealt with by ibn Abu al-Izz in his commentary to *al-Aqeedah al-Tahaawiya*. He wrote,

The question has been raised that sometimes people pray to Allah but He does not grant their prayer, or grants what they do not pray for. Many answers have been given. I will state three of them which are the best. First, the verse (*Ghaafir* 60)²

¹ Many Muslims today are content with living off of others, whether it be off of the Muslim community or even non-Muslim governments. This is not the proper way for a Muslim to live if he has the physical ability and means to support himself. Instead of degrading himself and his honor in front of his Muslim brethren or non-Muslim government officials, he should work to support himself and humble himself in front of Allah alone.

² The verse reads: “And your Lord said, ‘Invoke Me, I will respond to your invocation...’”

or *al-Baqara* 186) quoted above does not mean that the petition is necessarily granted. It only means that Allah responds to the supplicant; and response has a wider connotation than granting the supplicant. The Prophet said, "Our Lord comes down to the lowest heaven every night and says: Is there any one to call on (*yad'u*) Me that I may respond to him? Is there any one to ask of (*yas'alu*) Me that I may give him? Is there any one to seek My forgiveness (*yastaghfiru*) that I may forgive him?"¹ He has thus differentiated between a caller (*al-da'i*) and a supplicant (*al-sa'il*), and between response and granting. Call (*du'a*) includes supplication (*su'al*), but it means more than that; similarly, supplication (*su'al*) includes seeking forgiveness (*istighfar*), but it also means more than that. The Prophet (peace be on him) began with the widest term, *du'a*, then came to a narrower term, *su'al*, and then to the narrowest term, *istighfar*. Once Allah has told His servants that He is close to them and responds to their call, they know that He is with them and they can ask Him. They know His knowledge, mercy and power, and can call (*du'a*) on Him— call by way of worship (*du'a al-ibadah*) and call by way of supplication (*du'a al-masa'lah*). *Du'a* is *du'a* of worship or *du'a* of supplication and sometimes it is both. Both these calls are meant in the verse, "Your Lord says: Call on Me (*udu'ni*), I will answer you." The words that follow support the first sense for they say, "But those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in hell, in humiliation" (*Ghaafir* 60).

The second answer is that responding to the prayer of a supplicant is more general than granting the object he prays for. It may mean to grant something else. Muslim has recorded a hadith in which the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Whenever anyone prays to Allah for something which is not unlawful, or which is not harmful to his kin, He does any one of these following three: Either He immediately grants him the thing he prays for, or reserves for him something equally good, or removes from him an equal evil." Upon hearing this, someone from the audience said, "Then we should pray more." The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Allah will give you even more."² He thus made it clear that a prayer that does not seek any evil or injustice does not go unanswered. Either it is

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

² The hadith is not recorded by Muslim; it is recorded by Ahmad, al-Tahaawi in *Mushkil al-Athar*, Abu Ya'la, and al-Haakim. Al-Dhahabi has endorsed al-Haakim's evaluation that the hadith is *sahih*. Shuaib al-Arnaoot is also in agreement that it is *sahih*. See al-Arnaoot's footnotes to ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, p. 682.

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granted immediately, or something else is kept in store instead, or the supplicant is saved from an impending evil.

The third answer runs like this: Prayer is one of the means to secure an object. But there also may be some conditions to be fulfilled and some obstacles to be removed before the object is achieved. When the conditions are fulfilled and the obstacles are removed, either the object itself is secured or something else in its place. This is true of all the prayers and words of *dhikr* that have been said to bring one good or another, or remove one evil or another. Words of *dhikr* are like a tool which is useful in varying degrees according to the hands using it and whether or not the obstacles involved are weak or strong. It often happens that a person uses a particular *dhikr* and prays, and his prayer is granted, because along with praying, he also stresses his needs, or beseeches Allah earnestly, or does something good which Allah appreciates, or prays at a time when prayers are granted. He may, however, think that his prayer has been granted just because of the particular *dhikr* he has said, and he neglects other factors. Suppose there is a sick man who takes a good medicine and takes it at proper times and is cured. If someone thinks that he is cured just because of that medicine, he is wrong, for he does not consider other factors. Or suppose that a person in affliction goes to a grave and prays there and his prayer is granted. If he thinks that his prayer is granted because of the person in the grave, he is wrong. For that may happen because of his affliction, or because of his earnest praying. Had he prayed in one of the houses of Allah it would have certainly pleased Allah more.

Prayers, invocations and incantations are just like a sword which cuts not only because it is sharp but also because it is used with force. The effect intended is produced only when the sword is sharp, the hand that uses it is strong, the object against which it is used is something that can be cut, and there are no obstacles there. If any of these factors is lacking, the desired effect will not be produced. Similarly, if the object prayed for is not correct, or the proper orison is not chosen, or the supplicant does not pray earnestly or there is some obstruction there, then the thing besought will not be forthcoming.¹

¹ Ibn Abu al-Izz, vol. 2, pp. 681-684.

“If you seek help, seek help in Allah”

The Prophet (peace be upon him) guided his Companion to seek help in Allah. There are many things that a person cannot accomplish on his own. If a person needs to seek help or rely on anything or anyone, he should seek help in Allah. Indeed, if Allah does not help him and give him the ability to accomplish any task, the person would not be able to accomplish it. Hence, he must turn to Allah and, in reality, there is no one for him to turn to except Allah.

When a person turns to Allah for help and assistance, he is admitting and demonstrating that he is a weak creature who cannot accomplish anything without needed assistance. No matter how powerful or strong he may look or think of himself in this world, he is need of help and assistance. Hence, he is admitting his own weakness and need for others. Secondly, by turning only to Allah for help and relying upon Him, he is demonstrating that without the help of Allah, he would never be able to achieve success in this life or the Hereafter without Allah’s help. This admission in and of itself is a form of worship and testifying to part of the faith of Islam.

A person needs Allah’s help in fulfilling the obligatory deeds, avoiding the forbidden acts and having patience with what has befallen him. One may also note particular examples from the Quran wherein Allah’s help is needed to face the trials and tribulations of this life as well as the trials that one encounters when calling others to the path of Allah. A good example of such behavior is the example of Jacob, whose son was taken from him by his other children. Allah says, quoting Jacob after his sons had presented their false claims concerning Joseph,

فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ

“So [for me] patience is most fitting. And it is Allah (alone) whose help can be sought against that [lie] which you describe” (*Yoosuf* 18). Allah also quotes the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him),

قَالَ رَبِّ أَحْكُم بِالْحَقِّ وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمَنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ

“He [Muhammad] said, ‘My Lord! You judge in truth! Our Lord is the Most Gracious, whose help is to be sought against that which you [unbelievers] attribute’” (*al-Anbiyaa* 112).

A person is also in need of Allah to bring about what is good for him in both this life as well as the Hereafter. In addition, Allah’s help is also needed concerning what occurs after one’s death in this life, both in the grave and on the Day of Judgment.¹

This concept of asking Allah and seeking Allah’s help does not mean that a person puts forth no effort on his own part. Instead, the person should

¹ Cf., ibn Rajab, *Noor*, pp. 80-81.

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use all of his God-given abilities to meet his goal. He should ask Allah to help him in using those abilities and then ask Allah and seek help in Allah for his needs that are beyond what he has the capability to perform. This is the correct approach as implied by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) when he said,

الْمُؤْمِنُ الْقَوِيُّ خَيْرٌ وَأَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِ الضَّعِيفِ وَفِي كُلِّ خَيْرٍ احْرِصْ عَلَى مَا
يَنْفَعُكَ وَاسْتَعِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْجِزْ

"A strong¹ believer is better and more beloved to Allah than a weak believer— however, there is goodness in every [believer]. Be eager for [and strive after] what benefits you and seek help in Allah. And do not be too weak or lazy to do so." (Recorded by Muslim.)

Does this Imply that it is Not Allowed to Seek Help from Others?

Allah says in the Quran,

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى

"Help you one another in piety and righteousness" (*al-Maaidah* 2). This is a command from Allah for Muslims to help one another in acts of righteousness. Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself sought help from others during his lifetime. During his emigration, the Prophet (peace be upon him) sought help and assistance from a man from the tribe of Abdul Dail and used him as a guide. Similarly, Juwairiyah bint al-Haarith came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to seek her assistance in getting herself freed and the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not object to her act.²

These incidents provide evidence that it is not forbidden to seek help from other humans. However, once again, the seeking of help from others must be concerning matters that humans regularly have the ability to perform. Furthermore, the following passage from ibn Uthaimen must be kept in mind,

One should not seek help or aid from any human being except in the case of extreme necessity. Even in that case, if a person is forced into seeking help from another of the creation, he

¹ Al-Nawawi notes that the meaning of "strong" in this hadith is, "of strong resolve, one whose mind is intent on the affairs of the Hereafter. The person of this quality is more forthcoming in opposing the enemy in jihad, he is quicker to go after the enemy and to chase after them... He is also more anxious and prompt in the prayers, fasting, remembrance..." See al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, vol. 16, p. 214.

² This was recorded by ibn Ishaq in his *Seerah* with a chain that is *hasan* according to ibn Hajr. For this incident and other examples of people seeking help from other humans, see Mustafa ibn al-Adawi, *Al-Tasheel li-Taweel al-Tanzeel* (Riyadh: Daar al-Qaasim, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 53-54.

should make that as a kind of means or cause. He should not put his trust or reliance on that person. Instead, the actual source that he is truly relying upon must be only Allah.¹

In other words, as in the case of asking, one should realize that true help can only come from Allah— that is, only if Allah wills it to come. Hence, even when seeking help from other humans, one must actually turn to Allah and seek His help to ensure that one’s goal may be met through those humans.

The Relation between this Hadith and Verse Five of *Surah al-Faatiha*

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) advised ibn Abbaas to be mindful of Allah, to know Allah during times of prosperity and to turn to Allah to ask of Him. Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said,

الدُّعَاءُ هُوَ الْعِبَادَةُ ثُمَّ قَرَأَ (وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ)

“Supplication is the essence of worship.” Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) read the verse, “And your Lord said, ‘Invoke Me and ask of Me, I will respond to your invocation. Verily, those who scorn My worship, they will surely enter Hell in humiliation’ (*Ghaafir* 60).”²

So, in essence, in this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was telling ibn Abbaas to worship Allah alone. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) told ibn Abbaas, “If you seek help, then seek help in Allah.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) then stressed worshipping Allah properly as well as seeking help in Him. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was actually describing to ibn Abbaas the exact same behavior that every Muslim declares in each one of his prayers, from *Surah al-Faatiha*,

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“You (alone) we worship and in You (alone) do we seek help.”³

This one phrase from *surah al-Faatiha*, the meaning of which is also alluded to in this hadith, is considered one of the most important and

¹ Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh*, vol. 2, pp. 452-453.

² Recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi and others. Al-Haakim, al-Dhahabi, al-Nawawi and al-Ajmi have declared it *sahih*. See al-Ajmi’s notes to ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 78, fn. 1.

³ Although it is not stated explicitly, the Arabic construct of the sentence implies the word “alone” placed in parenthesis. However, in this hadith of ibn Abbaas, there is no such stress on the concept of asking Allah alone or seeking His help alone. The difference between the two and the possible reasons for the difference are discussed in ibn Ashoor, vol. 1, part 1, p. 185.

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encompassing phrases of the *shareeah*. Ibn Rajab stated, “The key aspect of all of the revealed books returns to and revolves around this sentence.”¹

Different Categories of People with Respect to Asking Allah and Seeking His Help

When it comes to worshipping Allah, asking Allah and seeking His help, people can be divided into different categories. The first category consists of the “people who worship and seek help in Allah”. Their goal is to be mindful of Allah, as stated in this hadith. When they ask of Allah and seek His help, first and foremost, they ask Him to help them along that path of worship. In other words, the help that they seek from Allah is the help they need to worship Allah in the proper and best manner. Their approach is exemplified by a hadith of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) in which he took the hand of his beloved Companion Muaadh and said to him,

يَا مُعَاذُ وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لِأُحِبُّكَ وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لِأُحِبُّكَ فَقَالَ أَوْصِيكَ يَا مُعَاذُ لَا تَدَعَنَّ فِي دُبُرِ كُلِّ صَلَاةٍ تَقُولُ اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنِّي عَلَى ذِكْرِكَ وَشُكْرِكَ وَحُسْنِ عِبَادَتِكَ

“O Muaadh, by Allah, I love you. By Allah, I love you.” Then he said, “I advise you, O Muaadh, do not stop saying at the end of every prayer, ‘O Allah, help me in remembering You, thanking You and excelling in Your worship.’”² The most beneficial help that one can ask for from Allah is the help in doing what is pleasing to Allah.

Another group of people are at the opposite extreme. They refuse to ask or worship Allah or to seek His help. If they do ever ask of Allah, it is just to meet their desires or wishes. It is not in an attempt to do anything that is pleasing Allah. In fact, the unbelievers and enemies of Allah even ask Allah at times— but not in an attempt to worship Allah. Allah may even grant their

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 78. Ibn al-Qayyim wrote, “The secret [or key] to the creation, affair, books, laws, reward and punishment reaches its peak with these two sentences. Servitude to Allah and *tauhheed* revolve around these two sentences. [This is true] to the point that it is said, ‘Allah revealed one hundred and four books. He combined the meaning of all of them in the Torah, *Injeel* and Quran. He combined the meaning of these three books into the Quran. He combined the meaning of the Quran in *al-mufasssal* (this is from *Surah Qaaf* to the end of the Quran). And He combined the meaning of *al-mufasssal* in *Surah al-Faatihah*. And he gathered all of the meaning of *Surah al-Faatihah* in, “You [alone] do we worship and in You [alone] do we seek help.”” Abu Bakr ibn al-Qayyim, *Tafseer al-Qayyim*, (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah), p. 65.

² Recorded by Abu Dawood and al-Nasaai. According to Abdul Qadir al-Arnaoot, its chain is *sahih*. Al-Albaani has also included it in his collection *Sahih al-Kalam al-Tayyib*. See Abdul Qadir al-Arnaoot’s footnotes to Ahmad ibn Taimiya, *Al-Kalam al-Tayyib* (Damascus: Maktabah Daar al-Bayaan, 1979), p. 55; Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Kalam al-Tayyib* (Kuwait: Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, n.d.), p. 68.

request. This can be seen in the example of the accursed Satan, as found in the following verses:

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾
إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ

“[Iblis] said, ‘My Lord! Give me then respite till the Day the [dead] are resurrected.’ [Allah] said, ‘Verily, you are of those allowed respite till the Day of the time appointed’” (Saad 79-81).¹

The last category of people are those who do turn to Allah and ask but, in reality, they are not truly seeking Allah’s help or relying upon Allah. These people do not realize that they actually need Allah’s help. They believe or act as if everything is within their own hands and power. They do not feel the presence and force of Allah. They are like deists² in that they act as if Allah has created everything and then has left it and has no role to play in the lives of humans. If they actually do ask of Allah, it is like something that must be done or is traditionally done but they do not truly believe that it has any real effect. When they do anything, they act like they are all alone and Allah is not there to help them. A very negative result of this approach is that when such a person accomplishes something, he believes that he has accomplished it on his own without realizing that he has only been able to accomplish it due to Allah’s help.

The correct approach is the approach of the first category of people. One should be mindful of Allah to the best of one’s ability and ask Allah for further assistance in being guided to the Straight Path and worshipping Allah.

“Know that if the nation were to gather together to benefit you...”

After telling ibn Abbaas to ask of Allah and seek help in Him, the Prophet (peace be upon him) told him, “Know that if the nation were to gather together to benefit you with something, they would not benefit you with anything except with that which Allah has already recorded for you. And if they gather to harm you by something, they would not be able to harm you by

¹ This is one of the evidences that demonstrate that Allah may answer a prayer but His answer is not a sign that the person is blessed or a devoted servant of Allah. The answer to the prayer may, in fact, only lead to the person’s own destruction. The only test of whether a person is a pious person or devoted servant of Allah is whether or not he is obeying the Quran and sunnah. (Even this sign is only an outward sign and cannot determine what is in the person’s heart.) If a person is not acting in accord with the Quran and sunnah, then he is definitely not a pious person or a devoted servant, no matter how many of his prayers may be answered.

² Deism is defined as “belief in a God who created the world but has since remained indifferent to his creation.” See *Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Portland House, 1989), p. 381.

anything except that which Allah has already recorded against you." This statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is directly related to his previous advice to ibn Abbaas. If no one can harm or benefit another except by what Allah has decreed for a person, why should anyone ask or seek help from anyone other than Allah. Everything is in Allah's hand and under His control. If He has decreed something beneficial for somebody, it will come about. Otherwise, if He has not decreed it, it will never come about, even if all of mankind tries to bring it about. So He is the only one to ask for something and in Him alone should one seek help.

The understanding of this concept is part of the reality of faith. In a hadith recorded by Ahmad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated:

لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَقِيقَةٌ وَمَا بَلَغَ عَبْدٌ حَقِيقَةَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَعْلَمَ أَنَّ مَا أَصَابَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُخْطِئَهُ
وَمَا أَخْطَأَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُصِيبَهُ

"Everything has a reality to it. The servant does not reach the reality of faith until he knows that what reached him was not going to miss him and what missed him was not going to reach him."¹

This also means that there is no reason to fear anyone other than Allah. One's provisions in life are not determined by any employer or ruler. It is also not determined by any government or international organization. It is only determined by Allah.

Correct belief in this part of the hadith should lead to tranquillity and happiness in the soul of the person. If a person turns to Allah and puts his trust in Him—with full conviction—he no longer cares about what people might plot against him or how they may try to harm him. He knows that all good or evil is according to Allah's decree. Humans do not have any real power to help or harm him. This person turns to Allah and puts his trust in Allah, as He is the only source of benefit or harm. Allah has said in the Quran,

وَإِنْ يَمَسُّكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ يَمَسُّكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ

"And if Allah touches you with harm, none can remove it but He. And if He touches you with good, then He is able to do all things. He is the Irresistible, above His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, Well-Acquainted with all things" (*al-Anaam* 17-18).

This passage should also give the believer courage and strength. He knows that nothing will occur to him save what Allah has already recorded for

¹ Recorded by Ahmad, ibn Abu Aasim in *al-Sunnah* and al-Tabaraani. According to al-Ajmi, its chain is *hasan*. See al-Ajmi's notes to ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 86, fn. 1.

him. He has no reason to fear anyone except Allah. He has no reason not to stand up for the truth and for the religion of Allah. He has no reason even to have a fear of death as a result of his actions because he knows that death will come to him at its appointed time as decreed by Allah. Allah says,

قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ

“Say: Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death” (*ali-Imran* 154).¹

“All of Creation”

In the other narration of the hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated, “If all of the creation...” rather than, “if the Nation were to gather together...” In the former narration, the Prophet (peace be upon him) left no doubt that no one, without any exception, individually or collectively, can harm or benefit any human being except by the will and permission of Allah.

The Relationship Between this Portion of the Hadith and the Remainder of the Hadith

According to ibn Rajab, all of the advice that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave to ibn Abbaas revolves around and returns to this portion. A Muslim should realize that nothing in creation can harm him in any way. This means that Allah alone is the One who brings about harm, the One who brings about benefits, the Giver, the Preventer. When the Muslim truly realizes this, the natural result is a true implementation of *tauheed*. In other words, the person who realizes this would only seek help in Allah; he would ask only of Allah. In fact, since everything is under Allah’s control, the wise person would then submit to no one other than Allah. He would only worship and obey Allah. This, says ibn Rajab, is because an intelligent person would not worship something if there were no call or benefit in worshipping that object. In the Quran, Allah censures those who worship the idols that cannot harm them or benefit them in any way.

Ibn Rajab goes on to say that many people who do not fully realize the concept of *tauheed* give preference to obeying created beings rather than obeying the Creator. They are hoping to benefit from such obedience or to

¹ Cf., al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 128. This does not mean that the person will not have any kind of natural fear whatsoever. For example, Allah stated about the Prophet Moses, “He [Moses] said, ‘My Lord! I have killed a man among them and I fear that they will kill me’” (*al-Qasas* 33). There are numerous verses of this nature in the Quran. It refers to a fear that Allah will give those feared people the ability or allow them to use the ability that they have been given by Allah in a detrimental manner. The real fear is of Allah who will allow them to do such. However, the person is aware that the other human has no power unless Allah allows him to do something.

Hadith #19: “Young man, I shall teach you some words...”

ward of some harm. But if one realizes that those objects of worship and obedience can do nothing, in reality, for him, he will single out Allah for all acts of worship and obedience. He will give preference to obeying Allah over obeying any of His creatures. In the same way, he will also ask only of Allah and seek help only from Him.¹

“The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.”

In this portion of the hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is making a clear reference to the belief in *al-Qadha wa al-Qadar* or “preordainment”.² Allah has recorded everything that is going to occur in this existence. Nothing will occur except by the will of Allah and Allah has already recorded what He has willed for all times. This recording was done even before the creation of mankind. Allah says in the Quran,

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلٍ
أَن نَّبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

“No calamity befalls on the earth or in yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book [of Decrees] before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah” (*al-Hadeed* 22).

The knowledge that everything has been already recorded may lead one to believe that one need not work as everything has already been determined. This idea was mentioned to the Prophet (peace be upon him) as found in the following hadith:

عَنْ جَابِرٍ قَالَ جَاءَ سُرَاقَةُ بْنُ مَالِكِ بْنِ جُعْشَمٍ قَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ بَيْنَ لَنَا دِينَنَا كَأَنَّا
خُلِقْنَا الْآنَ فِيمَا الْعَمَلُ الْيَوْمَ أَفِيمَا جَفَّتْ بِهِ الْأَقْلَامُ وَجَرَتْ بِهِ الْمَقَادِيرُ أَمْ فِيمَا نَسْتَقْبِلُ
قَالَ لَا بَلْ فِيمَا جَفَّتْ بِهِ الْأَقْلَامُ وَجَرَتْ بِهِ الْمَقَادِيرُ قَالَ فَفِيمَا الْعَمَلُ قَالَ زُهَيْرٌ ثُمَّ تَكَلَّمَ
أَبُو الزُّبَيْرِ بِشَيْءٍ لَمْ أَفْهَمُهُ فَسَأَلْتُ مَا قَالَ فَقَالَ اْعْمَلُوا فَكُلُّ مَيْسَرٍ

Jaabir reported: Suraaqah ibn Maalik ibn Jushum came and said, “O Messenger of Allah, explain to us our religion as if we were just now created. Concerning the deeds we perform today, are they something that the pens have already recorded and about which the decrees have already been set or are they [new events] that happen in the future?” He (peace be upon him) answered, “No, but

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 87.

² This essential belief was discussed in detail in the commentary to Hadith Number 2.

they are certainly what the pens have recorded and concerning which the decrees have already been determined.” He then said, “Then why do we perform deeds?”... He answered, “Perform the deeds as they are made easy for everyone [who is destined to perform them].” (Recorded by Muslim.) In other words, nobody knows what has been decreed for him and, therefore, he will perform those decreed deeds without actually realizing that he is performing that deeds that have already been decreed. Allah knows best.

The Second Narration

After presenting the narration as discussed above, al-Nawawi presents a second narration. However, as was noted in the *Takhreej* section, the chain of that narration has some weakness to it. It was also pointed out in the *Takhreej* section that there is another narration from *Musnad Ahmad* which is acceptable. It contains some important phrases that have not yet been discussed in this commentary and which are similar to the other narration mentioned by al-Nawawi. Attention will now be given to the following phrases from the second narration found in *Musnad Ahmad*: (1) “Become beloved to Him during times of ease and He will know you during times of hardship.” (2) “Realize that there is a great deal of good in having patience over those things you dislike.” (3) “[Realize also] that victory comes with perseverance, relief accompanies difficulties and ease accompanies hardship.”

“Become beloved to Allah during times of prosperity and He will know you in times of adversity.”¹

Literally, this phrase could be translated as, “Know Allah during times of prosperity and He will know you in times of adversity.” “Knowing Allah” is of two types. First is the general knowledge of Allah whereby one recognizes His existence and believes in Him. The second is a more specific manner of “knowing Allah”. This is where one’s heart turns completely to Allah, finds solace in His remembrance and becomes aware of His presence and majesty. This second meaning is what is being stressed here. A person becomes more and more beloved to Allah the more that he “knows” Allah in the sense just described.²

¹ There is an alternative explanation for the meaning of this phrase. In that interpretation, the reference is to the angels knowing a person. If a person is pious and remembers Allah, the angels become familiar with his voice. Then during times of hardship, when he prays, the angels state that they know that voice and, therefore, they go to intercede on his behalf in front of Allah. However, there is no need for such a far-fetched interpretation. The sentence has a clear meaning without any need to assume any missing portions or words. Hence, this alternative explanation is to be rejected, as explicitly stated by al-Haitami. See al-Haitami, *Fath*, pp. 175-176.

² Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 176.

Hadith #19: "Young man, I shall teach you some words..."

Similarly, there are two ways in which Allah "knows a person". There is a general level at which Allah knows all things. There is also a specific level which implies Allah's love and special care for a servant. This special level is what is being referred to in this hadith.

The meaning of this phrase, therefore, is that if a person is mindful of Allah during times of ease and prosperity, there develops a relationship between him and Allah. He becomes "known" to Allah—"known" in the special sense of becoming beloved or close to Allah.¹ Since he is "known" to Allah, Allah will come to his aid and assistance during times of hardship.

Those who are mindful and fearful of Allah have a special knowledge that distinguishes them from others. Ahmad ibn Aasim al-Antaaki once said, "I would like not to die until I know my Lord. This is not the knowledge of acknowledging His existence but the kind of knowledge that leads one to be shy of Him."² Ibn Rajab states that this special knowledge and relationship with Allah leads to tranquillity in the soul and complete trust that Allah will rescue the person from every hardship and difficulty that he is facing in this world. This is the one whom Allah responds to quickly when he beseeches Him during times of hardship.

There is a hadith which states,

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَسْتَجِيبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ عِنْدَ الشَّدَائِدِ وَالْكَرْبِ فَلْيَكْثِرِ الدُّعَاءَ فِي الرَّخَاءِ

"The one who is happy to have Allah respond to him during hardships and difficulties should increase his supplications during times of ease."³ This hadith provides further evidence that how one behaves towards Allah during times of ease affects how Allah treats the person during times of hardship. If the person is a devoted servant of Allah and prays to Him during times of ease, then Allah rewards him by responding to him during times of hardship. However, if the person only turns to Allah during times of hardship, there is nothing to suggest that Allah will respond to his plea, even if it is a sincere prayer.⁴

¹ This is being "known" to Allah in a special sense because, obviously, everyone, whether pious or wicked, is known to Allah. That general knowledge of Allah is referred to in the Quran, such as in *al-Najm* 32 and *Qaaf* 16.

² Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 60.

³ This hadith was recorded by al-Haakim, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Adi and al-Tabaraani. Al-Tirmidhi called it *ghareeb* (solitary), which usually implies that it is weak. Al-Ajmi concludes that this hadith is weak. (See al-Ajmi's notes to ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 61, fn. 1.) However, Saleem al-Hilaali, Muhammad Saeed al-Bukhari and al-Albaani all conclude that the hadith is *hasan*. [See al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 290; al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1078; Muhammad Saeed al-Bukhaari's notes to Sulaimaan al-Tabaraani, *Kitaab al-Dua* (Beirut: Daar al-Bashaair al-Islaamiyah, 1987), vol. 2, p. 805.]

⁴ Among humans, a person who is only heard from when he wants something from others is not as beloved to the others as one who is constantly by their side during good times and bad.

A case exemplifying the teaching of this hadith that is often referred to is the example of Jonah. He used to remember Allah often and worship Allah during times of ease. Therefore, when he was tried and he beseeched Allah, Allah came to his aid and rescued him from his ordeal. This aspect is specifically alluded to in the verses,

فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ لَلَّيْتُ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

“Had he not been of them who glorify Allah, He would have indeed remained inside its belly [the belly of the fish] till the Day of Resurrection” (*al-Saaffaat* 144).¹

The Pharaoh was of the opposite nature. He was not mindful of Allah. Therefore, when he faced his great trial and he claimed to have repented and believed, beseeching Allah, Allah said,

ءَأَلَّكَانَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“Now [you believe] while you refused to believe before and you were one of the evildoers” (*Yoonus* 91). His pleas went unheeded and Allah punished him.²

The greatest hardships that one could face are at the time of death and on the Day of Resurrection. The one who is mindful of Allah and becomes close to Him will have Allah as his Protector on those occasions. Allah will save those who were truly mindful of Him from the punishment in the grave and the punishment in the Hereafter. Ibn Rajab stresses that everyone must prepare for the possible torments of death and the Hereafter by working in this life. The key to the preparation is knowing Allah during the relatively easy life of this world as compared to the harshness of the trials of the Hereafter.³

If the person “knows Allah” in this life, by remembering Allah and obeying Him, then Allah will “know” him in the Hereafter and will not neglect him, but will come to his aid. Allah mentions in the Quran the case of those who did not know Him in this life,

¹ Another example that can be given is that of the three men who entered into a cave and a rock fell over the opening of the cave. They each supplicated to Allah by mentioning a specific good deed that they had done sincerely for Allah’s sake. Their prayers were immediately answered due to the good deeds that they had previously performed. This lengthy hadith may be found in Siddiqi, trans., *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1432.

² One of the first to juxtapose the examples of Jonah and the Pharaoh was al-Dhuhaak ibn Qais who died during the early second Century of Islam. For the quote from him, see al-Tabari, vol. 23, p. 64.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, pp. 62-63.

Hadith #19: "Young man, I shall teach you some words..."

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ
أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

"O believers! Fear Allah and keep your duty to Him. And let every person look to what he has sent forth for the morrow, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is all-aware of what you do. And be not like those who forgot Allah, and He caused them to forget their own selves. Those are the evildoers" (*al-Hashr* 18-19).

The Relation between This Portion of the Hadith and What Precedes It

One of the keys to worship is being mindful of Allah and respecting what He has ordered or prohibited. This is what the Prophet (peace be upon him) told ibn Abbaas at the beginning of this hadith. The result is that Allah will then protect the one who is mindful of Him. This is the most that a servant could seek from his Lord. After that, the Prophet (peace be upon him) told ibn Abbaas to become beloved to Allah during times of ease and then Allah will protect him during times of hardship. This is included in the completeness of Allah's protection of His servant. However, by necessity, during times of hardship, the servant is greatly in need of one to come to his rescue and aid. During such times of hardship, even the polytheists turn to Allah alone for help. They, in their souls, know that only Allah can rescue them. However, if Allah rescues them, they go back to their old ways of ascribing partners to Him. In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has advised ibn Abbaas to differ from the ways of the polytheists. He should become beloved and sincere to Allah during times of ease and then Allah will give him special protection during times of hardship. This is why it was specifically mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) after he stated that Allah would protect him.¹

"Realize that there is a great deal of good in having patience over those things you dislike."

The Meaning of Patience

Before embarking on the meaning of this passage, a definition should be given for the word *sabr*, which can be translated as "patience, perseverance, fortitude." Al-Bugha and Mistu have defined it as,

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 87.

It is the controlling of oneself, that is, managing it properly, to adhere to what intelligence and Islamic law determine it should adhere to. It also includes the controlling of oneself, that is, refraining it properly, to remain away from what intelligence and Islamic law determine it should remain away from. If we study the verses of the Quran and the hadith of His Messenger (peace be upon him) we find that the word *sabr* is used in many different ways. However, they all derive from the meaning just mentioned for *sabr*. They also all lead toward the same goal and attainment of the same result: success and victory.¹

“Realize that there is...”

This portion of the hadith brings to light a very important point: The events of this life are not based on the wants and desires of humans, including the pious among them. Allah is the all-wise. He is the One who decrees what He wills for this creation. Many times the servant does not know wherein lies own his best interests. Therefore, he should put his trust in Allah. He should realize that if he is being sincere and mindful of Allah, then Allah will protect him and guard him. However, in order for the person to be truly purified or in order for him to receive what is best for him in this life and the Hereafter, he may have to go through difficult times that go against his wishes.

The individual may dislike those times but he must realize that those times may be best for him. Allah is the One who knows while humans do not. For example, Allah has said,

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهُ لَكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Fighting is prescribed for you although you dislike it. It may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and it may be that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know” (*al-Baqara* 216).

The example of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions is an excellent one here. They faced a great deal of difficulties in the early years of Islam. Some of them were forced to migrate to Abyssinia. Eventually, in general, they were all forced to migrate from Makkah to Madinah. However, the result of those years of suffering can be seen in the strength of their faith afterwards. In addition, Allah has promised them a great deal of reward for their strivings and sacrifice. Hence, although they faced great hardships that

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 130.

must have been unpleasant to them, their being patient led to great good for them.

If a Muslim truly understands this reality, that everything occurs by the will of Allah and according to His wisdom and that one may face difficulties that in the long-run will be best for him, he becomes pleased and happy with whatever Allah has decreed. Allah says in the Quran,

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ

"No calamity befalls except by the will of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart" (*al-Taghaabun* 11). In commenting on this verse, the Follower Alqamah said, "This is in reference to a calamity that befalls an individual and He knows that it was from Allah, and, therefore, he submits to it and is pleased with it."¹ In addition, a hadith in *Sahih Muslim* states,

عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَلَيْسَ ذَاكَ لِأَحَدٍ إِلَّا لِلْمُؤْمِنِ إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَاءٌ
شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَاءٌ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ

"The affair of the believer is amazing in that it is always good for him and this is true only for a believer. If something joyful comes to him, he gives thanks and that is good for him. If something harmful comes to him, he is patient and that is good for him."

In fact, Allah tests and tries people according to their level of faith. Although from a superficial point of view it may seem like it is something harmful to them, it may actually be a great source of good for them. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ عِظَمَ الْجَزَاءِ مَعَ عِظَمِ الْبَلَاءِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ إِذَا أَحَبَّ قَوْمًا ابْتَلَاهُمْ فَمَنْ رَضِيَ فَلَهُ الرِّضَا
وَمَنْ سَخِطَ فَلَهُ السَّخَطُ

"The greatness of the reward goes with the greatness of the trial. Verily, if Allah loves a people, he tries them. Whoever is pleased, shall have [Allah's] pleasure. And whoever is angered shall have [Allah's] anger."²

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 92.

² Recorded by al-Tirmidhi and ibn Maajah. Ahmad has something similar to it. According to al-Ajmi, the chain of al-Tirmidhi's hadith is *hasan* while that of Ahmad is *sahih*. (See al-Ajmi, p. 93.) Al-Albaani calls the hadith "*hasan*, Allah willing." See al-Albaani's footnotes to al-Tabreezi, *Mishkaat*, vol. 1, p. 493. It is also reported that the Caliph Umar ibn Abdul Aziz used to make the following supplication, "O Allah, make me pleased with Your decree and bless me in what You have ordered, to the point that I do not love to have anything that You have delayed come sooner nor have anything You have come sooner to be delayed." Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 93.

Being pleased with what Allah has decreed is not easy for everyone. However, there are some factors that can help one overcome this difficulty and become truly pleased with whatever Allah has decreed for him. Ibn Rajab has mentioned the following three means:

(1) The individual should have absolute confidence and certainty that Allah has not decreed anything for a true believer except what is best for him. The individual should consider himself similar to a patient. When the patient goes to a doctor, the doctor may have to operate or do other procedures that cause a great deal of pain or harm to the individual. But the individual puts up with it because he believes that it is in his best interest and that the doctor only wants what is best for him. If a person takes this same approach toward what Allah has decreed for him, he will accept it and be pleased with everything that occurs to him.

(2) The person should think about the reward that Allah has promised the one who is pleased with His decree. If a person is completely engrossed in that thought, he will then forget whatever pain or troubles he may be encountering. Instead, he will look forward to his promised reward from Allah.

(3) Above and beyond what was described in (2) is for the person to be engrossed in his thoughts about Allah and the attributes of Allah. If he reaches that level, he will not feel any of the pain or difficulties of this world whatsoever.¹

(4) A fourth aspect must be added to the three Ibn Rajab mentioned. This is where the person thanks Allah concerning what he has been afflicted with by realizing what Allah can do to him if He so wills. This is captured in the statement of Qaadhi Shuraih who stated, "If I am afflicted with any affliction, I praise Allah four times: I praise Allah that the affliction was not greater than it is; I praise Him when He gives me the patience to withstand the affliction; I praise Him for guiding me to the statement, 'We belong to Allah and to Him we are returning'; and I praise Him for not making that affliction affect my religion."²

One must distinguish between being pleased with what has occurred to oneself in the past, however recent, and working to rectify or change the situation. If, for example, some wrong is being done, then it is obligatory upon the Muslim to change that wrong if he has the ability to do so.³ A person

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 95. Ibn Rajab gives the example of the women who cut their hands upon seeing Joseph's beauty (as mentioned in *Yoosuf* 31). If a person concentrates upon Allah's magnificence, he will become like those women in the sense that he will not notice any of the aspects going on around him. However, one must be careful about such statements. It was never the case that the Prophet (peace be upon him) or any of his Companions ever lost sight of this world and did not even realize what was occurring around them, like the women who cut their hands upon seeing Joseph.

² Quoted, without specifically ascribing it to Qaadhi Shuraih, in Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, pp. 102-103. The ascription to Qaadhi Shuraih is found in Muhammad al-Dhahabi, *Siyar Alaam al-Nubala* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risaalah, 1990), vol. 4, p. 105.

³ This point shall be discussed in detail in the commentary to Hadith Number 34, Allah willing.

cannot use being pleased with whatever Allah has decreed as an excuse not to fulfill his obligation of ordering good and eradicating evil. He is pleased or accepting of what happened to him in the past but this acceptance of the past does not mean that he will not work to change what is occurring in the present.

Is it Obligatory to be Pleased with Whatever Allah Has Decreed?

Ibn Rajab argues, taking this hadith as a whole, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was advising ibn Abbaas to be pleased with whatever Allah has decreed for him. The preceding statements of the hadith point to this principle. Now, it is as if he was telling ibn Abbaas, "If you are not able to be pleased with what Allah has decreed, then realize that there is a lot of good in at least being patient with respect to what Allah has decreed."

There is a difference between being patient with respect to what has been decreed and reaching the level of being pleased with whatever has been decreed. Ibn Rajab concludes that it is not obligatory to be at the stage where one is pleased with what has been decreed. This is like a praiseworthy, non-obligatory state. A person should pray to be of that nature, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray,

أَسْأَلُكَ اللَّهُمَّ الرَّضَا بَعْدَ الْقَضَاءِ

"O Allah, I ask of You for pleasure after what has been decreed."¹

If one can reach that state, though, he is reaching the state which is described as "the good life". Allah says in the Quran,

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً

"Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a true believer, to him We shall certainly grant a good life" (*al-Nahl* 97). It has been narrated from Ali and ibn Abbaas that the meaning of "good life" here is being pleased and content with whatever Allah has decreed.²

However, if one cannot reach that level, it is obligatory upon him to at least be patient with what has been decreed. If he fulfills the obligation of being patient, there is still a great reward promised for him.³

Ibn Rajab explains the difference between patience and pleasure with the Decree by saying that the patient person keeps himself from getting angry⁴

¹ This is part of a lengthy supplication recorded by Ahmad and many others. According to al-Ajmi, its chain is *sahih*. See al-Ajmi, p. 99.

² Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 487. Ibn Rajab simply attributed this statement to some of the early scholars. Al-Arnaout and Baajis, in their footnotes, give the references for it being a statement of Ali and ibn Abbaas.

³ See *al-Zumar* 10, *al-Baqara* 155-158 and *al-Hajj* 34-35.

⁴ It should be added that the patient person also keeps himself from doing something forbidden to counter what has been decreed.

in the presence of his pain while the pleased person actually feels joy and relaxation with the physical pain or hardship he is enduring. In his case, his physical pain or hardship may actually completely leave him due to the pleasure he is feeling.¹ A pithy statement that sums up the difference between the two states has been attributed to Umar ibn Abdul Azeez, al-Fudhail, ibn al-Mubaarak and others. They have been quoted as saying, “The one who is pleased does not wish to be in any other circumstances as opposed to the one who is patient.” In other words, the patient person accepts his situation but wishes it would come to an end as quickly as possible. The pleased person does not care if or when it may come to an end.

“[Realize also] that victory comes with perseverance”

The Meaning of the Word *Ma'* (مع)

The Arabic word مع (*ma'*) can, in general, be translated as “with”. This is the word that is used in the following three phrases. For example, this first phrase is, “Victory is *ma'* perseverance.” There is some difference of opinion concerning the meaning of the word *ma'* in these passages.

Al-Qari states that the meaning of *ma'* in these sentences is given by some as, “after, afterwards,” for example, “victory comes after perseverance.” He states that this interpretation is far away from the correct understanding. He says that, instead, it is meant to give the impression that the one thing follows very closely the other thing, as if they are coming together, one with the other. This brings further comfort to the individual who realizes this fact. It is as if the trial and its relief, for example, are coming one and at the same time. Therefore, it is a simple matter of being patient for a little time as the relief is coming quickly.²

Al-Haitami states the same point in a slightly different way. He says that the time of hardship and difficulty is the same time as the beginning of the relief and ease.³

“Victory comes with perseverance”

Perseverance or patience is one of the most important characteristics one can possess for the path to victory and success. If someone is faced with a

¹ Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 98. Obviously, this is not a masochistic type of pleasure that he is getting from pain. Instead, he knows that what is occurring is according to Allah’s decree and is best for him. Hence, he feels pleasure and happiness regardless of what may be occurring to him.

² Al-Qaari, vol. 10, p. 55.

³ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 177. Al-Haitami also mentions that some people say that the statements are in reference to Allah’s foreknowledge in that the hardship is with relief according to His knowledge and so forth. Al-Haitami says that this is far-fetched. Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 177.

challenge, he has two choices: he can surrender and give up in the face of that challenge or he can persevere and be patient to overcome the obstacles in his way, by the help of Allah. Al-Bugha and Mistu write,

The life of a human is filled with many different types of battles. He is faced with many and various enemies. His success in those battles is closely tied to and directly related to the amount of patience he possesses. Patience, therefore, is the path to gain what one is aiming at. It is the effective weapon to overcome the different enemies, whether they be hidden or open enemies.¹

Al-Bugha and Mistu also mention that patience is one of the main characteristics by which Allah tests mankind. It is through patience that the pious are distinguished from the impious and the true believers are distinguished from the hypocrites. Allah has stated,

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّىٰ نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَنَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ

"We shall try you until We show who are the *mujahideen* among you and who are the patient. And We shall test your facts [to display your true nature]" (*Muhammad* 31).

In another verse, Allah states,

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"Or deemed you that you would enter Paradise while yet Allah knows not those of you who really strive, nor knows those of you who are steadfast?" (*ali-Imraan* 142). This verse makes it clear that one of the purposes of the trials and tribulations of this world is to see who are the patient. The person should not expect to be allowed to enter Paradise without demonstrating that patience.

The one who is participating in *jihad*, in particular, is greatly in need of patience. By its essence, *jihad* is filled with sacrifices and difficulties. If the person is patient and perseveres, however, he can become successful. Indeed, a battle can be determined by which of the two armies was able and willing to be patient longer.

In two places in the Quran, Allah implies that those He grants victory to are those who are patient and persevere. Allah says,

كَمْ مِّنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"How often has a small group overcome a mighty host by Allah's leave? And Allah is with the patient" (*al-Baqara* 249). In another verse, Allah says,

¹ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 129.

فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَغْلِبُوا
أَلْفَيْنِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

“If there are one hundred of you having patience, they will overcome two hundred. If there are a thousand of you, they shall overcome two thousand, by the leave of Allah. And Allah is with those who are patient” (*al-Anfaal* 66). One of the early scholars stated, “We [the Muslims and the enemy unbelievers] both dislike death and the pain of injury. However, we outdo them by patience.”¹

But one must keep in mind that *jihad* is not just with an external enemy, as stated in the quote above from al-Bugha and Mistu. It can also be with respect to an internal enemy, such as desires and lusts. In fact, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated,

الْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ لِلَّهِ

“The *mujahid*² is the one who struggles against his soul for the sake of Allah.”³ This type of *jihad* also requires a great deal of patience and perseverance for the person to be victorious in such internal struggles. Without patience, he is doomed to failure. Without any patience, he may become a slave to his passions and desires.⁴

The Types of Patience that a Person Needs to Be Successful

There are different “types” of patience that a person needs to be completely successful. These include the following:

First is patience or perseverance in performing good deeds, especially the obligatory deeds. In reference to the definition of *sabr* as given by al-Bugha and Mistu, an intelligent person knows that he must perform these deeds as part of his worship of Allah and, more importantly, Islamic law has required him to perform certain deeds. He must not fail in the performance of the obligatory deeds.

The performance of the obligatory deeds, however, requires patience and perseverance on the part of the Muslim. Take, for example, the prayer five times a day. Allah says about them,

¹ Quoted in ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 104.

² Meaning, the one who makes *jihad*.

³ Recorded by Ahmad, al-Tabaraani and ibn Hibbaan. Al-Tirmidhi also has something very similar to it. Al-Albaani calls it *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 1133.

⁴ Cf., ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 106.

Hadith #19: "Young man, I shall teach you some words..."

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيْ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ
السَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرٌ لِلذَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَأَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ

"Establish worship at the two ends of the day and in some watches of the night. Lo, good deeds annul bad deeds. This is a reminder for the mindful. And have patience for Allah wastes not the rewards of the good" (*Hood* 114-115). And Allah also says,

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا

"And enjoin prayer upon your family and be patient in offering them [the prayers]" (*Taha* 132). Ibn Katheer points out that patience is especially needed for performing the prayers constantly and correctly.¹ This is one of the implied meanings of the verse,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"O you who believe, seek help in patience and prayer. Truly, Allah is with those who are patient" (*al-Baqara* 153).

Perhaps the need for *sabr* (patience) is just as clear with respect to some of the other obligatory deeds. Fasting, for example, is clearly an action that requires patience. But patience is also needed for *zakat*— which implies the giving up of part of one's wealth and putting one's trust in Allah— and the pilgrimage to Makkah is filled with different aspects that require patience.

The second type of patience is perseverance or patience in remaining away from sinful acts. This type of patience is the one that really distinguishes the righteous person or the person with *taqwa* from the rest of the Muslims. As noted earlier, it is not unusual for both the wicked or evil person and the pious person to perform the obligatory duties, but it is really only the pious person that keeps himself away from sins and evil deeds.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) pointed out the importance of this type of patience. He stated that the road to Paradise is paved with hardships while the road to hell is paved with desires.² It is very easy for a person to succumb to those desires unless Allah has blessed him with the patience to stay away from them.

The third type or aspect of patience is perseverance in the face of what Allah decrees or does not decree for a particular individual. Allah has created this world such that there are times of joy and happiness as well as times of

¹ Ibn Katheer, *Tafseer al-Quran al-Adheem* (Kuwait: Jamiyyah Ihyaa al-Turaath al-Islaami, 1991), vol. 3, p. 189.

² This is stated in a hadith recorded by al-Bukhari.

misery and sadness, and times of health and well-being as well as times of sickness and malady. When some afflictions come to a person, the only outlet is patience and contentment with what Allah has given the person. But, as Allah has described, not all humans are able to have such fortitude,

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا ﴿١١﴾ إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ
مَنُوعًا ﴿١٣﴾ إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿١٤﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ

“Verily, man was created anxious, fretful when evil befalls him and, when good befalls him, grudging— save worshippers who are constant at their worship...” (*al-Maarij* 19-22).

The pious people respond by realizing that all these trials are from Allah and unto Allah is the final return. Allah says,

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ
وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ
وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ
هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

“And certainly We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits. But give glad tidings to those who are patient— those who when afflicted with calamity say, ‘Truly, to Allah we belong and, truly, to Him we shall return.’ They are those on whom are blessings from their Lord and they are those who receive His mercy. And it is they who are the guided ones” (*al-Baqara* 155-157).

In reality, patience is required during both times of ease or plenty and times of hardship. In fact, many scholars say that patience during times of extreme hardship is much easier than patience during times of extreme ease. This is true because many times during extreme hardship there is not much one can do about the situation. The person simply must accept his fate. But during times of ease, the situation is completely different. When a person, for example, is given great wealth by Allah, the choice is open to him with virtually no constraints to spend that money in a proper way or to spend it in an improper way.

A fourth type of patience is patience with respect to how one is treated by others. When dealing with others, one is not always treated in the proper or correct manner. This requires patience so that a person does not do something in response that may lead to greater harm. Allah has stated that humans are a trial for one another. However, He also advises that one have patience and forgiveness when dealing with each other. Allah says,

Hadith #19: “Young man, I shall teach you some words...”

وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً أَتَصْبِرُونَ^١

“And We have made some of you as a trial for others. Will you then be steadfast?” (*al-Furqaan* 20). Allah also says about people who have been wronged,

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

“And, verily, whoever shows patience and forgives, that would truly be from the things recommended by Allah” (*al-Shoora* 43).

This fourth type of patience is especially important when one is involved in calling others to Islam or ordering good and eradicating evil. Satan and all the enemies of Islam will not allow the process of calling to truth and righteousness to continue unhindered. Instead, they will seek to block this call by any means. Their goal is to make the person stop working for Islam and be content with a simple life of this world.¹ For this reason, Allah advised the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the Quran,

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ

“Therefore, be patient [O Prophet] as were the messengers of strong will and resolve. And do not be in haste concerning them [the disbelievers]” (*al-Ahqaaf* 35). Luqmaan also advised his son,

يَبْنِيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَنْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا
أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

“O my son, establish the prayer, enjoin what is good and forbid evil, and bear with patience whatever befalls you. That is truly from the things recommended by Allah” (*Luqmaan* 17).²

¹ Unfortunately, such opposition comes not only from non-Muslims, from whom it is expected, but even from other Muslims who do not wish to see a return to the Quran and sunnah. This makes the situation even more difficult. The situation has become so bad in some cases that the question is no longer whether a person is calling to Islam or not or if what he says is correct according to the Quran and sunnah. For some people nowadays, he must be calling to Islam, be correct according to the Quran and sunnah but, it is more important to them that he does it within the framework of a specific group, *madhhab* or organization. Through this means, Satan has been able to divide those people who are calling to one and the same thing, yet Satan has convinced them that they are calling to different things.

² Ibn Katheer states that the latter portion ordering patience is directly related to what preceded it. In other words, when ordering good and eradicating evil, one will face trials and difficulties from the people, so one must have patience. Al-Qurtubi also mentions this meaning but states that the phrase could be more general, meaning that one must be patient in the face of trials and tribulations in this world. See ibn Katheer, *Tafseer* (Jamiyyah), vol. 3, p. 491; al-Qurtubi, *al-Jaami*, vol. 14, p. 68.

If a person possesses all of these types of patience, then success will surely come to him, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned in this hadith. Those who are patient are promised a great reward and success in the Hereafter. Allah says,

إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

“Verily, I have rewarded them this day for their patience. They are indeed the ones that are successful” (*al-Muminoon* 111).¹

“Relief accompanies difficulties”

It is the way of Allah— based on His infinite wisdom— to have mankind pass through stages in their lives. In general, people go through good times and they go through hard times. Naturally, it is when they go through hard times that they face the most psychological stress. Those who do not realize that everything occurs according to Allah’s Will and Plan become the most lost under such circumstances. They search for an escape or a solution to their problems. If there seems to be no clear end or hope in sight, they can enter into a state of despair and depression. This may even lead them to suicide.

On the other hand, the true believer realizes that everything happens according to Allah’s will. The true believer should also understand that whatever hardship or difficulties he faces will come to an end soon, as is implied by the word *ma’* (“with”) in this sentence. It, therefore, behooves him to be patient and to have good expectations concerning Allah. Allah is the Most Merciful of those who are merciful, even more merciful than a mother towards her small infant. The individual should realize that the Merciful will not leave him in that situation for long if he is patient for the sake of Allah.²

The believer realizes that there is wisdom behind these events. More importantly, he realizes where his solution lies. It lies with Allah. Hence, he turns to Allah and beseeches Him to help him through his difficulties. This is one of the major benefits from trials and hardships. If a person lives a life of ease only, it becomes simple for him to forget about Allah and that he must rely upon Allah and turn to Him. Allah tries the believers and this trial is actually a blessing for them. It brings them even closer to Allah. If a person is rescued by Allah in his darkest hour³, that person should never afterwards forget Allah and

¹ For more about the important concept of patience, see Muhammad ibn al-Qayyim, *Iddat al-Saabireen wa Dhakheerah al-Shaakireen* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1983), *passim*; Asmaa Fadaq, *al-Sabr fi Dhau al-Kitaab wa al-Sunnah* (Makkah: Raabitah al-Aalam al-Islami, n.d.), *passim*.

² Cf., al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 177.

³ This obviously requires that the person realizes that it was truly Allah that rescued him. Many times people are saved by firemen, policemen or others and they become grateful to those people for the rest of their lives. Yes, they should be grateful to those people for their help. However, they must also realize that those people did not in and of themselves save them. Allah used them

what Allah has done for him. Indeed, there should be a close bond forged that may not have existed had Allah not tried His servant.

In fact, the extremity of the trial is directly related to how close and beloved the person is to Allah. Note the following hadith from *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*,

عَنْ مُصْعَبِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ النَّاسِ أَشَدُّ بَلَاءً قَالَ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ
ثُمَّ الْأَمْثَلُ فَالْأَمْثَلُ فَيَبْتَلِي الرَّجُلُ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَإِنْ كَانَ دِينُهُ صَلْبًا اشْتَدَّ بَلَاؤُهُ وَإِنْ
كَانَ فِي دِينِهِ رِقَّةٌ ابْتُلِيَ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَمَا يَبْرَحُ الْبَلَاءُ بِالْعَبْدِ حَتَّى يَتْرُكَهُ يَمْشِي
عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مَا عَلَيْهِ خَطِيئَةٌ

"Musab ibn Saad narrated from his father who said: I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, what people face the harshest trials?' He answered, 'The prophets, then the people most like them [in piety], then the people next most like them. A person is tried according to his religiousness. If his religion is firm, his trial makes him stronger. If his religion has some weakness, then he is tried according to his religiousness. A person is continually tried until he walks on the earth and he has no sin [left, as they have all been wiped away due to the trials].'"¹

The possible extent of the hardship of trials, that are soon followed by relief, can be seen in the following verse of the Quran,

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ
مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ
مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ الْآيَاتِ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ

"Or do you think that you will enter Paradise without such [trials] as came to those before you? They were afflicted with severe poverty and ailments and were so shaken that even the Messenger and those who believed along with him said, 'When will the Help of Allah (come)?' Yes! Certainly, the help of Allah is near" (*al-Baqara* 214).

as means to save them. Hence, the real thanks and gratitude should be directed towards Allah. It is Allah that should be remembered and thanked for the rest of the person's life.

¹ Recorded by al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah, Ahmad and al-Daarimi. According to al-Albaani, it is *hasan sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Sahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, vol. 2, p. 286.

Examples of Relief Accompanying Difficulty

The Quran and hadith have provided numerous examples of how Allah has tried different peoples and persons and how, if they were patient, Allah provided them with great relief and joy afterwards.¹

One example is the case of Jacob and his son Joseph (peace be upon them). A reading of *Surah Yusuf* demonstrates the trials and tribulations that they faced. For example, Jacob had his beloved son taken away from him by his other sons. He had no knowledge of what had happened to his son. Joseph also faced his own trials, such as being put in prison based on a false accusation. In the end, however, Joseph became a powerful man in the land and he was reunited with his father. The envy and hatred among the brethren toward him also came to an end.

The example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the trials that he faced is another sterling example that should bring hope and confidence to all who follow in his path. He faced great resistance and assaults from some of his closest relatives. Allah brought him relief from such situations. One *surah* beautifully sums up the result of the plight of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ ﴿١﴾ وَوَضَعْنَا عَنكَ وِزْرَكَ ﴿٢﴾ أَلَّذِي أَنْقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ ﴿٣﴾ وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ ﴿٤﴾ فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥﴾ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٦﴾ فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ ﴿٧﴾ وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ ﴿٨﴾

“Have We not opened your breast for you [O Muhammad] and removed from you your burden which weighed down your back? And have We not raised high your fame? Verily, along with every hardship is relief. Verily, along with hardship is [yet another] relief. So when you have finished [your affairs] devote yourself to Allah’s worship. And to your Lord [alone] turn [all your] attentions and hope” (*al-Sharh* 1-8).

Another moving example that should give hope to all who face trials in their lives is the example of Kaab ibn Maalik and the other two who failed to

¹ There have been a number of books that record incidents of that nature. They include incidents concerning the earlier prophets and people who have come after the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The problem with such books is that the narratives they present are not always authentic. One of the better known of such works is the five-volume work Ali al-Tanookhi, *Kitaab al-Faraj bad al-Shiddah* (Beirut: Daar Saadr, 1978). A more recent work is Ibraaheem al-Haazimi, *Al-Faraj bad al-Shiddah wa al-Dhaaiqah* (n.c., n.p., 1412 A.H.). Strangely enough, the introduction by al-Haazimi is in the first person yet much of it was taken from al-Tanookhi’s introduction (also in the first person) without referencing al-Tanookhi.

march forth for the Battle of Tabook.¹ Allah described their situation with the following words,

وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلَفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ
وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَن لَّا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ
عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

"And [Allah did forgive also] the three [who did not join the expedition] till for them the earth, vast as it is, was straitened and their own selves were straitened to them, and they perceived that there is no fleeing from Allah and no refuge but with Him. Then He forgave them, that they might beg for His mercy. Verily, Allah is the one who forgives and accepts repentance, Most Merciful" (*al-Tauba* 118).² The end result of their trials was forgiveness and mercy from their Lord.

The Causes a Believer Should Follow to Bring About a Prompt Relief for His Hardships

In this hadith and elsewhere, it is made clear that relief follows hardships. Indeed, such has been promised by Allah. Fareed makes the point that just because relief has been promised, it does not mean that a person should not follow the causes that should lead him to hope for a prompt relief from his difficulties. Fareed proves this point by citing a parallel example from the Quran. Allah has said,

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا

"And no moving [living] creature is there on earth but its provision is due from Allah" (*Hood* 6). At the same time, however, one is commanded to seek one's provisions and follow the causes that lead to acquiring one's sustenance. In the same way, although the relief is coming, Fareed argues, one must follow the causes that increases one's hope in the relief coming quickly.³

Briefly, some of the factors that he mentioned that may lead to a quicker resolution to one's difficulties are:⁴

(1) Having *taqwa* and fear of Allah: Allah has said,

¹ For the complete story of their situation, as narrated by Kaab himself, see Siddiqi, trans., *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, pp. 1445-1450.

² This verse shows that the three, due to their trial, realized that they had to turn to Allah and Allah alone. In addition, they realized that they had to repent for their sins as their trials were due to the sins they committed. These are some of the important benefits that may accrue from the trials and tribulations by which Allah tests His servants.

³ Ahmad Fareed, *Al-Faraj bad al-Shiddah* (Alexandria: Daar al-Imaan, n.d.), p. 27.

⁴ For more details, see Fareed, *al-Faraj*, pp. 27-37.

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا

“Whoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make his matter easy for him” (*al-Talaaq* 4). Ibn Katheer stated that this verse means that Allah will make matters easy for him and will bring a quick resolve and solution to his difficulties.¹

(2) Becoming closer to Allah during times of ease such that He responds during times of hardship: This is the same aspect that was discussed earlier in the commentary to this hadith.

(3) Turning to Allah with sincere supplication during times of hardship: It is Allah alone who can change one’s plight and it is He who responds to the sincere supplications. Allah says,

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ
أَلَيْسَ لَهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ

“Is not He who responds to the distressed one when he calls on Him, and who removes evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth [better than the false gods you call upon who cannot do such]? Is there any god alongside Allah? Little is what you remember” (*al-Naml* 62).

(4) Asking Allah for forgiveness of one’s sins: Fareed writes, “Afflictions do not come to a person except because of the sins he committed² and the cure for sins is seeking Allah’s forgiveness. One of the pious predecessors said, ‘This Quran guides you to what is your disease and what is your medicine. Your disease is sins and your medicine is seeking Allah’s forgiveness.’”³ The evidence for that statement is the verse,

اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا ﴿١٠١﴾
وَيُمَدِّدْكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا

“Ask forgiveness from your Lord, verily He is Oft-forgiving. He will send rain to you in abundance, and give you increase in wealth and children, and bestow on you rivers” (*Nooh* 10-12).

(5) Turning to Allah and seeking His rescue and refuge: It has been narrated concerning the Prophet (peace be upon him):

¹ Ibn Katheer, *Tafseer* (Jamiyyah), vol. 4, p. 404.

² Although that is a common thought, it seems that it does not always have to be true. In other words, a very pious person— who commits few sins— is also tested with trials and afflictions, perhaps even more so than many others who commit more and greater sins (as a previously mentioned hadith indicates). Allah knows best.

³ Fareed, *al-Faraj*, p. 31.

Hadith #19: "Young man, I shall teach you some words..."

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا كَرَبَهُ أَمْرٌ قَالَ يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ بِرَحْمَتِكَ أَسْتَغِيْثُ

"If a matter became a hardship for the Prophet (peace be upon him), he would say, 'O All-Living One, O Sustaining One, in your mercy I seek rescue.'"¹

(6) Completely putting one's trust in Allah and relying upon Him to bring about a solution: Allah says,

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

"And whoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him" (*al-Talaaq* 3).

(7) Having good expectations of Allah that He will bring about relief. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that Allah has said,

أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي

"I am as My servant expects of Me." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) Fareed wrote, "If the person believes that Allah will give him relief from his difficulty and make his matter easy, then Allah will act as he expects of Him."²

"And ease accompanies hardship."

In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave comfort to ibn Abbaas and all Muslims by teaching him that when hardship comes, ease is soon to follow. Allah has stated something very similar in the verse,

سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا

"Allah will grant ease after hardship" (*al-Talaaq* 7).

However, Allah has also stated in the Quran,

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥٦﴾ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

"Verily, along with every hardship is ease. Verily, along with every hardship is relief" (*al-Sharh* 5-6). The implication of these two verses is different from the implication of this hadith and the verse just quoted. In this case, the word used for hardship is in the definite case in both verses while the word used for ease is in the indefinite case. That means that there is one form of hardship while the situations of ease are two different ones.³ What this implies is that with

¹ Recorded by al-Tirmidhi. According to al-Albaani, it is *hasan*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 868.

² Fareed, *al-Faraj*, p. 36.

³ A parallel case in English may make this clearer. If someone says, "A man entered the store," and then wants to describe what the same man did next, he might say, "The man went to the counter." The use of the indefinite, "a man," followed by the definite, "The man," implies that it was the same man. But if a person were to say, "A man entered the store. A man went to the counter," this would give the impression that the two men referred to were two different men. In

every one hardship there comes two situations of ease¹— if, as al-Tanookhi states, the person turns to Allah and is sincere towards him.² This is why the Companion ibn Abbaas stated, “One hardship will never overcome two forms of ease.” Umar ibn al-Khattab also made the same statement.³ This is all part of the great mercy of Allah for His servants.

The Relationship Between the Portions of the Hadith

Al-Bugha and Mistu point out that these last portions of the hadith are very closely related to each other. Hardship brings about difficulties. Ease is a form of relief. However, hardship and difficulty require patience and perseverance. If the person has patience, he will be successful. He will overcome his hardship and difficulties until relief and ease comes to him. This is part of the mercy of Allah, that He has determined that hardship is followed by ease. But the one who truly benefits from that is the one who is patient during the times of hardship, as he will be rewarded greatly for that period.⁴

There is another way by which this hadith is tied together. It is in times of trials and tribulations that one most seeks a refuge and a helper. It is during those times of hardship, when one’s emotions may take over and the person does not behave in the proper manner, that one must force oneself to have patience. Not only that, he must realize that everything is by the will of Allah. If all of mankind wanted to help him in his situation, they would have no power to do so— unless Allah willed it. Therefore, who should he ask and to whom should he turn for help? The answer is Allah. Just as the Prophet (peace be upon him) told ibn Abbaas, “If you ask, ask of Allah. If you seek help, seek help in Allah.”

the two verses above, Allah describes “the hardship” followed by a case of ease and followed by a case of ease. This implies that the situations of ease are two different situations. Note that, like almost all points of style and rhetoric, this is a general ruling and the context may prove that it is not to be applied. Al-Qari cites the example of the verse in the Quran, “O Allah, possessor of the Kingdom, You give the kingdom to whom You will...” (*ali-Imraan* 26). In this case, although the definite, “the kingdom” is used in both cases, it is clear from the context that they are referring to two different types of “kingdom”. See al-Qaari, vol. 10, p. 55.

¹ According to ibn Uthaimen, the meaning of two situations of ease is one prior to the hardship and one after the hardship. Allah knows best. See ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaaadh*, vol. 2, p. 456. Al-Haitami points out that some people explain the verse to mean two forms of hardship followed by two forms of ease: the hardship in this world followed by ease and the hardship of the Hereafter followed by ease. (See al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 177.) The explanation as given in the text above, though, has been narrated from a number of Companions and early scholars.

² Al-Tanookhi, vol. 1, p. 59.

³ The statement by Umar is recorded by ibn Abu Shaiba, al-Haakim and by Malik in *al-Muwattaa*. This statement is also recorded as a hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) by al-Haakim. However, it is a weak hadith because its chain is *mursal* from al-Hasan al-Basri. See al-Arnaoot and Baajis’ footnotes to ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 492.

⁴ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 136.

The Benefits of Trials and Tribulations

Someone might ask, "If relief follows hardship, what is the real purpose or benefit from trials and tribulations?" Some even say, "Are not the hardships and afflictions that people face simply a sign that either there is no god or that God is not really a merciful one?" These types of questions demonstrate a shortsighted view of reality. If one were to give thought to the positive effects of trials and tribulations, one would not ask such a question.

At the end of his book which is a commentary on this hadith, ibn Rajab mentioned the benefits of trials and tribulations. Some of the aspects he mentioned were:

(1) Such trials and tribulations are a means by which Allah removes sins from a person.

(2) Facing such trials and tribulations in the proper manner, with patience and behavior within the limits of the *shareeah*, is a great source of reward and Allah's pleasure.

(3) Such trials and tribulations should make the person recall the sins that he has committed. This should lead him to repentance and reform. This is especially true if the hardship is relatively prolonged. In that case, the person prays and prays and his situation does not seem to change. When that occurs, the person should really blame himself and realize that Allah may not be responding quickly to him because of the sins he has committed. Hence, he has no one to blame but himself.

(4) Such trials should soften the person's heart and make him submit humbly to Allah. A person who never faces hardship may become haughty, arrogant and cold-hearted. Experiencing such trials can humble a person and make his heart soft and merciful as he feels what others have experienced.

(5) It is through trials and tribulations that a person can experience the characteristic of patience. He may even get beyond that to the experience of feeling happiness and pleasure at whatever Allah has decreed.

(6) Trials and tribulations makes a person realize that he cannot rely solely on himself or even on others. He can only rely on Allah. Allah is the only true source of help and assistance.

(7) Trials and tribulations require one to fight against Satan, which is an act of worship in itself. During such hardships, Satan will incite the person to get upset and do forbidden acts. Indeed, Satan may incite him to get upset at Allah or to have evil thoughts concerning Allah.¹

After mentioning some of the above points as well as others, ibn Rajab concludes that if the person truly realizes and understands the above, "he will know that the bounty that comes from Allah to a believer due to his trials is greater than the bounty that comes from Allah during his times of ease."² Both

¹ Cf., ibn Rajab, *Noor*, pp. 120-124.

² Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 124.

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cases are from the bounties and mercy of Allah, if only humans would realize that and be grateful to Him. What Allah has said is certainly true:

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ

“If you count the blessings of Allah, never will you be able to count them. Verily, man is an extreme wrongdoer, an extreme ingrate” (*Ibraaheem* 34).

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- The advice that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave to ibn Abbaas was while the two of them were riding an animal, moving from one place to another. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used this opportunity to teach ibn Abbaas. This demonstrates that a Muslim should use every moment available to him for something beneficial. Time is a very precious resource. Once a moment passes, a person never has access to it again. Hence, a Muslim should not waste his time. Even while walking or driving, he should engage himself in something beneficial, as shown in this example of the Prophet (peace be upon him).¹
- The portion of this hadith that states, “If you ask, ask of Allah. If you seek help, seek help in Allah,” demonstrates, according to ibn Uthaimen, that a person who asks of another human has a shortcoming in his application of *tauheed*. For this reason, it is disliked to ask anybody else for anything, large or small.²
- If Allah wills to help someone, He may help him through well-known means or through ways such that the person may not even recognize that he is being helped by Allah. Allah may make others, even one’s enemies, come to his rescue. However, it is always important to remember, as ibn Uthaimen pointed out, that the real helper, the one who truly brought about the aid, was Allah. It was Allah that led the others to help the individual. Ibn Uthaimen stated,

When Allah has helped you through someone else, it is not allowed for you to forget that the cause of the help was Allah. This [act of forgetting] is what some ignorant people have done today. They [the Muslims] sought help from the disbelieving countries and those countries gave them a show of help. Some ignorant people sanctify those unbelievers and they do not realize that they are their enemies, regardless of whether they assisted them or not. They are your enemies until the Day of Judgment and it is not allowed for anyone to become allies with them or to give them their mutual support or to pray for them, as we have heard from some of the ignorant masses.

¹ Cf., Sultaan, p. 178.

² Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh*, vol. 2, p. 453.

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They actually have stated, “We will go and slaughter an animal for the sake of so and so” of the disbelievers. And refuge can only be sought in Allah. Some of us even name our children by their names and pray for them— and we ask Allah to safeguard us from that. If Allah did not subjugate them to you and put them at your aid, they would not have helped you in anyway. *Al-Naafi’* [the True Giver of what Benefits] and *al-Dhaar* [the One who brings what is Harmful] is Allah...¹

- Ibn al-Qayyim has mentioned some important points concerning seeking help from Allah. Allah is the only One that a person can have complete trust in and full reliance upon under all circumstances. Ibn al-Qayyim stated,

Seeking help in Allah combines together two important principles: trust in Allah and reliance upon Him. A person may have trust in another but he does not rely on him in his affairs, although he trusts him. This is because he is not in need of him. On the other hand, a person may rely on another when he is need of him and has no other alternative, even if he has no trust in that person. He has to rely on him although he does not have trust in him.²

- One time the Prophet (peace be upon him) told his Companions, “Shall I not inform you of one of the treasures of Paradise?” When they replied positively, he stated the expression, لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله (“There is no movement or power except in Allah”). (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) This treasure of the treasures of Paradise is closely related to many of the points mentioned in this hadith. This statement means that unless Allah wills something and allows something to happen, it will not happen. Hence, there is no need to ask of anyone other than Allah. If someone needs help, he should turn to Allah as Allah is the only true source of help. If all of mankind attempted to change what Allah has decreed, they would not be able to do so, because “there is no movement or power except in Allah.”
- Humans are born with an innate nature that recognizes that they have one Lord and Creator. It is natural for humans to turn to Allah during times of hardship and stress. They pray to Allah to rescue them and help them when they have reached their darkest hour. Even those who have no relationship with Allah during other times still turn to Allah when they are truly in need and things look hopeless. They turn to Allah during hardship and then they turn away from Him afterwards. This hadith demonstrates that one of the differences between those who are beloved to Allah from those who are not

¹ Ibn Uthaimen, *Sharh Riyaadh*, vol. 2, p. 453.

² Ibn al-Qayyim, *Tafseer al-Qayyim*, p. 66. The same passage may be found in al-Saalihi, vol. 1, p. 83.

is that the devoted servants are mindful of Allah and remember Him during all states of their life. They do not only turn to Him during times of hardship but also during times of ease and plenty, they give thanks to Allah and they do not violate His commands. When rich or poor, healthy or sick, strong or weak, the true servant of Allah is always remembering and being mindful of Him.¹

- Ibn Rajab states that if a person does not become “known” or close to Allah during times of ease, then that person will not have anyone who “knows” him or can help him during his times of hardship. He will not have anyone to help him in either this life or the Hereafter. The harsh times he faces in this life will become much harsher in the Hereafter and, at that time, he will be void of any protector or helper.²
- Hardships and trials should increase a person’s faith. They should drive the person to become even closer to Allah, making him realize that Allah is, in fact, his only Protector and Helper. If such trials and tribulations do not have any effect on the person, it is a clear sign that his heart is dead. Reviving the heart and submitting to Allah is one of the most important aspects of such trials. Allah has said in the Quran,

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَكِن قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ
وَزَيَّنَّ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“Verily, We sent [messengers] to nations before you. And We seized them with extreme poverty and with calamities so that they might humble themselves. When Our torment reached them why did they not humble themselves [in faith]? But their hearts became hardened, and Satan made fair-seeming to them that which they used to do” (*al-Anaam* 42-43).

- No matter what kind of difficulties or hardships a Muslim is facing in his life, he should realize that relief is in sight. He does not have to become despondent. Indeed, there is no excuse for him to despair as he has been promised that relief will come with hardship.
- A person should fulfill his obligations, such as praying, fasting, obeying Allah and so forth, and he should not fear others and submit to them, thereby leaving what Allah has obligated upon him. Instead, he should realize that he must fulfill his obligations toward Allah and then whatever will happen to him will happen, according to Allah’s decree and not the whims of people.

¹ Cf., al-Baitaar, p. 123.

² Ibn Rajab, *Noor*, p. 65.

Hadith #19: "Young man, I shall teach you some words..."

Summary of the Hadith

- If a person truly obeys Allah, Allah will protect him.
- If a person truly obeys Allah, he will find Allah with him in the sense that Allah will be his close friend and protector. Allah will not leave him alone or leave him for his enemies to devour him.
- If a person finds himself in need to ask someone for anything, he should turn to Allah and ask from Allah.
- If a person is in need of help, he should turn to Allah alone as Allah, in reality, is the only one who can help him.
- Everything is by the decree of Allah. If Allah decrees something, it will occur. If Allah does not decree something, it will never occur. Even if all of mankind tries to change that decree, they will never be able to do so.
- The decree has been made by Allah and the efforts of man cannot change what has already been recorded; the pens have been lifted and the scrolls have dried.
- If a person becomes "known" or beloved to Allah during his times of ease and comfort, then Allah will not leave him alone during his times of hardship and difficulties.
- Humans may face situations that are not pleasing to them. If they are patient during those situations, it will be beneficial to them in both this life and the Hereafter.
- If a person is patient, he will be victorious and successful in the end.
- When difficulties arise, the person must realize that relief is in sight.
- Also, when hardships occur, the person should realize that situations of ease will follow.
- During such affliction and hardships, one should be patient. If he is going to seek help from anyone, he should seek it from Allah.

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Hadith #20
"If you feel no shame, then..."

عَنْ أَبِي مَسْعُودٍ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَمْرٍو الْأَنْصَارِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ
قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ مِمَّا أَدْرَكَ
النَّاسُ مِنْ كَلَامِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُولَى إِذَا لَمْ تَسْتَحِ فَاصْنَعْ مَا شِئْتَ
رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ

On the authority of Abu Masood Uqbah ibn Aamr al-Ansaari, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "From the words of the previous prophets that the people still find are: If you feel no shame, then do as you wish."
Recorded by al-Bukhari.

Selected Vocabulary

مما	- This is a compound word, made up of من ("from") and ما ("what, whatever")
كلام	- speech
النبوة	- prophethood
تستح	- "you feel shame"
فاصنع	- "then do or act," the ف stands for "then," and the اصنع means "do, act"
شئت	- "you wish"

Takhreej

This is an authentic hadith. It was recorded by al-Bukhari¹, Abu Dawood, ibn Maajah, Ahmad, al-Baihaqi, ibn Abu Shaiba, ibn Hibbaan, al-Tabaraani and numerous others from the chain of Mansoor ibn Mutamir from Rabi ibn Hiraash from Abu Masood.

Ahmad, al-Bazaar and others also recorded it from Rabi from Hudhaifah. These narrations also have an authentic chain, according to al-

¹ Al-Mudaabaghi (p. 179) criticizes al-Nawawi and all of the commentators on this hadith for failing to note that al-Bukhari does not record the words, "the earlier," in his *Sahih*, although it is mentioned in other collections. Actually, it was al-Mudaabaghi who was mistaken. He noticed that al-Bukhari recorded this hadith in the section discussing events from the prophets of the Tribe of Israel. In that section, his narration does not have the words, "the earlier". However, he also recorded it in *Kitab al-Adab* (the book of manners) with that additional word.

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Albaani. Ibn Hajr concluded that Rabi heard it from both Abu Masood and Hudhaifah. Such an occurrence is not strange in the hadith literature.

There are yet other narrations of this hadith, but they seem to be weak.¹

General Comments about the Hadith

The importance of this hadith lies in the fact that it points to one of the most important characteristics a person can possess: the characteristic of *hayaa'* (modesty, shyness, bashfulness). Al-Nawawi states that all of Islam revolves around this statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him).²

About the Narrator: Abu Masood Abdullah ibn Uqbah al-Ansaari al-Badri

Abu Masood al-Badri was a well-known Companion of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was from the tribe of Khazraj, of the Ansaar of Madina. He is known as al-Badri, which one could understand to mean that he attended the Battle of Badr. Actually, he did not attend that battle but he was known as al-Badri because he lived close to or around the place of the Battle of Badr.³

Abu Masood was one of the seventy who took part in the Second Oath of Allegiance to the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was the youngest one to make the oath. He participated in the Battle of Uhud as well as all sequential battles of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

When Ali ibn Abu Taalib left Kufah to go to the Battle of Siffeen, he left Abu Masood in charge as the governor of Kufah.

Abu Masood died in the year of 41 or 42 A.H. Some say that he died in Madinah while others say he died in Kufah. In the standard books of hadith there are some 102 hadith attributed to his authority. Nine of his hadith are to be found in both *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*.

“From the words of the earlier prophets that the people still find are”

This phrase means that the statement concerning modesty is something that has been passed on from the earliest prophets. It is part of the legacy of the earlier prophets that the people still had in their possession. In other words, the first prophet had made this statement and it continued to be passed on until the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).⁴

¹ Cf., ibn Muhammad, pp. 146-147.

² Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Matn*, p. 93. A complete understanding of the concept of *hayaa'* (shame or modesty) will demonstrate the truth of al-Nawawi's statement.

³ According to al-Haitami, it was the opinion of al-Bukhari and Muslim that Abu Masud did actually participate in the Battle of Badr. However, the majority of the scholars say that he did not. Allah knows best. See al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 178.

⁴ In another narration, it states, “The people do not have any statement from the first prophecy except that statement.” Ibn Rajab states that this was recorded by Abd ibn Humaid, ibn

Hadith #20: "If you feel no shame, then..."

Al-Haitami states that the meaning of this phrase is that all of the laws of the earlier prophets agreed upon this principle concerning modesty. It was stated by the earliest prophet and then repeated by all of the later prophets. Hence, all of the prophets praised the characteristic of modesty and ordered their followers to have that attribute. This principle was never abrogated in any of the laws of the prophets.¹

"If you feel no shame, then do as you wish."

This portion of the hadith is in the form of an imperative or command. For that reason, it has been interpreted in a number of different ways. Each interpretation shall be discussed separately.

The First Interpretation

Some scholars say that although this phrase is in the form of an imperative, it is actually not meant to be an order. Instead, it is a form of threat or warning. Its meaning is, in other words, "If you have no shame or modesty, then do whatever you wish and Allah will recompense you—punish you—for what you do."

This is a known form of speech in Arabic. This style can also be found in the Quran. For example, Allah says,

أَعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

"Do what you will. Verily, He is All-Seer of what you do" (*Fussilat* 40). This is not a command for one to do as one likes, but, instead, it is a type of threat. In fact, in their translation of the Quran, al-Hilali and Khan add in parenthesis at the end of that verse, "this is a severe threat to the unbelievers."²

Ibn Rajab states that a number of scholars follow this interpretation.³ Al-Munaawi,⁴ and Al-Bugha and Mistu⁵ conclude that this is the strongest interpretation.

Zanjuwaih and others. Neither al-Hilaali nor al-Arnaoot and Baajis add any additional comment concerning said narration. Allah knows best. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 497; al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 304. Ibn Hajr refers to a narration in Ahmad and al-Bazzaar that states, "The last of what the people of *Jaahiliyah* had from the words of the first prophecy are..." See ibn Hajr, *Fath al-Baar bi-Sharh Saheeh al-Bukhaari* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1996), vol. 10, p. 641. Linguistically, it could be argued that the meaning of the present hadith is, "Part of what the people have from the first prophecy..." (See al-Mudaabaghi, p. 178.) However, if these other narrations are authentic, this possibility is negated.

¹ Al-Haitami, *Fath*, p. 178; al-Munaawi, vol. 2, p. 540.

² Al-Hilali and Khan, p. 866.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 498.

⁴ Al-Munaawi, vol. 2, p. 540.

⁵ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 140.

A Second Interpretation

A second interpretation for this hadith also states that the imperative or command is not what is meant by this statement. Instead, it is a case of an order being used as a statement of fact. In other words, the meaning is, "If a person does not have any shame, then he does whatever he wishes." *Hayaa`* (shame or modesty) is one of the most important factors that keeps a person away from committing a lewd or sinful act. If a person has no feeling of shame or modesty, then there is nothing to prevent him from doing most anything. He would do almost anything because he has nothing inside of him telling him that such is not good behavior and that he should be ashamed to act in that fashion.

Ibn al-Qayyim has shed some more light on this interpretation by saying that when a person commits sins, his feeling of *hayaa`* is lessened. As he commits more and more sins, his *hayaa`* is weakened more and more, to the point that it may not exist at all. When he gets to that point, he does not care what people might say or think about him. In fact, he might even start to brag or tell others about the sins that he has committed. This type of person will not be forgiven and the road to repentance will be blocked for him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said,

كُلُّ أُمَّتِي مُعَافَى إِلَّا الْمُجَاهِرِينَ وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْمُجَاهِرَةِ أَنْ يَعْمَلَ الرَّجُلُ بِاللَّيْلِ عَمَلًا ثُمَّ يُصْبِحَ وَقَدْ سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَيَقُولُ يَا فُلَانُ عَمِلْتُ الْبَارِحَةَ كَذَا وَكَذَا وَقَدْ بَاتَ يَسْتُرُهُ رَبُّهُ وَيُصْبِحُ يَكْشِفُ سِتْرَ اللَّهِ عَنْهُ

"All of my Nation are apt to be forgiven except for those who commit sins openly. Included among those who commit sins openly is where a person performs a deed during the night and, although Allah had concealed that sin, in the morning he says, 'O so and so, last night I did such and such.' He spent the night being concealed by Allah and in the morning he uncovered Allah's concealment from himself." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.)¹

This interpretation is also consistent with what is known in the Arabic language. Another example of this nature, according to some, is the hadith,

مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ فَلْيَتَّبِعُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ

¹ Muhammad ibn al-Qayyim, *Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi liman Sa'ala an al-Dawaa al-Shaafi* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1983), p. 78-79.

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"Whoever falsely attributes something to me must take his own seat in the Fire."¹ The meaning of this hadith is a statement of fact: "The one who falsely attributes something to me shall take his own seat in the Fire."

Al-Khattaabi explains why the Prophet (peace be upon him) made this statement in the form of a command rather than a statement of fact. He says that the character that keeps a person from committing a sin is *hayaa`* or shame. If a person has no shame, then he becomes like someone who is naturally ordered by his soul to commit evil.² Hence, it is proper to state the meaning in the form of an order as, in the long-run, this is what it is actually describing.

According to ibn Rajab, this interpretation of this hadith has been favored by Abu Ubaid, al-Qaasim ibn Salaam, ibn Qutaibah, Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Maroozi and others. He also states that Abu Dawood has narrated from Ahmad a quote that indicates that he also follows this interpretation.³

A Third Interpretation

A third interpretation is that the command here is in the form of displaying permission.⁴ In other words, "If you are contemplating an act and it is an act such that there is no reason to be ashamed of it in front of Allah or the people, then you may do that act." Hence, according to this interpretation, modesty or shame becomes the standard over whether or not one should do the act. If there is nothing to be ashamed of concerning the act, then there is no harm in doing the act. However, if there is reason to be ashamed from that act, either with respect to Allah or others, then the person should not perform that act.

This is the interpretation that is favored by al-Nawawi.⁵ This view has also been recorded from Ahmad.⁶

The interpretation of a command to mean permission is also well-known and established in Arabic. In fact, numerous examples of this nature may be found in the Quran. For example, Allah says,

¹ Recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim and many others. Al-Hilaali points out that it is *mutawaatir*. See al-Hilaali, *Eeqaadh*, p. 304.

² Ibn Hajr, *Fath* (Maktaba Dar al-Baaz), vol. 10, p. 641. Al-Zamakhshari also stated something similar. See al-Munaawi, vol. 2, p. 540.

³ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 498.

⁴ If a sentence is stated in the form of the imperative, it has many possible meanings. The first meaning is that of obligation. This is its understood meaning unless there is evidence to demonstrate otherwise. However, it could also imply recommendation or permissibility. It can also be interpreted in the manner described earlier as a warning or censure. For more on this point, see Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Selangor, Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 1989), pp. 177-179.

⁵ Ibn Hajr, *Fath* (Maktaba al-Baaz), vol. 10, p. 641.

⁶ Ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 503.

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ

“Then when the [Friday] prayer is ended, disperse through the land and seek the bounty of Allah” (*al-Jum'ah* 10). This verse is actually an imperative. However, its meaning is permissibility, “After the prayer, you may disperse through the land...”

A Fourth Interpretation

Saleem al-Hilaali offers a fourth interpretation. He states, as a possible understanding, that this hadith is a form of encouragement to have the characteristic of modesty and indirectly points to the virtues of modesty. In this way, the hadith is understood to say, “Since it is not allowed to do any act you wish, it is not allowed to leave having modesty and shame.”¹

Conclusion About the Meaning

All of the four interpretations stated above have meanings that are excellent and acceptable. It is difficult to determine which is the strongest of the above interpretations. Each interpretation, with the possible exception of the last one, has evidence to support it. Since all four are viable, perhaps each of them should be kept in mind and applied in one's life.

Personally, this author prefers the third interpretation, that the hadith implies permissibility. It is the interpretation that seems closest to the literal meaning of the hadith.

Another hadith states,

دَعْ مَا يَرِيكَ إِلَىٰ مَا لَا يَرِيكَ

“Leave that [act] which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt.”² Applying these two hadith together, one can understand that if a Muslim has no doubt about an act, then he is free to perform it. Similarly, if an act has no shame connected to it, then, again, the person is allowed to perform it. Hence, a Muslim's actions should be free of doubtful matters as well as shameful matters. Allah knows best.

¹ Saleem al-Hilaali, *Al-Hayaa` fi Dhau al-Quran al-Kareem wa al-Ahadeeth al-Saheehah* (Dammam, Saudi Arabia: Maktaba ibn al-Jauzi, 1988), p. 10. Al-Hilaali did not state who favors this fourth interpretation. Al-Jeelaani also mentions it in passing. [See Fadhluallah al-Jeelaani, *Fadhl Allahu al-Samad fi Taudheeh al-Adab al-Mufrad* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Salafiyah, 1407 A.H.), vol. 2, p. 54.] Al-Hilaali concludes that all four interpretations are good and offer excellent meanings. However, he favors the interpretation that the sentence is a command expressing a fact. Ibn Rajab actually mentions a fifth interpretation, but he states that it is not at all feasible. See ibn Rajab, *Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 504-505.

² This is Hadith Number 11 of this collection, that was discussed earlier.

Hadith #20: "If you feel no shame, then..."

The Concept of *al-Hayaa`* (الحياء)

In order for this hadith to be understood in a complete sense, the concept of *hayaa`* itself must be understood well. This is a very important concept and it behooves every Muslim to understand it correctly and apply it correctly in his or her life.

The Meaning of *Hayaa`*

In Lane's *Lexicon*, the word *hayaa`* is defined as,

Shame; a sense of shame; shyness, or bashfulness; (and particularly, but not always, honest shame, or prudence, or modesty)... a shrinking of the soul from foul conduct, through fear of blame, a languor that affects the animal facility and turns it back from its actions; and repentance¹

The word *hayaa`* is derived from the word *الحياة* (*al-hayaah*), which means life. Rain, for example, is called *hayaa`* because it brings life to the earth and vegetation. It is said that the one who has no *hayaa`* (shame) is like a dead person in this life.

In fact, his heart can be considered dead. If he possesses modesty and shame, his heart will be sound and healthy. The more modesty he possesses, the healthier his heart is. The less modesty a person has, then the less life and health his heart possesses.² Umar ibn al-Khattaab was reported to have said, "If a person has little *hayaa`*, he will have little *wara`* (fear of Allah and feeling of His presence). And the one who has little *wara`*, his heart has died."³

In essence, it is the feeling in the heart that keeps the person away from performing evil deeds. It is directly related to what is commonly called "one's moral conscience"⁴ in the West today. If a person has no moral conscience, he will do whatever he pleases. He does not care what anyone might think or say about him. Indeed, he does not even care about what he thinks about himself. This is because his heart is truly dead and he has no feeling of shame whatsoever.

On the other hand, a person's conscience may bother him even if nobody witnessed the act that he is ashamed of. His heart is uneasy and unhappy because he is ashamed of what he did. This realization is very close to the concept of *hayaa`* that is being discussed here. However, obviously, it must be put within the Islamic framework that shall be described below.

¹ Lane, vol. 1, pp. 681-682.

² Muhammad al-Muqaddam, *Al-Hayaa` Khuluq al-Islam* (Cairo: Daar al-Dawah al-Salafiyah, 1993), p. 5.

³ Quoted in al-Muqaddam, p. 28.

⁴ Conscience would normally be considered the translation for the Arabic word, *الضمير*. However, its usage, as described above, is very close to the overall concept of *hayaa`*.

Al-Muqaddam points out that *hayaa`* is the attribute that truly distinguishes a human from an animal. In general, animals follow their desires or instincts without any feeling of whether what they did is right or wrong. They do not feel any shame in their actions. Hence, the less *hayaa`* a person possesses, the closer he comes to the level of the animals rather than being a moral human being.¹

The word *hayaa`*, as it is going to be used throughout this commentary, should be understood to mean shame, modesty, shyness and moral conscience. It is the factor in the person's heart that keeps him from behaving in just any way that his desires or lusts should lead him or in the way others may prod him to behave. It is the factor that controls his behavior and keeps him from performing acts that are considered distasteful and lewd.

Natural and Acquired *Hayaa`*

Hayaa` (modesty and shame) is something that every human being naturally possesses. One of the aspects of *hayaa`* that is naturally found in mankind is the feeling to cover one's private parts. This characteristic can be seen clearly in the example of Adam and Eve. Allah says about them,

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتَ لَهُمَا سَوْءُتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ
الْجَنَّةِ

"Then they both ate of the tree, and so their private parts became manifest to them, and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of Paradise for their covering" (*Ta-Ha* 121).²

Like all natural characteristics, this quality may be nurtured and allowed to grow or it may be stunted to the point that the person completely loses this quality.

Beyond the natural feeling of *hayaa`*, there can be an acquired aspect that is directly related to the strength of one's faith.³ This is the *hayaa`* that comes about by realizing that Allah is always present and He sees everything that one does. There is no escape from Allah. When a person realizes this, he

¹ Al-Muqaddam, p. 8.

² Some people may possess this natural form of *hayaa`* and due to it alone they do not perform certain deeds. However, this motive is not accompanied with an intention to please Allah. In fact, unbelievers many times act based on this reason. In that case, the person's *hayaa`* alone was his motive and, hence, it is not a deed that shall be rewarded by Allah.

³ Al-Qadhi Iyaadh stated that *hayaa`* can either be received naturally or acquired through effort. Whatever the case might be, in order to use it in the proper way requires effort, thought, intention and knowledge. Therefore, it forms part of *imaan*, even if it were a person's natural characteristic. Al-Qurtubi stated that the *hayaa`* which is acquired is part of *imaan* and is the portion that one is held responsible for. However, if a person is naturally endowed with *hayaa`*, that will help him in acquiring the correct *hayaa`* and applying it properly. See al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, vol. 2, p. 5; al-Jeelaani, vol. 2, p. 56.

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will be ashamed to perform any act that is displeasing to Allah. This remembrance of Allah is one of the most important means by which one increases his *hayaa`*.¹

Another helpful factor is for the person to think about all of the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon him. If a person thinks about all of the blessings that he has received from Allah, he becomes very shy to use the blessings that Allah has given him in ways that are displeasing to Allah. For example, if he really thinks about how great a blessing his eyesight is, he will be ashamed to use this blessing from Allah in ways that are displeasing to Him.

Another way by which one may increase his *hayaa`* is to associate with the people of *hayaa`*. One can learn from their example and behavior. More importantly, in their presence, one will be too embarrassed or shy to do anything shameful. This feeling of shame and modesty, Allah willing, will develop and grow in the person to the extent that even in the presence of others, he will continue to have that characteristic.

The Importance and Virtues of *Hayaa`*

The Prophet (peace be upon him) discussed the importance and virtues of *hayaa`* on numerous occasions. This, in itself, may be considered a sign of how important *hayaa`* is for the faith and behavior of a Muslim. Upon reading those hadith, the importance and essential nature of *hayaa`* will become manifest.

In one hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated,

الْحَيَاءُ وَالْإِيمَانُ قُرْنَانِ جَمِيعًا فَإِذَا رُفِعَ أَحَدُهُمَا رُفِعَ الْآخَرُ

"*Hayaa`* and *Imaan* are two companions that go together. If one of them is lifted, the other is also lifted."² In essence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that a person who has no *hayaa`* could not possibly have any *imaan*. Obviously, then, for a person to have *imaan*, he must have *hayaa`*. This hadith demonstrates how essential *hayaa`* is to a person's faith.

In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) noticed one person finding fault with another due to his *hayaa`* or shyness. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then told the former,

الْحَيَاءُ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ

¹ Al-Muqaddam, p. 10.

² Recorded by al-Haakim. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, pp. 609-610.

“*Al-Hayaa`* is part of *Imaan*.” (Recorded by Muslim.) In another hadith with a similar purport, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) stated,

الإِيمَانُ بَضْعٌ وَسَبْعُونَ أَوْ بَضْعٌ وَسِتُّونَ شُعْبَةً فَأَفْضَلُهَا قَوْلُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَدْنَاهَا إِمَامَةٌ
الْأَذَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ وَالْحَيَاءُ شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ

“*Imaan* has seventy some-odd or sixty some-odd branches. The most virtuous of them is the statement, ‘There is none worthy of worship except Allah,’ and the slightest of them is to remove something harmful from the road. And *hayaa`* is a branch of *imaan*.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.) Ibn Qutaiba stated that *hayaa`* keeps a person from committing sins in the same manner that *imaan* does. It is referred to as *imaan* or part of *imaan* because it should have the same effect as *imaan*. It is mentioned in particular in this hadith because it calls to or leads a person to all of the other branches of faith. It is like a foundation for *taqwa* and *imaan*.¹

In another hadith, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

الْحَيَاءُ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ وَالْإِيمَانُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَالْبَدَاءُ مِنَ الْحَفَاءِ وَالْحَفَاءُ فِي النَّارِ

“*Hayaa`* is part of *Imaan* and *Imaan* is in Paradise. Lewdness is part of hardness of heart and hardness of heart is in the Fire.”²

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also stated that *hayaa`* beautifies and improves everything it touches. He said,

مَا كَانَ الْفَحْشُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا شَانَهُ وَمَا كَانَ الْحَيَاءُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا زَانَهُ

“Lewdness does not appear in anything except that it blemishes it. And *hayaa`* does not appear in anything except that it beautifies it.”³ Similarly, in the following hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also stated that *hayaa`* brings about nothing but goodness:

الْحَيَاءُ لَا يَأْتِي إِلَّا بِخَيْرٍ

¹ Quoted in al-Jeelaani, vol. 2, pp. 55-56.

² Recorded by Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 1, p. 609.

³ Recorded by Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi and ibn Maajah. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p. 987.

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"*Hayaa`* does not produce but goodness." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.¹)

In yet another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) indicates the importance of *hayaa`* for his followers. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ لِكُلِّ دِينٍ خُلُقًا وَإِنَّ خُلُقَ الْإِسْلَامِ الْحَيَاءُ

"Every religion has a particular manner or characteristic. And the characteristic of Islam is *hayaa`*."² Al-Muqaddam explained this hadith by saying,

Every other religion has a predominant characteristic other than *hayaa`*. However, the predominant characteristic in our religion is *hayaa`*. This is because it is part of the completeness of noble character. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent to perfect or complete noble morals and behavior. Since Islam is the noblest of the religions, Allah gave it the most noble and finest characteristic, *hayaa`*.³

In fact, *hayaa`*, as alluded to in this hadith under discussion, was a characteristic of the prophets. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said about the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him),

إِنَّ مُوسَى كَانَ رَجُلًا حَيِيًّا سَتِيرًا لَا يُرَى مِنْ جِلْدِهِ شَيْءٌ اسْتَحْيَاءً مِنْهُ

"Moses was a modest, bashful person. No part of his skin was seen due to his shyness." (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the best example for all of mankind, was described by his Companion Abu Saeed al-Khudri in the following fashion,

¹ After the Companion Imraan ibn Husain narrated this hadith, Bushair ibn Kaab said to him that in their books of wisdom and sayings it states that *hayaa`* has tranquillity and calmness to it. After he said that, Imraan told him, "I am narrating to you from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and you are quoting to me from your sayings of wisdom?" This is an important message that Imraan was conveying. Once someone has received the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), there is no need to look at other sources for corroboration or more guidance. Muslims must keep this point in mind. Their guidance is in the Quran and sunnah. There is no need for them to look for "further guidance" in the books of the Jews, Christians, philosophers, psychologists and so forth.

² Recorded by ibn Maajah. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. [See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh Sunan ibn Maajah* (Riyadh: Maktab al-Tarbiyah al-Arabiya li-Duwal al-Khaleej, 1988), vol. 2, p. 406.] Al-Hilaali said about it, "The hadith with all of its chains is *sahih* without any doubt." (See al-Hilaali, *al-Hayaa`*, p. 24, fn. 12.)

³ Al-Muqaddam, p. 25. What is meant by "other religions" is the *shareeah* of the other prophets. It is clear that they all taught their followers to have *hayaa`* but this teaching or characteristic was not as prominent as it was in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَشَدَّ حَيَاءً مِنَ الْعَذْرَاءِ فِي خِدْرِهَا فَإِذَا رَأَى شَيْئًا يَكْرَهُهُ
عَرَفْنَاهُ فِي وَجْهِهِ

“The Prophet (peace be upon him) was more bashful than the virgin girls kept in their private compartments. If he saw anything he did not like, we would recognize it by [the expression on] his face.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Hayaa` is One of the Attributes of Allah

As can be seen in the following hadith, *hayaa`* is one of the attributes of Allah.¹ The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حَيٌّ سِتِيرٌ يُحِبُّ الْحَيَاءَ وَالسَّتْرَ فَإِذَا اغْتَسَلَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَسْتَتِرْ

“Verily, Allah has the attributes of great modesty and concealment. And He loves modesty and concealment. Therefore, if any of you is going to wash himself, he should conceal himself.” Allah is greatly modest, and He is, for example, shy to refuse someone who stretches out his hands to Him in supplication. But His *hayaa`* is not related to any fear of anyone’s reprisal or rebuke, as it is in the case of many humans. He does not fear anyone and He is not in need of any of His creation.² Instead, it is only due to His own attribute of *hayaa`*. He also has *hayaa`* when sins are committed and falsehood perpetrated. He is also *al-Sateer* (الستير) and loves for sins to be concealed and not made public and spread about.

This is an example of an attribute that Allah loves for His servant to also possess— although in a form that cannot be considered comparable to Allah’s own attribute. Ibn al-Qayyim once wrote,

Whoever has the same attribute as one of the attributes of Allah [although the nature of the attributes are completely different], that attribute will lead the person by its tight reins; it will allow him to enter upon His lord and bring him closer to His mercy. He will become beloved to Allah. This is because

¹ When it is said that it is one of the attributes of Allah, it means in a way that is unique to Allah and befitting His majesty and grandeur. Hence, it is not to say that *hayaa`* is an attribute of Allah in the same way that a human being may have that attribute. Furthermore, not every attribute can be translated into a name of Allah. There is a difference of opinion concerning whether or not *al-Hayyi* should be considered one of the names of Allah. For example, al-Baihaqi and ibn Uthameen included this name as one of the names of Allah while ibn Munduh, al-Isbahaani, ibn Hazm, ibn al-Arabi, ibn al-Wazeer and ibn Hajr did not. See Abdullah al-Ghasn, *Asmaa Allahu al-Husna* (Riyadh: Daar al-Watn, 1417 A.H.), p. 360.

² Ahmad al-Baihaqi, *Kitaab al-Asmaa wa al-Sifaat* (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-Arabi, 1985), vol. 1, p. 158.

Allah is merciful and He loves those who are merciful; He is generous and He loves those who are generous; He is All-Knowing and He loves those with knowledge; He is strong and He loves the strong believer who he is more beloved to Him than the weak believer; He is *Hayyi* [the One with extreme *hayaa`*] and He loves the people of *hayaa`*; He is beautiful and He loves the people of beauty; He is odd [the One, being an odd number] and He loves the people who perform the prayer with the odd number of *rakats* [the *Witr* Prayer].¹

Having *Hayaa`* Towards Allah

There are many different ways in which *hayaa`* should show itself. Most importantly, however, one should have *hayaa`* with respect to Allah.

A person should be ashamed to have Allah see him doing something that is displeasing to Allah. He should be ashamed in front of Allah, for example, when he does not perform his prayer in the proper time and in the proper manner. If a person has a complete *hayaa`* of Allah, he would not perform any act that is displeasing to Allah. He would be too ashamed of ever doing something of that nature. In fact, he should have more *hayaa`* toward Allah than toward any of the creation. This is because everything he possesses has come to him as a blessing from Allah and He knows that Allah is aware of everything that he does.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) has ordered Muslims to have the proper *hayaa`* towards Allah. He said,

اسْتَحْيُوا مِنَ اللَّهِ حَقَّ الْحَيَاءِ قَالَ قُلْنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا نَسْتَحْيِي وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ قَالَ لَيْسَ
ذَلِكَ وَلَكِنَّ الْإِسْتِحْيَاءَ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَقَّ الْحَيَاءِ أَنْ تَحْفَظَ الرَّأْسَ وَمَا وَعَى وَالْبُطْنَ وَمَا حَوَى
وَلْتَذْكَرِ الْمَوْتَ وَالْبَلَى وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ تَرَكَ زِينَةَ الدُّنْيَا فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ اسْتَحْيَا مِنَ
اللَّهِ حَقَّ الْحَيَاءِ

“Have *hayaa`* towards Allah in the correct manner of *hayaa`*.” The Companions said, “O Messenger of Allah, we are bashful towards Allah, and to Allah is the praise.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) then told them, “This is not what is meant. The *hayaa`* towards Allah which is the true *hayaa`* is for a

¹ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi*, p. 77. Ibn al-Qayyim made that statement in the middle of a passage concerning the evil effects of sins. After stating the above, he said, “If sins and acts of disobedience did not carry with them any other effect than the mere fact that they make the person go against those attributes of Allah, that would be enough of an evil result.”

person to be mindful of his head and what it contains,¹ and of his stomach and the [bodily parts] close to it,² and to remember death and disintegration. And whoever desires the Hereafter abandons the beautification of this world. The one who does that has had *hayaa`* toward Allah in the proper manner of *hayaa`*.³

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said,

اللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُسْتَحْيَا مِنْهُ مِنَ النَّاسِ

“Allah has more right that one be shy before Him than the people do.”⁴

One’s shyness toward Allah, in particular, may be noted when one is alone and out of the view of mankind. Kaab stated, “Be shy toward Allah when you are in private in the same way that you are shy toward the people when you are in public.”⁵ Al-Auzaai stated that he heard Bilaal ibn Saad say, “Do not be a devoted servant of Allah in your public behavior while you are an enemy to Him in your private affairs.”⁶ Al-Muqaddam states that one of the people of knowledge stated, “If a person’s behavior in private is better than his behavior in public, that is true virtuousness. If his behavior in private is equal to his behavior in public, that is justice. If a person’s public behavior is better than his private behavior, that is injustice.”⁷ Humaid al-Taweel asked Sulaimaan ibn Ali to advise him and he told him, “If you disobeyed Allah while in private, knowing that Allah sees you, then you have taken a bold step into a grave matter. If you thought that He does not see you, then you have committed *kufr*.”⁸

¹ In other words, he should not use its senses except in manners that are permissible. Cf., al-Muqaddam, p. 48, fn. 2.

² The bodily parts “close to” the stomach include the heart, the private parts, the legs and arms. The person should not use them in any act of disobedience towards Allah. Cf., al-Muqaddam, p. 48, fn. 3.

³ Recorded by al-Tirmidhi and Ahmad. According to al-Hilaali, it is *hasan*. See al-Hilaali, *al-Hayaa`*, p. 20, fn. 8.

⁴ Recorded by al-Bukhari in *mualaqa`* form. Also recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi and al-Haakim. According to al-Albaani, it is *hasan*. See al-Albaani, *Saheeh Sunan Abi Dawud*, vol. 2, p. 759.

⁵ Quoted in al-Muqaddam, p. 50.

⁶ Quoted in al-Muqaddam, p. 54.

⁷ Quoted in al-Muqaddam, p. 54.

⁸ Quoted in al-Muqaddam, p. 54. Al-Muqaddam (p. 59) quotes an “ascetic” (*zaahid*) who said, “Woe to me. I behaved in a trustworthy manner towards the people and I was deceitful towards my Lord. Woe to me, if only it were the other way.” Then he started crying. Like many other statements coming from such people, this statement has an aspect to it that is not acceptable. One cannot be trustworthy towards Allah while cheating the people. This is also misbehaving towards Allah, for Allah does not accept misbehavior towards His creatures.

Other Manifestations of *Hayaa`*

Besides having *hayaa`* with respect to Allah, one should display *hayaa`* toward the angels and other humans. Indeed, one should even have *hayaa`* toward oneself.

The angels are noble and dignified creatures. They witness the acts that humans perform. Every human has angels with him that witness everything he does. A hadith in *Sahih Muslim* states that the angels are harmed by the same things that humans are harmed by. Therefore, Muslims should be aware of their presence and be shy to perform shameful deeds in front of them in the same way that they are shy to perform shameful deeds in front of other humans.¹

Humans having *hayaa`* toward one another is an essential characteristic that keeps people from harming each other and from performing indecent acts that others may become aware of. The Companion Hudhaifah ibn al-Yamaan is reported to have said, "There is no good in a person who has no modesty with respect to others."²

In general, the more respected or dignified a person is, the more others will be shy to behave improperly in front of him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) alluded to this fact when he said,

أَوْصِيكَ أَنْ تَسْتَحْيِيَ مِنَ اللَّهِ كَمَا تَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الرَّجُلِ الصَّالِحِ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ

"I advise you to be shy toward Allah, the Exalted, in the same way that you are shy toward a pious person from your people."³

Finally, a person must also have *hayaa`* toward himself. This is akin to having self-respect. A person should be ashamed of himself when he performs acts that are shameful. He should not even like to live with himself. It is almost as if he is two people and the one is ashamed of the other and does not wish to be associated with him. This would not occur if the person has no feeling or understanding of *hayaa`*.

Perhaps the following hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him) alludes to this type of self-respect and *hayaa`* that a person should possess. He said,

مَا كَرِهْتَ أَنْ يَرَاهِ النَّاسُ فَلَا تَفْعَلْهُ إِذَا خَلَوْتَ

"Whatever you hate to have people see you doing, you also should not do while you are alone."¹

¹ For more on this point, see ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Jawaab al-Kaafi*, pp. 127-128.

² Quoted in al-Muqaddam, p. 35.

³ This hadith is recorded by Ahmad in *al-Zuhd*. Al-Albaani concludes that it is *hasan*. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth al-Saheeha* (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1979), vol. 2, pp. 376-377.

Al-Muqaddam stated that if a person feels shame in front of others but feels no shame toward himself, this means that he is denigrating himself and does not have the same kind of respect for himself that he has for others. Al-Muqaddam then quoted one of the early scholars who said, "If a person does a deed in private which he would be ashamed to do in public, then his own self has no weight in his own eyes."²

What Does not Form Part of the Praiseworthy, Islamic *Hayaa`*?

There are many acts that people perform in the name of shyness and bashfulness that do not fall under the Islamic definition of *hayaa`*. The Islamic definition of *hayaa`* differs slightly than the natural concept of *hayaa`*. Islamic *hayaa`* leads one to avoid evil deeds and to fulfill others' rights. A basic difference between the two types of *hayaa`* is that being silent or afraid to speak in the presence of falsehood or oppression does not form part of Islamic *hayaa`*. Ibn al-Salaah stated that such behavior is not *hayaa`* at all. Instead, it is weakness, fear, cowardice and treachery.³

Al-Qurtubi wrote,

The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself followed the path of *hayaa`*, ordered others to it and encouraged others concerning it. However, *hayaa`* did not keep him from speaking the truth or following a command of the religion. He was, in this way, clinging to Allah's words, "And Allah does not shy away from the truth" (*al-Ahzaab* 53). This is part of the completeness, perfection and justice of *hayaa`*. If a person goes to an extreme concerning *hayaa`*, such that it keeps him from speaking the truth, then he no longer has *hayaa`* toward the Creator. He only has *hayaa`* toward the creation. Such a person has been prevented from attaining the benefits of *hayaa`*. He is characterized by hypocrisy and acting for show. Having *hayaa`* with respect to Allah is the foundation and basis. Allah has the most right that one be shy toward Him. One must protect and guard this foundation, since it is beneficial.⁴

Therefore, *hayaa`* cannot be used as an excuse for not ordering what is good or preventing what is evil. If a person does not do these acts on the basis of *hayaa`*, then, as al-Qurtubi implied, he has the wrong form of *hayaa`*. He

¹ Recorded by al-Dhiya and others. According to al-Albaani, it is *hasan*. See al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Sahihah*, vol. 3, p. 43.

² Al-Muqaddam, p. 31.

³ Quoted in al-Nawawi, *Sharh Saheeh*, vol. 2, p. 5. Al-Baitaar points out that what makes the situation even worse is that these people think they are doing something good: having *hayaa`*. Hence, they try to increase such a characteristic in themselves. This is nothing but evil and ignorance, al-Baitaar states. Al-Baitaar, p. 129.

⁴ Quoted in al-Munaawi, vol. 1, p. 487.

does not have the proper *hayaa`* toward Allah although he may have some form of *hayaa`* toward mankind.

Abu Saeed al-Khudri narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

أَلَا لَا يَمْنَعَنَّ رَجُلًا هَيْبَةُ النَّاسِ أَنْ يَقُولَ بِحَقِّ إِذَا عَلِمَهُ

“Verily, fear of the people must not keep one from speaking a truth he knows.”¹ After narrating this hadith, Abu Saeed said, “We have seen things but we feared the people [and, therefore, we remained silent].” Then he started crying.

One also should not allow his shyness to keep himself from doing what is correct. For example, nowadays, even Muslims ridicule and embarrass other Muslims who apply Islam. Muslim sisters ridicule other sisters who wear the complete and proper *hijaab*. Muslim men who grow their beards or dress modestly are also ridiculed. One cannot allow one’s shyness toward those people to change his behavior and actions if they are correct and proper according to the Quran and sunnah. Ubaid ibn Umair once said, “One must give preference to having *hayaa`* toward Allah over having *hayaa`* toward the people.”²

Another area in which one should not allow *hayaa`* to prevent him from attaining his desired goal is the seeking of knowledge. It is reported that Ali said, “The one who does not have knowledge should not be too shy to ask until he gets knowledge. And the one who is asked about something he does not know should not be so shy that it keeps him from saying, ‘I don’t know.’”³ Al-Bukhari recorded in *mualaqa* form that Mujaahid stated, “The one who is shy and the one who is arrogant do not attain knowledge.”

Aisha once stated the virtues of the women of the Ansaar, “Shyness does not keep them from getting an understanding of the religion.” (Recorded by al-Bukhari.) A clear example of this nature concerning women can be seen in the following hadith from *Sahih al-Bukhari*,

جَاءَتْ أُمُّ سُلَيْمٍ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ فَهَلْ عَلَى الْمَرْأَةِ مِنْ غُسْلِ إِذَا احْتَلَمَتْ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ

¹ Recorded by al-Tirmidhi, ibn Maajah and Ahmad. According to al-Albaani, it is *sahih*. See al-Albaani, *Silsilat*, vol. 1, hadith #168, pp. 111-115.

² Quoted in al-Muqaddam, p. 43.

³ Quoted in al-Muqaddam, p. 40.

وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا رَأَتْ الْمَاءَ فَغَطَّتْ أُمُّ سَلَمَةَ تَعْنِي وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَوْتَحْتَلِمُ الْمَرْأَةُ
 قَالَ نَعَمْ تَرَبَّتْ يَمِينُكَ فَبِمَ يُشَبِّهَهَا وَلَدُهَا

Umm Sulaim came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and said, “O Messenger of Allah, Allah does not shy away from the truth. Does a woman have to make *ghusl* if she has a wet dream?” The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated, “Yes, if she sees liquid.” Umm Salamah then covered her face [out of shyness] and said, “O Messenger of Allah, do women have wet dreams?” He said, “Yes, may your hands be covered in dust, how else does her child resemble her?”

Other Points Related to This Hadith

- As stated earlier, al-Nawawi says that all of Islam revolves around this hadith. This statement can be understood in the following way: An act is either obligatory, recommended, permissible, disapproved or forbidden. One should be ashamed not to perform the obligatory and recommended deeds. One should also be ashamed to perform the disapproved or forbidden deeds. As for the permissible deeds, one may be shy to perform them or not. Hence, this concept of *hayaa`* encompasses all of the acts of the religion. Therefore, all of the religion revolves around this hadith.¹
- Al-Baitaar points out that this hadith demonstrates the beautiful and pithy speech of the Prophet (peace be upon him). First, as a kind of introduction, he stated that this was something that had passed on from the previous prophets. This alerted the people’s attention to what he was going to say. After he got the people’s attention, he made a very, short pithy statement that was easy for all to grasp and memorize.²
- Given the great importance of the concept of *hayaa`* in the religion of Islam, it is of great importance that this character be taught to Muslim children as they are growing up. From the time that they are young, both boys and girls should be taught to be modest and shy in front of others.³ It seems, in this author’s view, and Allah knows best, that being exposed to the different forms of modern media would be very detrimental to the development of *hayaa`* in a person. Today’s media, for example, television, exposes and displays acts that one would never do in public thirty, fifty or one hundred years ago. If a person becomes more and more accustomed to seeing such acts in front of him, his sense of shyness and modesty becomes weakened. He no longer becomes shocked when he sees, for example, sexual indecencies or partial nudity. He begins to accept it

¹ Ibn Hajar, *Fath* (Maktaba al-Baaz), vol. 10, p. 641.

² Al-Baitaar, pp. 127-128.

³ Al-Bugha and Mistu, p. 143.

and may even consider it normal behavior. Therefore, to protect one's *hayaa`*, it would be best to remain away from such possibly detrimental influences.

- There is a direct relationship between *hayaa`* and *ihsaan*. In the case of *ihsaan*, a person worships Allah either as if he is seeing Allah or, at least, recognizing that Allah is seeing him. If a person has this feeling, he will be ashamed to have Allah see him perform acts of disobedience. In other words, such a person would then have *hayaa`* toward Allah.
- If a person notices that he does not naturally have *hayaa`*, he must work on himself to develop this characteristic as it is one of the most important characteristics of a believer.¹
- *Hayaa`* is a sign that a person's soul is healthy. His soul cares about what he is doing and is distressed when he is doing something harmful or sinful. This is the person who has a real conscience, who does not accept from himself the doing of wrong or evil. Allah has mentioned this kind of soul in the Quranic verse,

لَا أَقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ

"And I swear by the self-reproaching soul" (*al-Qiyaamah* 1). Qutb notes that Allah only swears by those things that are very great and noteworthy. Hence, this type of soul must be something noteworthy: this is the soul that drives a person to do good and keeps him away from doing evil. There is no doubt that such a soul has a great weight in Allah's scale. This is so because it is the true axis which elevates man and keeps man adhering to the noble qualities. (And this will only be the case when that soul has the quality of *hayaa`*, this noble quality of Islam.) What happens to a human when he loses that quality in his soul? Then the soul becomes of a different nature. It becomes a soul that actually drives man to do evil and the person does not care about the evil he commits. This type of soul does not refine or elevate the person because true refinement and elevation can only occur with true *imaan*, of which *hayaa`* is an essential component. Allah has described this soul that is lacking in its conscience as the soul of those whom Allah has not blessed with His mercy. Allah says, quoting the wife of the Azeez in the story of the Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him),

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي

"Verily, the (human) self orders one to evil, except in the case of the one whom my Lord has bestowed His mercy" (*Yooosuf* 53). Qutb argues that atheism and *kufir* remove the self-reproaching aspect from the person and he is left with the soul that orders to evil. He further states that even if on the surface many disbelievers may seem to have a moral conscience, in

¹ Al-Khizindaar, p. 322.

reality, when one studies their real goal and purpose, one will see that they have no real moral conscience as their deeds are never sincere and solely for the sake of Allah.¹

Summary of the Hadith

- The characteristic of *hayaa`* has been encouraged by all of the previous prophets. Indeed, it may be one of the few of their teachings (or the only one) that had been passed on among the people until the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him).
- Although this hadith has a number of possible interpretations, the one preferred by the author is: If an act is not shameful in any way, then it is permissible for a Muslim to do it.

¹ Cf., Qutb, pp. 166-167. Qutb did not tie his discussion into the concept of *hayaa`*. Hence, the allusions to *hayaa`*, which is an essential part of *imaan* and therefore indirectly referred to by Qutb, were added by this author.

Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi

About the Book

From the Introduction by Dr. Jaafar Sheikh Idris

This is a great commentary on a great book. Br. Jamaal Zarabozo is to be congratulated for producing such a scholarly work. He is also to be thanked for giving the English speaking students of Islam the chance to taste the flavor of in-depth knowledge of hadith, a flavor that has been up to now the prerogative of speakers of Islamic languages, especially Arabic. He is also to be commended for choosing al-Nawawi's Forty Hadith because they are known to be among the most important sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In-depth knowledge of them is thus sure to give the reader, even if he or she is a novice, a comprehensive view of the most fundamental Islamic beliefs and principles. No wonder that this book has been for hundreds of years among the most popular of Islamic books in the Muslim world... There are many commentaries on this book from which Br. Zarabozo has definitely benefited; but his is not a mere translation or summary of those commentaries—it is an original commentary the English speaking reader will find more useful and interesting than mere translations of those traditional commentaries.

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