

## Part 1: Beliefs

### Lesson 1: Why Religion?

#### 1. Why Study Religion?

Why should we investigate about religion and study about God? What provokes us to consider religion? There are three reasons:

##### (A) Love of Knowledge

We all want to know the truth about the world in which we live: Did the heaven with its beautiful stars, the earth with its glorious landscapes, the beautiful birds, the colourful fish, the blue oceans and the high mountains—did all these come into being by themselves or are they the product of an All-Knowing and Powerful Creator?

Besides all this, the first question that comes to mind for all of us is the origin of ourselves: Where did we come from? Why are we in this world? Where are we heading to? The love of knowledge and the searching spirit within us dictates that we must not rest until we find the answers to these questions.

Thus the first reason that compels us to inquire into religion is our thirst and love for knowledge.

##### (B) The Sense of Thankfulness

The world around us and the world within ourselves is full of marvelous things. The sun and moon, the plants and trees, the mines and minerals hidden deep in the heart of the earth; all of them are of great benefit to mankind.

Within ourselves, we have the digestive system, the respiratory apparatus, the heart and other organs of the body; but the greatest of all, however, is the intellectual ability of man himself through which he can

make a mighty mountain crumble into pieces, and create from water and iron enormous power and the most delicate objects.

Now this question poses itself: Should we not engage ourselves in research and inquiry until, if there is a benefactor, we acknowledge that benefactor, to fulfill our duty and offer him our thanks?

This is the second reason why we should inquire into religion.

### **(C) Preventing Possible Danger**

If a child were to come and tell you that he saw a poisonous snake go into the room you were in, you would immediately jump up from your chair and undertake a thorough search of every nook and cranny until you found it, or until you were satisfied that it was not there.

Similarly, while traveling by night in a dangerous country, if you learnt that bandits were waiting on the road ahead to ambush you—you would without any doubt wait until the way ahead was clear of danger, and would not take a single step forward until then.

In these two examples, we have made clear that reason compels us to investigate conceivable dangers. It is possible that some of the harmful things may turn out to be nothing at all, and that other people may not pay any attention to them; but if an inquiry carries the price of a human soul, then it cannot be ignored.

In the history of mankind, we learn of people who were famous for telling the truth and who lived an honest life. They claimed that they were messengers of God, and they called people towards God and to act in certain ways. As a result of the efforts and the constant sufferings of these special people in all corners of the world, many groups believed in them. Thus the birth of Jesus became the beginning of the Christian calendar and the migration of the Prophet Muhammad was taken by the Muslims as the beginning of their calendar.

Now, we see that these messengers attracted men to religion and to follow particular rules, caused them to fear punishment of their bad deeds and convinced them that they would be tried in the Great Court of Justice before the Righteous and Wise Judge. They trembled at the hardships and perils of Resurrection and the harshness of the punishment there, and warned men of the dire consequences of evil deeds.

The question is: Do the warnings of these people make us realize the possibility of harm and danger in the same way as did the warning of the small child in the example mentioned above? Is it right to ignore the words of the messengers of God who, after all, were men of high moral standards and who made greatest sacrifices for their cause?

Clearly, the words of the messengers —if they do not make a man certain— at least provoke him to think: perhaps what they say is true. If what they say is true, then what is our duty? What answer will we

have in the Court of the Great Judge?

Common sense reckons the necessity of preventing this “possible harm”. What is more, these messengers and prophets call man to a healthy and civilized life, and they also say that after death an extensive new world and everlasting blessings await one who has performed his duty. Does reason allow us to ignore this important message?

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There is a similar argument known as the “Pascal's Bet,” named so after the famous French mathematician, Pascal (d. 1662 CE). Pascal proved the importance of inquiring about religion in the following way:

If you believe in the life-hereafter, you will gain everything if it really exists; and you lose nothing if it does not exist. Therefore, it is better to bet that it does exist.

The theme of this argument was presented by the Shi'a Imams long before Pascal. We also know that Pascal had read Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's works. It, therefore, seems quite possible that Pascal might have read this argument from Imam 'Ali (a.s.), the first Shi'a Imam, as quoted in *Mizanu'l-'Amal* of al-Ghazali. Imam 'Ali said:

*The astrologer and the physician both say, 'The dead will never be resurrected.'  
I say: 'Keep your counsel. If your idea is correct, I will come to no harm;  
but if my belief is correct, then you will surely lose.'*

## **2. Some Necessary Qualities of Religion**

The religion which can fulfill the needs of mankind must have the following qualities:

### **(a) It must satisfy the intelligence and intellect of human beings.**

Islam gives foremost importance to human intelligence. Islam emphasizes that you must understand the faith and then believe in it. Belief follows understanding, and not vice versa.

### **(b) It must teach and demonstrate dignity of human beings.**

Islam places human beings over and above all other creations of God; it promotes equality among human beings. Islam does not allow human beings to lose their dignity by bowing down in worship to a fellow man, animal or an inanimate object.

### **(c) It must be a complete guide to develop the body, mind and spirit of humans as**

## a whole.

Islam does not only develop the soul at the expense of the body; nor does it promote the care of the body at the expense of the soul. It promotes development of all aspects of human life in a balanced way. Islam not only talks in general terms about the code of life; it gives specific details and also provides examples in the lives of the prophets and imams.

### (d) It must conform with human nature.

The teachings of Islam takes the human nature into consideration. It does not promote, for example, celibacy which is completely against human nature.

### (e) It should not be a tool in the hands of oppressors to suppress the masses.

Islam promotes social justice and rejects the theory of predestination. The oppression of a tyrant ruler is not predestined by God. This leaves no room for the tyrant rulers and oppressors to say that the masses have been predestined for serving the ruling class.

\* \* \*

This lesson is based on:

Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi, *Need for Religion*, Tanzania 1970.

Dar Rah-e Haq, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982.

Neisir Makarim Shirazi, *Principles of Islamic Ideology*, Tehran 1985.

It has been compiled & edited for this course by S.M. Rizvi.

## Question Paper For Lesson 1

*Question 1:* [20 points]

True or False:

- (a) Study of religion involves a sincere inquiry into the possible existence of a supreme creator.
- (b) Our rational thinking provokes us to reflect upon this infinite universe and a possible creator.
- (c) Religion is a set of rituals.
- (d) The birth of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was taken by Muslims as the beginning of their calendar.
- (e) Religious investigation can be thought of as an investment which might generate profit in the life

hereafter but guaranteed to produce no loss.

(f) Islam condones the theory of predestination.

(g) Our sense of gratitude dictates that we should offer our thanks to our creator if He exists.

(h) Islam promotes the suppression of legitimate desires.

(i) Faith has no rational basis. The truth is what one believes in.

(j) Prophets were pious people who preached good things and forbade people from doing evil things.

*Question 2:* [20 points]

From the statements given below, give a number (in order of preference) to the ones that best describe the essential qualities of an effective religion. If you think that a statement is completely disqualified as a quality of an effective religion, then do not assign any number to it.

(a) Preaches unity of creator and creatures.

(b) Promotes faith based on understanding.

(c) Preserves human dignity.

(d) Preaches division of society into various classes to create order, discipline and cohesion.

(e) Promotes and practically implements equality, fairness and justice.

(f) Conforms to human nature.

(g) Promotes abandonment of the material luxuries of life to elevate the soul.

(h) Promotes celibacy as a means of spiritual upliftment.

(i) Provides a complete and comprehensive code of life.

(j) Promotes suppression of natural desires to achieve closeness to God.

*Question 3:* [10 points]

Describe three reasons of your own (other than those discussed in this lesson) that might provoke humans to contemplate on religious matters.

# Lesson 2: Ways Of Knowing God

From time immemorial, man has found different ways of knowing God. Human beings of various intellectual levels have found their own ways to God. Common people have found simple ways; whereas thinkers and philosophers reached the same conclusion on a higher plane of thought. The two most common ways of knowing the Creator are:

- the inner way (which is also the closest way).
- the outer way (which is also the clearest way).

## First Method: The Inner Way

God has created the inner light in each and every human being. If we go deep within ourselves and touch our souls, we hear the message of God. History and anthropology has shown that if man is left alone and is not indoctrinated by any school of thought—then, sooner or later, his inner voice will lead him to believe in a power as the Creator and Maintainer of this world.

However, at times this natural feeling is subdued by external means. But it re-emerges when that person finds himself in difficulties—he naturally prays to a Power whom he believes to be above all powers. This is very well portrayed in the talk which Imam Ja`far as-S`adiq (a.s.), the sixth Imam of the Shi'a Muslims, had with an atheist.

Knowing that the atheist had gone on sea voyages several times, the Imam asked:

“Have you ever been caught in a fierce storm in the middle of nowhere, your rudder gone, your sails torn away, trying desperately to keep your boat afloat?”

The Atheist: “Yes.”

The Imam:

“And sometimes perhaps even that leaking boat went down leaving you exhausted and helpless at the mercy of the raging waves?”

The Atheist: “Yes.”

The Imam:

“Was not there, in all that despair, a glimmer of hope in your heart that some unnamed and unknown power could still save you?”

When the atheist agreed, the Imam said, “That power is God.”

That atheist was intelligent. He knew the truth when he saw it.

The “inner way,” in spite of being the natural and closest way of knowing God, is also a very personal way. It is only sufficient for the person who has seen the light within himself.

## Second Method: Experiment Beyond Sensation

The second way of knowing God is by studying the signs of His presence and power in the world within us and around us. The Qur'<sup>an</sup> has mentioned both these signs as follows:

***“We shall show to them Our signs upon the horizons (i.e., space) and in their own selves so that it may become manifest to them that He is the Truth.” (41:53)***

This method of knowing God is based on the principle of “cause” and “effect”. The signs of nature are the effects of which the ultimate cause is God.

Now, let us try to understand the nature and scope of this method more clearly.

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### Nature & Scope of this Method

Whenever we see a beautiful building of great splendour and design, we can easily understand that its architect was an expert in his own craft. Similarly, by looking at a car, an airplane, a computer or any other well-designed product or artifact, we are invariably guided to well-informed and knowledgeable inventors, designers and manufacturers, and we are also made aware of their skill and learning.

In none of these instances is it necessary to actually see the builder, the manufacturer or the designer of such an artifact with our own eyes to testify to his existence.

Moreover, when observing all these things, it is not with any of our external senses that we perceive the knowledge and skill of the builders and manufacturers. But, nevertheless, we believe in his expertise and knowledge. Why? Because the design and order which we perceived in the artifacts forces us to recognize the knowledge of their builders. And from this we reach the conclusion that it is not necessary that something whose existence we wish to believe in should be visible or tangible.

There are many things which are not perceptible to our external senses, but we become aware of them through their effects. For every wise person understands that there can be no effect without a cause, nothing orderly without a wise and knowledgeable designer.

Based on the above, we can divide the things of this world into two categories:

1. Things which are evident to one or more of the five senses; we observe visible things with the eyes, we hear sounds with the ears, we become aware of pleasant and unpleasant smells with our nose, we know bitter and sweet tastes with our tongue, and we feel hot and cold or rough and smooth with the skin of our body.
2. Things which are not perceived by any of the five senses, but whose existence we can deduce by considering their effects. These facts are not all of one kind, some are material and some are non-

material. We shall mention a few of them here.

*Electricity:* By merely looking at two wires, one of which is electrified, we can never determine which of them has an electric current. We can only discover the existence of this current from the effect of electricity, e.g., a lamp being lit. So electricity is something which exists although our eyes cannot directly see it.

*Gravity:* If you let go of the book which you now have in your hand, it will fall to the ground, i.e., the ground will pull the book towards itself. This power is something which we do not directly perceive through our senses. Gravitation is again one of those things which is not visible, but we come to know its existence by observing its effect: the falling of bodies to the ground.

*Magnetism:* When we place a magnet beside a piece of iron, we do not see anything except the two objects. But when the iron is pulled towards the magnet, we discover that magnetism exists around the magnet.

*Invisible Radiation:* If we shine white sunlight through a prism we see on the other side of the crystal six colours (the spectrum) which are: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. No more colours are to be seen on both extremes of the spectrum. However, scientists have discovered that in the place where the eyes see no more light, further 'colours' exist which have heating and chemical properties. These 'lights' are called infra-red and ultra-violet.

*Intelligence & Mental Image:* All of us are aware of ourselves, i.e., we perceive that we exist; and we also arrive at concepts in a gradual manner concerning matters outside ourselves which we explain by this kind of statement: "I solved the most difficult mathematical problem." Also, man is aware of his own knowledge: he knows that he knows. Intelligence is not something visible or audible in the sense that man can see it with his eyes or hear it with his ears; but everyone finds it in himself. Others cannot learn about my intelligence through the five senses, but they can deduce its presence from the effect it produces. For example, when a scientist is expounding on a problem, it becomes clear that he has understood it.

People can construct in their own minds any form that they wish, e.g., a tower similar to the Eiffel Tower whose construction in the external world required many years, a thousand sorts of different building materials and substances, and hundreds of workers; this can be built in the mind in an instant. It is clear that others cannot be informed directly of the creations of our minds, because they are not visible and audible, but they can discover their existence from our speech.

*Life:* A beautiful chicken, moving towards the water, falls into a pond, and, before we can rescue it, it dies. At this very moment, what change has taken place in the chicken; and what difference has occurred that it no longer moves, plays or eats?

There surely was something in the live chicken but which does not exist in the dead—life itself. Life is

not an object of the senses. We only perceive the effects of life: movement, feeding, etc., and from these effects we discover its existence.

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The facts mentioned above make it thoroughly clear that over and above the beings that we perceive with our sensory organs, there are also things which we do not directly perceive, but we know about them only through the effects they produce.

Thus we draw the conclusion that it is not right for us to reject something which we do not see only because it is not visible, because invisibility is different from non-existence. Moreover, the way of discovering something is not confined to the eyes or other external senses. The human mind can discover something by means of the effects of those things, as we saw in the examples mentioned above.

We do not wish to say that God is similar to the scientific examples mentioned above, because God is a reality above those things, nothing is equal or comparable to Him. Our intention, however, is to say that in the same way as we discover the existence of those things through their effects, we can also discover the existence of God through His signs.

Discovering the existence of God through His signs is the "outer way" of knowing Him.

Thus, those who deny the existence of God just because they cannot see Him with their eyes, are blind as far as their eyes of wisdom and contemplation is concerned—since we know that His existence can be demonstrated through the precise design and order of creation. To these people we say, with the poet:

*Open thy heart's eye for your soul to see,  
And what is invisible will be manifest to thee.*

\* \* \*

This lesson is based on the followings:

Dar Rah-e Haq Board, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982.

Nasir Makrim Shirazi, *Principles of Islamic Ideology*, Tehran 1985.

Syed Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi, *Need of Religion*, Tanzania 1970.

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## **Question Paper For Lesson 2**

*Question 1:* [10 points]

True or False:

- (a) Anything that has order or design implies a creator.
- (b) Invisibility implies non-existence.
- (c) The inner way is the clearest way of knowing God.
- (d) We can perceive things by observing their effects.
- (e) Science and reasoning cannot measure everything that exists in this universe.

*Question 2:* [20 points]

Name at least three things (besides the examples described in this lesson) that cannot be detected by our five common senses, i.e., vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

*Question 3:* [20 points]

Lesson 2 states that there are two most common ways of knowing the Creator, namely (1) the inner way and (2) the outer way. Explain this idea using somewhat different terminology from that used in this lesson.

## Lesson 3: Design In The Universe

In this universe, from the smallest atom to the largest celestial body, in everything we see, we are reminded of its perfect orderliness and exact regulation, so much so that great scientists have been provoked to amazement. One look at the world around us makes it clear that all things in it are in full coordination with one another. The nourishment of living creatures, for example, depends on the coordination between the sun, clouds, rain, earth and its resources. All this points to the existence of one coordinated system in the universe.

There is so much orderliness in nature that the scientists, by using the immutable laws of nature, can explain the course any phenomenon will take before it occurs. For this reason, scientists endeavour to discover these laws. For if these laws did not hold would not every kind of effort in this field be fruitless?

So let us look at some examples of the order and design in the universe:

The **earth** in which we live, with respect to its size, its distance from the sun, the speed of its orbital movement, etc., is so arranged that it is able to act as the support for life. If the smallest change were to take place in its condition, losses of unacceptable dimensions would occur.

“The earth rotates on its axis at one thousand miles an hour; if it turned at one hundred miles an hour, our days and nights would be ten times as long as now, and the hot sun would then burn up our

vegetation during each long day while in the long night any surviving sprout would freeze.

“Again, the sun, the source of our life, has a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and our earth is just far enough away so that this ‘eternal fire’ warms us just enough and not too much! If the sun gave off only one-half of its present radiation, we would freeze, and if it gave half as much more, we would roast.

“The slant of the earth, tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, gives us our seasons; if it had not been so tilted, vapours from the ocean would move north and south, piling up for us continents of ice. If our moon was, say, only 50 thousand miles away instead of its actual distance, our tides would be so enormous that twice a day all continents would be submerged; even the mountains would soon be eroded away. If the crust of the earth had been only ten feet thicker, there would be no oxygen without which animal life must die. Had the ocean been a few feet deeper, carbon dioxide and oxygen would have been absorbed and no vegetable life could exist.”[1](#)

The **atmosphere**, most of whose constituent elements are life-giving gases, is sufficiently viscous that it can, like a shield or armour, protect the earth from the deadly attack of 200 million meteors every day, which approach the earth with a speed of 50 km per second. The responsibility for regulating the temperature of the earth's surface within limits which maintain life also belongs to the atmosphere, and if it did not exist, inhabited land, like the dry deserts, would become incapable of supporting life. “Because of these, and a host of other examples, there is not one chance in millions that life on our planet is an accident.”[2](#)

\* \* \*

But why are we taking the long way round in explaining these things?

Nearer than anything else is our own **body**. The mysteries of man's existence are without number, so much so that the world's scientists, after years of research and study, have not yet been able to fathom all the wonders of it. After many years of study, Dr. Alexis Carel wrote a book called *L'homme, cet inconnue (Man, the Unknown)*. He confessed that biology and other sciences were still unable to discover the facts about the working of the human body, and that many problems remained to be unraveled.

Now let us examine some of the marvels of our own existence.

**The Cells of the Body:** A human body is like a building. It is composed of small building blocks called cells, each of which is itself a living entity. In the structure of the cells most metals such as iron, copper and calcium are used as are other elements like oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and sulphur.

The number of cells in the body of man is about  $10^{16}$  which is equivalent to ten thousand, million, million.

Each one of these living cells works in perfect cooperation with the next, and all of them follow the same aim. They are very quick to suffer, having low tolerance levels, and nourishment must be correctly supplied for their needs.

The blood, with the help of the heart, performs this duty very well. The structure of the heart is well-designed and has perfect dimensions, so that it can supply blood to the whole body through the agency of the blood vessels and the capillaries.

The blood, after it has delivered nourishment to the cells, absorbs poisonous substances which have accumulated there and returns to the heart with a dull colour. The heart delivers this to the lungs, a filtering apparatus for the blood, whereupon it is resupplied to the whole body with a bright colour and greater freshness. While passing through the kidneys, another part of these poisonous matters are removed, so that no kind of disturbance arises in the general working of the body.

Do we not see in the precise combination and quantity of the metals and elements from which the cell is formed, and also the amazing structure of the heart and its way of working, a plan of perfect and superior design? And if we see in the human body, a mysterious whole and at the same time a design, are we exaggerating?

Without doubt, no.

\* \* \*

In the same way we must confess that the world of existence firmly rests on the foundation of perfect orderliness, and undoubtedly every orderliness and design is the creation and accomplishment of a wise and powerful maker.

The same argument demonstrates that design and orderliness must have originated from a source of knowledge and power, and that chance cannot be the origin of marvels having design and orderliness simply because everything produces a particular effect: it is incorrect to suppose that design and order should come from chance or mere accident. The scientific “law of probability” makes it impossible to explain the coordination in this world on the basis of chance. According to the law of probability, for example, an illiterate person can never write an essay by randomly hitting the keys of a typewriter. Similarly, the present system in our universe could never have come to exist on the basis of chance or accident.

It therefore follows that the wonderful design and order that is observed in the human body and in the universe around us constitutes complete evidence and living proof that the universe has a wise and powerful designer and creator. The more we learn about the system of creation, the more aware we become of the greatness of its Creator.

Even the things produced by human beings themselves reflect the knowledge and intelligence of the

Creator, because it is not possible for someone who has no understanding and intelligence to give to His creations such understanding and intelligence.

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This lesson is based on the followings:

Dar Rah-e Haq Board, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982.

Few details have been added from S. Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi, *God of Islam*, Tanzania, 1969 and Nāsir Makrīm Shirazi, *Principles of Islamic Ideology*, Tehran 1985.

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## Question Paper For Lesson 3

*Question 1:* [15 points]

Fill in the blanks:

- (a) Intelligent creations are possible only by an \_\_\_\_\_ creator.
- (b) The more we come to know about the universe, the more we realize how \_\_\_\_\_ we know.
- (c) The number of cells in human body is \_\_\_\_\_.
- (d) Organization and discipline in this universe indicates a \_\_\_\_\_ and powerful \_\_\_\_\_.
- (e) Dr. Alexis Carel wrote a book called “\_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_”.

*Question 2:* [20 points]

This lesson gives some examples of design and orderliness in the universe. Give three examples of your own observation of design and orderliness in this universe.

*Question 3:* [15 points]

- (a) The physical meaning of the fraction  $1/2$  is “one part out of two parts”. What is the physical meaning of the fraction  $1/0$ ?
- (b) Think about your answer in part (a). Is it possible? Relate your answer to the material you learnt in this lesson and then write one sentence that describes the essence of this lesson.

1. A. C. Morrison quoted in S. Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi, *God of Islam*, Tanzania 1969, p. 31

2. Ibid.

# Lesson 4: More About God

## 1. The Eternal Need For God

Examine the following examples, and then you will realize the extent to which the creatures of this world show the presence of a Creator.

1. How do those who construct airplanes work together to produce a plane? These specialized engineers assemble the body sections in a specific manner according to exact equations so that the plane may fly, carrying passengers and cargo. Of course, the work of the construction engineers is to assemble the basic material according to their plans, in such a way that when their work is finished their activity ends. As for the engines, the electronic control systems, the interior setting and decor, etc., these do not depend upon the body constructors.
2. If we want to build a house and we are in possession of all the raw materials, is that sufficient? Surely, we need a builder and his workmen, not in order to produce the raw materials, but so as to put them together according to their craft. It is clear that we do not need the workmen for producing the materials used in the building, but that we need them only in so far as the use of these materials is concerned. In this way a house can be built from these materials.
3. A person who has never seen the Eiffel Tower can nevertheless construct it in his imagination in no time at all, merely from having heard about it. He can even construct it higher than it is, and imagine people climbing it.

The existence of the Tower in the imagination is, as the previous two examples suggest, the work of the one who has imagined it. The basic materials of the plan and the house were not produced by their constructors, but all the materials for the imagined Tower were made by the one who imagined it, not obtained from some place or another. That is why their size is not dependent on the quality of raw material available, and it can be made larger according to the wish of the one who imagines it. We can see that imaginary forms derive their existence from ourselves. They remain in our minds as long as we want them to, and when we forget about them they become nothing again, and have no further existence in our imagination.

From this last example, we can conclude that anything whose existence depends on the existence of something else can not be independent, and at every moment has need of the other.

Now we can understand the condition of the created things of this world which have come into existence from nothing and which are the creation of God.

Are these created things, at every moment, in need of their creator? Some people may think that the

created things of this world, after their creation, do not stand in need of their creator for their continued existence. However, this is a completely erroneous concept, because the things in the world are the effects and creations of God and are identical with the imagined forms which we ourselves can construct in our imaginations, in that at every moment they need the One who created them in order to continue existing.

In order to understand this better, imagine a human figure, speaking, walking and working according to his will. Does this figure have any independence? Clearly his existence is due to you, for if you cease to want him to exist, he will be annihilated and returned to nothingness.

This is the condition of the entire universe of creation which is completely from God, created by Him, and in no way independent. It is always in need of God. Also, if God ceased to will its existence, it would return to nothingness. The Qur'<sup>ān</sup> says:

***O men, you are the ones that need God; He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable. If He will, He can put you away and bring a new creation. (35: 15–16)***

This is a subject to which Islam directs the attention of its followers. For example, it is instructed that in daily prayer when one rises one should say “*bi hawli l-<sup>ilāh</sup>i wa quwwatihi aq<sup>ṣ</sup>mu wa aq`ud* — with the power of Allah do I stand up and sit down.”

## 2. God Occupies No Space

The world we see with our eyes is a material world composed of atoms. Every object has a special place and special properties, which vary from situation to situation. Distance plays a role in the action of these properties and the nearer the cause is to the effect the stronger the effect is; the further away it is, the weaker the effect, until a distance is reached where the cause has no action at all. To elucidate this point we shall give one or two examples.

(a) The power of a magnet is not the same at all distances: the nearer the metal is to the magnet, the stronger the power of attraction. If a nail is placed at a distance of two centimeters from a magnet, the attraction will be stronger than if it is placed at a distance of ten centimeters.

(b) The light of a lamp may reach a hundred meters, but within this distance the intensity is not uniform. The nearer to the lamp we are, the greater the intensity of its light.

These two examples show that all things which are situated in a certain place do not have an equal effect at all distance, the nearer we are to the center of something, the greater its effect will be, and vice versa.

## Does God Have a Center?

Some people may possibly think that like the sun and other material things, God has a place and that He has a seat from which He exerts His influence over His creation. However, this is not the case, because His influence on creation, which is His own work, is the same in every place, from the depths of the oceans to the furthest parts of outer space. There is no place to which His influence does not reach in sufficiency.

This influence is not such as has a center, such that the further we go from it the weaker it becomes, until we reach a point where there is no trace of his influence and chaos reigns. For if God had a place like other material things, His influence would vary throughout the universe. Therefore we can deduce from this that the Creator of this world has no location and no center. Indeed, God is the Creator of “place” and it is impossible that the Creator should be dependent on what He has created.

God cannot be compared with an inventor, because, as we explained previously, an inventor is not a creator. His only genius is that he understands the properties of things and is successful in bringing together certain elements to make something which, in some cases, he is himself in need of. But God, who is the Creator of all creation, is not in need of what He has created.

## 3. Is God Visible?

Now, since we have seen that God has no place, it is clear that he has no body either, because a body needs a place, and there can be no body which has no place. Since God has no body, he cannot be seen, because our eyes can see only bodies.

## 4. God Is In Need Of Nothing

Since God is the Creator of nourishment and other necessities of life and all things, we must agree that He has no need of any of these things. God, therefore, is the entire Truth who is in need of nothing. Unlike human beings, He does not need shelter, nourishment, and the other necessities of life, rather all people and things are in need of Him.

\* \* \*

Maybe you will now ask: “If God has no body, occupies no space and cannot be seen, then what is He and how can we say that He exists?”

To understand this, take the following example. We can say that electricity is neither solid, nor liquid, nor gas. These negations do not deny the existence of electricity, and it could never be true to say that because electricity is none of these things, therefore it does not exist. We have to admit that electricity is a fact which is not describable by any of the aforementioned conditions.

Now, when we say that God, the Self-Sufficient, has neither body, nor place, nor can He be seen, nor is He in need of anything, we mean that none of these imperfections can be found in the perfect, unlimited Being of God, who is the source of all existence. Here there can only be Perfection and Self-Sufficiency.

These properties distinguish His Being from other beings, and this is the God in Whom we must believe. Intelligence and human nature can accept such a God. No wise and honest person can deny His existence. The supremacy and glory of Islam can be seen when we compare this concept with the belief that God is on a level with man, having a body, children and other such attributes and appendages.

In fact, we might say that many materialists reject God because the true God has not been made known to them, and what they have considered is not the real God.

## 5. God's Omniscience

The grandeur and mystery of creation cannot be compared to a man-made machine. The infinite details seen in living beings and inanimate objects indicate the unlimited knowledge of God. Let us examine the following:

(a) Newton said that a study of the components of the ear and the eye would lead us to understand that the maker of the ear was thoroughly acquainted with the laws of acoustics, and that the maker of the eye was thoroughly acquainted with the laws of light and vision; a study of the heavenly bodies, he said, would lead us to understand the Truth which governs the universe.

(b) The physiology of the bat is full of amazing things. In order to be able to find its way in the dark without flying into obstacles, the animal sends out ultrasonic waves in front of itself rather like radar. If there is an obstacle in the way, the sound waves reach it and are reflected back, and thus the bat can steer clear of the obstacle.

(c) Although insects are very small, they are very delicate and wonderful in their structure. For example, some of them, instead of eyes with one lens, have compound eyes made up of individual visual units called ommatids, every one of which has three parts: a cornea, a lens and a retina. The number of ommatids varies between insects. Glow-worms have about 2,500, but in others there can be between 10,000 and 28,000. Because insects cannot rotate their heads, they can be permitted, by these compound eyes, to see things which happen beside them or behind them.

\* \* \*

Now we must ask if God knows all the things after He has created them. And the answer is, yes, of course He does. God knows about things, whatever their place and whenever they happen. He is aware of the shining of the furthest star in the highest heaven, of the tempestuousness of the foaming blue waves breaking on the furthest shores of the ocean, of the most mysterious hollows of the most remote valleys in the folds of the mountains, of the rustling of even one leaf in the gentle breeze, of the doleful

coo of the owl in the deepest silence of the forest, of the flicker of the glow-worm among the leaves, of the innumerable fish with their infinite colours and variety in all the waters of the world, of the birth of the fawn of the honey-coloured gazelle in the depths of the forest, of the falling of the clear, pearly dew-drop from the petal of the half-opened rosebud in the recess of the rocks. He knows the height of the mountains, the covering of the sky, the expanse of the lands and the seas and the treasures of the mines, the hidden depths of the caves and of all and everything.

\* \* \*

## **The Basis Of God's Knowledge**

He who creates and gives existence is aware of His creation and always attends to it, in the same way as we are not unaware of the forms we create in our own imaginations. As long as we wish them to exist, they remain in our minds, but when we turn our attention away from them, they cease to exist. If you imagine a person, you are necessarily aware of all his movements and his resting, and his actions are never hidden from your mind, because this imaginary person is your creation, that is, he did not exist before you thought of him, and you brought him into existence by your imagination.

God, who created the world and all of creation, whose existence comes from Him, oversees it all and is never unmindful of it. Of course, the difference between us, who imagine various forms in our minds, and God, who created the universe, is that we ourselves depend on God for our existence and that our existence comes from Him. However, God is independent of all things and has given existence to all things. It is for this reason that we call only Him the real Creator.

\* \* \*

## **The Difference Between Creator & Maker**

The maker of a computer is not its creator and did not give it its existence; his only skill was that he gave a new form to what was already in existence. He was not aware of the computations and the information that will be stored in it in the future. Similarly, other inventors, discoverers and artisans are not informed of all the minutiae of the movements and stillness of what they have made, because they have not given existence to them, they have not brought them from non-existence into existence. The raw materials were already in existence in the world. Only, by analysing and constructing, have they changed their form. Take the case of the airplane, which is made from raw materials in mines which were extracted, smelted and forged and made into the finished products.

Clearly, then, the makers did not create what they made; they only changed the form of the materials. For this reason, they are not permanently aware of their artifacts, and one cannot, therefore, properly call them creators. If, in some cases they have to be called creators, they have only been called so figuratively, not literally.

But God, Who has given existence to all things, is always aware and knowledgeable of their actions, because He is the real and true Creator. The Qur'<sup>ʿ</sup>ān says, **“Shall He not know who created?” (67: 14)**

Now we have understood that we ourselves and all the creatures of this world are not separated from the glorified presence of God. Wherever we are and to whatever land we travel, in the depths of the oceans, in the outer reaches of space, in the narrow places of the valleys, we are not hidden from Him. He sees the smallest of our good or bad deeds, and will reward and punish accordingly.

Can someone who has such a God and believes in Him ever fall prey to sin? Think about it.

\* \* \*

This lesson is based on the followings:

Dar Rah-e Haq Board, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982.

It has been edited for this course by S.M. Rizvi.

## Question Paper On Lesson 4

*Question 1:* [18 points]

True or False:

- (a) Imaginary forms derive their existence from the external world.
- (b) Independent existence implies self-sufficiency.
- (c) God's influence is uniform throughout the universe.
- (d) Men are capable of creating and destroying things in this universe.
- (e) God's influence on a person depends upon his faith.
- (f) Man can neither create nor destroy anything in this universe. He can only change the form, shape or size of things to suit his needs.

*Question 2:* [12 points]

Describe four essential attributes of God.

*Question 3:* [20 points]

Explain the difference between us as the creator of our imagination and God as the Creator of this universe.

# Lesson 5: The One & Only God

The advent of science has exposed for us a unique pattern of the universe. There was a time when the earth was considered to be the center of the universe, that it was stationary, and the heavenly bodies revolved around it. Then came a time when the people explored the solar system through the help of the telescope; and so, they gave the sun, the pride of place. Now we know that our solar system is but an insignificant family of planets at the edge of the huge galaxy which we call the Milky Way.

We see the moon rotating around the earth, like a happy child dancing brightly around its mother. There are eight other planets, besides our own earth, in the solar family; and five of them have satellites of their own. Mars and Neptune have two moons each; Jupiter has twelve moons and satellites; Saturn has nine and Uranus has five moons. All the moons and satellites rotate around their planets. And all these planets, in turn, rotate around the sun, which may be called the head of the family.

Now, let us trace back our steps before going further.

All these stars, planets, and satellites are made of atoms. And an atom itself is just a miniature solar system. Formerly, it was believed that atoms were immutable entities, i.e., they could not be divided. Now that atoms are known to have so many particles, the belief in their indestructibility has been shattered away. Atoms consist of a nucleus and a number of electrons. The nucleus is built from simple particles: neutrons and protons. The nucleus is located at the center of the atom and is surrounded by electrons. Electrons revolve around the nucleus in a fixed orbit much like our solar system. It should be mentioned here, to make the picture more clear, that the nucleus of an atom is a particle of very small radius, but of exceedingly great density. In plain words, all the atomic mass (except a negligible fraction) is concentrated in the nucleus, while the size of the nucleus is less than one hundred thousandth of the size of an atom. And don't forget that more than 100,000,000 atoms can be put side by side in one centimeter. Now, as we have stated earlier, the atom is a world in itself. The protons and neutrons behave as though they were rotating around their own axis, like rotating tops. Their spin suggests the idea of an internal rotation.

Thus, we see that there is a single pattern of operation, right from the smallest sub-atomic particles to the mighty solar system.

But this is not the end of the story.

As we know, the sun, together with its family, is placed on the brink of the Milky Way. "If we could view the Milky Way from a vast distance and see it as a whole, we should observe a rather flat wheel of stars with spiral arms — something like the sparks of a Catherine wheel." It consists of many millions of separate stars like our sun. This system of stars is physically connected by gravitational forces and moves through space as a whole. It is called a Galaxy.

If we think that our solar system is a family of stars, a galaxy may be called a very big tribe consisting of millions and millions of such families.

The multitude of galaxies were unknown in the past. By about 1920 it was thought that there were at least 500,000 galaxies. Now, with the advent of powerful telescopes this number had risen to 100,000,000, and is increasing day by day. So far as the eyes of cameras and telescopes can see, there are clusters and clusters of galaxies.

Human knowledge, at present, is in its infancy. Nobody knows what is beyond these galaxies. Nor do we know much about the nature of their movement. The Qur'<sup>1</sup>ān says, “God has decorated the nearest sky with these lamps (i.e., stars).” So we know that until now, we have not seen the end of even the first sky. And who knows what wonders are hidden beyond the first sky! “You have not been given knowledge but a little.”

So, let us confine our talk to the little that we know about. We know that the particles of atoms are rotating around their axis; satellites are rotating around their planets; planets are rotating around their stars; and stars along with their dependent families, are rotating in the galaxies.

Our faith in monotheism, the Unity or Oneness of God, is the purest in the world. We have given countless proofs for our belief in the last fourteen centuries. Now science has opened a new path, which, also leads to the belief in the Unity of God. It may be described briefly, in these words: “The uniform pattern of the universe is an indisputable proof that all this has been made by one, and only one, Creator.”

When we see two identical watches, we need not be told that they were made in the same factory. On the same ground, when we see the entire universe woven into a single entity; all its components governed by the same laws; all its parts operating on the same pattern, our natural instinct guides us to believe that it is created, made and controlled by ONE and only ONE Creator.

And, remember, there is a great difference between watches and the universe. Watches may be imitated or duplicated by impostors and forgerers. But, as the scientists say, “by definition there is only one universe. One cannot repeat it or do experiments with it.” So, we need not bother ourselves with the thought of any imitation-gods. If the universe — the creation — cannot be more than one, how can God — the Creator — be more than one?

\* \* \*

This lesson is entirely based on chapter 18 of Syed Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi's *God of Islam*, Dar-es-salaam, 1970. It has been slightly summarized and edited to suit this course by S.M. Rizvi.

## Question Paper On Lesson 5

Question 1: [20 points]

- (a) Is it preferable to work under one boss or several bosses?
- (b) Comment on the situation when a person works under two supervisors and each gives him conflicting orders.

Question 2: [20 points]

One of the examples of uniformity and consistency in this universe is that in Toronto the longest and the shortest days fall exactly on the same day every year since time immemorial. Give two more such examples from your own observation.

Question 3: [10 points]

Describe in your own words the scientific evidence that points to the existence of only One God.

## Lesson 6: Tawhīd & Sifāt

### 1. Tawhīd: Monotheism

The corner-stone of Islamic beliefs is tawhīd, the belief in Unity or Oneness of God which is also known as monotheism. Tawhīd is the first part of the kalimah—the formula of faith in Islam. It says:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

There is no god but Allāh.

“Allāh” is the proper name of God in Islam. The word “Allāh” means “One who deserves to be loved” and “in Whom everyone seeks refuge.” This word, grammatically speaking is unique. It has no plural and no feminine. So this name itself reflects light upon the fact that God is one and only one; He has neither any partner nor any equal. The name cannot be adequately translated by the word “God” because God can be transformed into “gods” and “goddess”.

\* \* \*

### The Message of Tawhīd:

The first part of the *kalimah* consists of two statements: A negative statement (“There is no god”) and a positive (“but Allāh”).

The negative statement leads a Muslim throughout his life not only in religious matters but also in social affairs. “There is no god” shows a Muslim that nothing in the universe is superior to him. It is observed in the Qurʾān that ***He is the One who created for you all that is in the earth***. So a Muslim knows that nothing in this world is to be worshipped. Neither stone nor trees, neither animals nor human beings, neither the Sun, the Moon, nor the stars can be worshipped, because everything is created for his benefit.

When a Muslim thus rejects every falsehood and every idea of nature–worship, idol–worship and human–worship, he is ready to believe in the positive truth of *tawhīd*. Believing in a Supreme Being gives an aim to our life and provides a purpose for our actions. Had man been left with the wrong impression that there was no God at all, his life would have been aimless, and an aimless life is dangerous. So it is added that there is no god “but Allāh”.

The *kalimah* of *tawhīd* has a negative and a positive aspect. Both are instrumental in creating the belief that every person is equal to every other person. When nobody is superior, nobody is inferior. Thus, the belief in *tawhīd* promotes the sense of brotherhood and equality and equity which is another feature of Islam.

## 2. Sifāt: the Attributes of God

In the preceding lessons, we have learnt about most of the important attributes of God. There are many attributes which are a must for God, while there are others which are beneath His dignity and, therefore, cannot be found in Him.

The attributes of God, therefore, have been grouped into “positive” and “negative”: the former reflects the attributes that exist in Him, where as the latter reflect the attributes that cannot be found in Him. The positive attributes of God are known as *as-sifāt ath-thubutiyyah*; whereas the attributes that cannot be found in God are known as *as-sifāt as-salbiyyah*.

### (A) The Positive Attributes (As-Sifāt Ath-Thubutiyyah)

There are many attributes which are befitting Allāh, but only eight are usually mentioned because of their importance. The eight *as-sifāt ath-thubutiyyah* are as follows:

1. Eternal (*al-Qadīm*): God has neither a beginning nor an end.
2. Omnipotent (*al-Qādir*): God is Omnipotent; He has power over every thing and every affair.
3. Omniscient (*al-ʿAlīm*): God is Omniscient; He knows every thing. Even our unspoken intentions and unexpressed desires are not hidden from Him.
4. Living (*al-Hayy*): God is always Alive and will remain Alive for ever.

5. Will Power (*al-Murūd*): God has His own will and discretion in all affairs. He does not do anything under compulsion.
6. All-Perceiving (*al-Mudrik*): God is All-Hearing and All-Seeing; He can see and hear everything without any need of eyes and ears.
7. Master of Speech (*al-Mutakallim*): God can create speech in anything, as He did in a tree for Prophet Musa (a.s.) and in the curtain of light for our holy Prophet (a.s.).
8. Truthful (*as-Sādiq*): God is always true in His words and promises.

It is impossible to fix any limit to the attributes of God. This list is not exhaustive but is essential to understand the glory of Allāh. These attributes are not acquired but are inherent in the concept of Divinity.

### **(B) The Negative Attributes (As-Sifāt As-Salbiyyah)**

The term “negative attributes” means those attributes which cannot be found in God because they are incompatible with the concept of Divinity. Similar to the positive attributes, the negatives attributes are also many but only eight are normally listed because of their importance. The eight *as-sifāt as-salbiyyah* are as follows:

1. Partner (*as-Sharīk*): God has no partner or colleague.
2. Compound (*al-Murakkab*): God is neither made nor composed of any material. He cannot be divided even in imagination.
3. Place (*al-Makān*): God has neither a center nor a place because He has no body; and He is everywhere because His power and knowledge is magnificently apparent everywhere.
4. Incarnation (*al-Hulūl*): God does not enter into anything or any person, nor does anything enter Him. Therefore, the belief in incarnation is incompatible with the concept of Divinity.
5. Change (*Mahall-e Hawādhith*): God is not subject to change.
6. Visible (*al-Marʾi*): God is not visible; He has not been seen, is not seen, and will never be seen.
7. Need (*Ihtiyāj*): God is not deficient in any virtue, so He does not need anything. He is free from want.
8. `Acquired Attribute' (*Sifat-e Zāʿid*): The attributes of Allāh are not separate from His person. When we say that God is Omnipotent and Merciful, we do not mean that his power and mercy are something different from His person.

To understand the concept of `additional quality' or `acquired attribute' more clearly, read the following

two sentences: “Tea is sweet” and “Sugar is sweet”. In the first example, sweetness is an additional quality for tea; the tea was not sweet when it was made, it became sweet after sugar was added to it. But in the second example, sweetness is an essential quality not an added quality for sugar; the sugar was sweet from the day it became a sugar; a “sugar” which is not sweet is not sugar at all. The positive attributes of God are like sweetness is to sugar; they are not additional to the person of God. Power, mercy, knowledge, justice, virtue, truth, etc. were never separate from His person.

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This lesson is entirely based on chapter 26 & 27 of Syed Sa’eed Akhtar *Rizvi’s God of Islam*, Dar-es-salaam, 1970. It has been compiled and edited to suit this course by S.M. Rizvi.

## Question Paper on Lesson 6

*Question 1:* [10 points]

What is the uniqueness of the word “Allah”?

*Question 2:* [10 points]

(a) Which part of the kalimah tells a Muslim that it is humiliating for him to worship inanimate objects?

(b) Describe in your own words how the kalimah instills a sense of dignity, equality, justice and brotherhood among Muslims.

*Question 3:* [24 points]

From the attributes of God listed below, circle those that cannot be found in God.

1. Gracious.
2. Resident.
3. Incarnation.
4. Almighty.
5. Creator.
6. Just.
7. Visible.
8. Divisible.
9. Partner.
10. Overwhelming.

11. Inventor.
12. Compound.
13. Subject to change.
14. Eternal.
15. Forgiving.
16. Merciful.
17. Vengeful.
18. Protector.
19. Everlasting.
20. All-Knowing.

*Question 4:* [6 points]

Explain in your own words the concept of “additional quality” and why this attribute is incompatible with the concept of Divinity.

## **Lesson 7: The Justice Of God**

### **1. God's Justice**

From previous lessons we have read and learned that:

1. The order, design and harmony in the universe in general and in the human body in particular are veritable witness to the existence of a Creator whom we call God.
2. The same order, design and harmony also shows the Omniscience and Omnipotence of the Creator; but at the same time, due to our limitation, we cannot fully encompass the extent of His wisdom, knowledge and power.
3. Unlike the perpetual need of all creation, God is the Absolutely Needless and He stands in need of nothing. We also came to know that He does not occupy any space or center, nor is He visible.

\* \* \*

Now we may ask if it is possible for God to be unjust? We know that injustice stems from ignorance, need, weakness or similar causes, none of which can exist in God. If we seek to find the cause of injustice, we may find the following reasons:

1. *Ignorance:*

People sometimes commit injustice out of ignorance. At times, injustices stem out of man's limited and finite knowledge. For example, a judge can unjustly pass a sentence against an innocent person because he does not know the truth or because the truth was hidden from him.

2. *Need:*

Injustice sometimes takes place when a person cannot get what he needs by proper means.

3. *Weakness or Compulsion:*

Sometimes, people commit injustice because of weakness and compulsion. For example, after much struggling, when a person cannot get his rights from an unjust person, he is, sometimes, led to extremes and does anything he can to bring that person down. The deprivation of that person becomes a pretext for violence and crime.

These and similar causes of injustice are impossible for God, because He is Omniscient, Free from need, and Omnipotent. So He is incapable of any injustice. This is a very clear and obvious matter. Those who doubt the justice of God have not considered what we have explained, or else they do not understand what justice is.

## 2. What is Justice?

Justice is that every person's rights should be respected, that no distinction should be made between people for no reason. For example, in a school examination, all those who have a certain mark can move up to next grade. Thus, the principal cannot make any distinction among the students and allow some of them to proceed to the next class while depriving others of this right while their marks are the same—because creating such a distinction among students who have the same right of entry into the higher class constitutes an act of injustice.

But in a situation where the question of rights does not arise, discrimination between individuals cannot be counted as injustice. For example, if someone wishes to invite some deprived persons to a meal, and chooses only some of these unfortunates, his act does not constitute injustice—because here there are no rights which are being violated. What is given to them is only given in order to help them and purely out of a sense of doing good.

The observance of equality and justice is necessary when all have the same right; but when no rights exist, there can be no discussion of equality and justice, and discrimination between two individuals in such cases cannot be called injustice.

Thus, those who find difficulty in understanding the creation of things, and ask why God has not created all people equal and without distinction, and why He does not behave towards everyone with equal measure, have actually not understood the real meaning of justice. If God does not create anyone at all or if He distinguishes between beings, nobody's rights have been violated, and therefore we can say that there is no injustice in spite of the differences and variations we find among human beings.

However, since God is Omniscient and Wise, and does nothing without a good purpose, we can ask: What is the reason for the distinctions among human beings? Are the differences necessary in the order of things?

### **3. The Vicissitudes in the Life of Man**

Certainly you have heard of the spacecraft "Apollo", a perfect example of the marvelous progress man has made in science and technology. It took man above the clouds, beyond the atmosphere, and allowed him to set his feet on the surface of the moon, thus opening the door to a world hitherto unknown to him.

Looking at the design of this spacecraft, we see a huge mass of nuts and bolts, large and small, and various delicate and complex instruments; the command module, the main craft, the lunar landing module, landing and take-off equipment, fuel tanks, telecommunication and navigational apparatus, power sources, safety devices and sufficient stores of food, water and other necessities. Each of these parts has its own role. Obviously, if it were not for these various parts, Apollo would never have come into existence, and it would not have been able to overcome the difficulties facing man on his way to the moon.

This example shows us that in a whole whose parts are connected with each other and in harmony, variety cannot be avoided.

\* \* \*

Now let us look at the world of existence to discover that diversity here is neither pointless nor without reason. Without doubt, the beauty and complexity of this world is due to the variety of its parts, and we cannot call this diversity meaningless or unjust.

We have shown above that injustice exists where distinction is made when all have the same right to use something equally. However, the parts of the world had no existence before they were created, and so they had no pre-existent rights which would enable us to say that the distinctions between them constitutes an injustice. In fact, the world of creation owes its existence to variety, and if there had not been any variety there would not have been any universe, there would have been just one big uniformity. It was this variety that brought into existence atoms, solar systems, galaxies, trees, plants and animals.

Turning now towards variety in human life, we see that diversity in man is not an exception to this general principle of variety. If we look at the diversity in human ability, intelligence and memory and ask why they are not the same in all humans, we must first ask why plants and minerals do not have these superior faculties. Then we can see that neither of these questions can be properly discussed, because such questions can only arise when rights are being trampled on. In this case, neither of these two conditions existed prior to creation such that a distinction between them should be seen as an injustice.

\* \* \*

Another point to notice is that God demands from everyone according to his ability and responsibility, and no one is asked to do more than his bodily and mental powers enable him. This is justice itself.

For example, if a principal gives the examination of the most advanced class to one of the lower classes, this is an act of injustice. However, if he gives the easy questions to the lower class and the difficult questions to the advanced class, then no one can complain that there had been injustice. Instead, he would be regarded as just by any meaning of the word.

Therefore, if all existent things are regarded from the same point of view and their responsibilities were all the same, then to make a distinction as regards their creation would be an act of injustice. But we know that responsibilities are proportional to the individual's capabilities, and thus there is no injustice. For example, if a small screw in a machine has to do the same work as the largest cog, there would be injustice; but if each part must work according to its design and possibilities, then there is no injustice.

Moreover, we believe that God is Wise and that He does not do anything for no reason or for no good purpose, and we believe that the world has a special design so that no speck can come into existence without reckoning or design. If, in such cases, something appears useless or without a function, it is in fact because of the limited nature of our minds. Not knowing something does not mean that it does not exist.

We can conclude from this that all the variations in things have some good purpose, and that they are all perfectly useful and necessary in the system of the universe, although we may not be able to understand this by our restricted thinking.

\* \* \*

It may be objected that all individuals may have the same characteristics, talents and abilities, but that because of the needs of society they are forced to divide their labour among themselves. The answer to this is that if this were the case, those who seek an easy life would choose the easier occupation, and the difficult and laborious occupations and menial tasks would be left with no one to do them; for no one would be ready to do them, since they all think the same way.

The spirit of man must pass through various states in order to obtain moral perfection. Gradually, calmly

and without haste, through facing difficulties and comforts, tasting the bitter and the sweet, his spirit becomes more perfect.

It is these ups and downs that teach man to acquire pleasure; sometimes he is the king of the castle, and sometimes he is thrown into the dungeons. Happy is the one who uses whatever situation he finds himself in to perfect his soul. If he is well-off, he can follow the way of perfection by helping the poor and the orphans, thus acquiring a great, humanitarian spirit, although he could be using his riches for easy living and luxury without putting them to any spiritual use.

Similarly, if he is poor, instead of encroaching upon other people's property and rights, he can be contented with his lot, be patient and cultivate self-respect, thus rolling away the stone of life's difficulties with the hand of activity and patience. Thus all the vicissitudes of life are ways to perfection, and we must follow this way, whether the passage is narrow or wide.

Our meaning is not that we should will upon ourselves difficulties and sufferings. It is clear that this would be very difficult because we would not be using the natural abilities that God has bestowed upon us. What we mean is that, if we try our best, but do not reach our objective or fall from prosperity to hardship, we should not consider ourselves to be unfortunate. Rather, we should regard the vicissitudes, ease and difficulty, as new fields for the building of our souls and the use of our minds in resistance and struggle against these difficulties. In this way, we can derive the greatest benefit for our spiritual strength. One who acts thus does not find in life anything against the principles of justice and purpose, and everywhere he turns he finds victory and prosperity. In this respect, the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> says:

***He has raised some of you in rank above others, that He may try you in what He has given you. (6: 165)***

The meaning of the words 'that He may try you' here is that we should use to our benefit the present moment, and so, whatever situation happens to man, it is for his spiritual development, and this is the Grace and Justice of God.

This is the philosophy of differences and vicissitudes which can never be in contradiction to Justice. If we fail to understand some of the world's events we should not consider them to be unjust and wrong, because the system of creation is built firmly by the Powerful hands of the One with whom there can be no injustice, and all that He demands from us is through His Love.

This is a fact that we have clearly observed many times in the things which have happened to us and to others. Sometimes we consider something to be bad, but after a while we realize that not only was it without harm, but that it was also positively beneficial. The Qur'<sup>ān</sup> says:

***Yet it may happen that you will hate a thing which is better for you; and it may happen that you will love a thing which is worse for you. Allah knows, and you know not. (2:216)***

\* \* \*

This lesson is based on the followings: Dar Rah-e Haq Board, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982. It has been compiled and edited for this course by S.M. Rizvi.

### Question Paper on Lesson 7

*Question 1:* [2 points for each correct statement]

Circle the letter of two correct statements:

- (a) Injustice stems out of arrogance.
- (b) Injustice means physically harming other person.
- (c) Injustice can be defined as removing something from its proper place.
- (d) Injustice is an act of making distinction when all have equal rights.
- (e) Injustice can be defined as not treating everybody equally.

*Question 2:* [10 points]

Explain in your own words the correct meaning of injustice and the real meaning of justice.

*Question 3:* [2 points for each correct answer]

Fill in the blanks with words from the pool of words given below by simply placing the number of the correct word in the blank space.

- (a) The beauty and complexity of the universe is due to the \_\_\_\_\_ of things and \_\_\_\_\_ of creation.
- (b) This universe is a huge, gigantic machine whose parts \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are performing their designated \_\_\_\_\_.
- (c) If no \_\_\_\_\_ are violated, no \_\_\_\_\_ occurs.
- (d) No one in this universe is asked to do \_\_\_\_\_ than what one is \_\_\_\_\_ of doing.
- (e) Since God is Wise, He does not create anything without a \_\_\_\_\_ or a good \_\_\_\_\_.
- (f) Without diversity and variety, this universe will be a dreadful \_\_\_\_\_.
- (g) Justice means responsibilities should be \_\_\_\_\_ to capability.

1. rights

2. proportional

3. reason
4. injustice
5. more
6. variety
7. purpose
8. capable
9. small
10. diversity
11. large
12. uniformity
13. function

*Question 4:* [10 points]

The Qur'anic verse "So that He may try us in what He has given us" means:

- (a) He would like to see how we conduct ourselves in a given situation.
- (b) He may test us by giving us certain things.
- (c) He wants us to perfect ourselves morally by dealing patiently and strongly with whatever situation we are facing.
- (d) In happiness or sorrow, our objective remains the pleasure of God.
- (e) He subjects some people to greater difficulties than others.

## **Lesson 8: Prophets & Human Guidance**

### **1. The Purpose of Life**

Did God create man as part of the chain of reproduction, to be a cog in a machine, and to be counted only as an automaton? Was man created only for his own enjoyment? Was he created only to amass as

much wealth as possible through any means, direct or devious, so as to satisfy his material wants? Is there no greater idea behind His creation?

A large number of people regard only man's material aspect and neglect the other side of the coin, because they have not understood the profundity of the nature of man or because they have not correctly evaluated it. Men of great understanding have ascribed three dimensions to man:

1. Individual material dimension.
2. Social dimension.
3. Spiritual dimension.

Those who give importance only to the first dimension, overlook the profound character of man and have thus forgotten the other two important dimensions. Those who land importance to the first two dimensions, but neglect the third, only succeed in creating an environment devoid of any spiritual and moral values.

Arnold Toynbee, the famous British historian, in a long interview with *Life* magazine, said that man had submitted himself to materialism and that from that point of view we do not lack anything. However, he said, we have become bankrupt on the spiritual side of things. There is still time, he said, to address this problem and return to religion.

So a serious thinker goes further than the first two dimensions, and studies the purpose of life from all three dimensions. The third dimension gives man the power to evaluate his entrances and exits on the stage of personal and social dimensions. Man can reach perfection only by making his way through various dimensions—he must find this way, for it is the purpose of his creation.

## 2. Human Conscience

The question now arises of whether man's conscience alone can lead him through these dimensions. Let us begin to analyse this problem with description of human conscience itself.

Most people would agree that within the depth of man's nature, there is a power which can distinguish good from bad. This power is known as human conscience.

We do not deny that society has an influence on deciding what is good and evil: for example, dress, food and other similar things may be good at one time and place, and bad in others. Such values are the result of a particular society's view-point. However, there are certain values —good as well as evil— which are of universal nature; they are not confined to one time, place or society. For example, trustworthiness, helping the poor and the weak, working for humanity, and justice. These are considered as good values deeply rooted in the nature of man. Likewise, cheating, selfishness, and injustice are considered as bad at all times and in all places. Such universal values prove the existence of human conscience.

Can conscience alone guide us to perfection through the three dimensions of life? Conscience by itself cannot guide man completely—it needs training. Human conscience is like minerals in the earth which must be extracted and refined. Otherwise, it may be perverted and rendered useless under the influence of a corrupt social environment. Every person is familiar with the situations where he himself or a fellow human being has suppressed the voice of his conscience and given in to his evil desires.

### **3. Human Intelligence**

From the early stages of history, man has been putting forward many ideas for the improvement of human society. But to this day, he has failed to present a plan which would satisfy all requirements of human nature. This is due to the finite nature of our knowledge about the material as well as the spiritual world.

Even when man has put forward a good idea, there is no guarantee that it will be implemented properly. On the individual level, for example, many intelligent and knowledgeable people know the harm of alcoholism, gambling and crime, but nevertheless they fall victims to such practices. On the social and collective level, we have the example of the United Nations Organization with over 150 member countries. But it is a weak world body whose resolutions generally remain merely in the minutes and only on paper. This shows clearly that human intelligence and knowledge are no guarantee for action.

### **4. The Divine Guidance**

Human conscience and intelligence alone are not enough to guide us to the perfection in the three dimensions of life mentioned above. The Divine guidance is the answer: it comes from the unlimited source of knowledge which has no room for error, and its implementation is comparatively more guaranteed because of the dire consequences in the hereafter from which no one can escape.

Conscience and intelligence, with confirmation from the Divine guidance, can help man to reach felicity without danger of corruption or diversion. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said,

Then God sent His messengers and prophets to mankind to make them fulfill the pledges of His creation, to recall to them His bounties, to exhort them by preaching, to unveil before them the hidden virtues of wisdom and show them the signs of His Omnipotence.

#### **The Need for Prophets & Messengers:**

We can conclude from the above that:

- the aim of life is to achieve perfection in individual, social and spiritual dimensions;
- human conscience alone is not enough to guide man to perfection;
- human intelligence alone also does not satisfactorily guide man to formulate a plan to achieve the

purpose of life;

- prophets and messengers have been sent to guide human beings to fulfill the purpose of life on this earth by nurturing their conscience and intellectual power, and also by providing a more stronger guarantor of implementing the Divine plan.

Through these four points, we discover that the prophets are necessary for the perfection of mankind, and that they were sent to inform human beings of what they require in the way of perfection so that they may tread the path of happiness. One cannot imagine that the Wise God could leave man without instructions and laws, or that He could leave them without guidance so that they may become victims of human desires and be prevented from reaching perfection.

### **The Distinctions of the Divine Guidance:**

The Divine guidance is not concerned with one dimension of life only. God sent messengers and prophets to guide people in order to reach perfection in the material as well as the spiritual dimensions of life. The prophets and messengers have guided us in spiritual plane as well as in politics, in justice as well as in economy, in personal problems as well as in social responsibilities.

The Divine guidance is not restricted to one class of society; it encompasses all levels of people and upholds the rights of all. This belies the claim of those who think that religion was invented by the wealthy class, and that it was invented in feudal and capitalist societies to serve their interest. Moreover, history bears witness that the upper and wealthy classes did not participate in the movements led by the prophets, and that Divine religions always opposed the oppression of feudalists and capitalists.

## **5. Role of Miracles in Prophethood**

When man realizes that he needs the guidance of prophets in order to achieve the purpose of life, he naturally feels affection for the prophets and messengers who work for his benefit and who sacrifice their lives for his advantage. This affection reaches a degree where people are willing to bear any hardship to advance the aims of the prophets; and they start preferring the commands of the prophets to their own desires.

This strong love and affection of the people for prophets of God, and the tremendous power and influences which the prophets gain has caused some ambitious persons to claim prophethood in order to advance their own interest.

So, if someone claims prophethood, one cannot believe in him without some investigation. For it is possible that he falsely proclaims prophethood, as many people have indeed done so up to the present day. In order to find out if someone is a genuine prophet, the latter must bring some evidence so that people can be sure of him and accept his claim. Thus the real prophets can be distinguished from the pretenders. This evidence is known as miracles.

## What are Miracles?

Miracles (*mu`jizah*) are what the prophets did according to the will of God in order to prove the truth of their claim of prophethood, and which others are unable to copy.

This purpose of miracles makes it very clear as to why at times the Prophet did not accede to demands for more miracles. Some people, who had already seen miracles, demanded various things from the prophets as miracles not with the desire to follow the truth but to find an excuse for not believing. They even asked for things that were logically impossible. However, since the prophets brought enough miracles, they did not accede to such demands. Miracles are done according to the will of God and in situations where they are necessary.

The Qur<sup>ān</sup> says, ***“The signs are only with God, and I am only a plain warner.” (29:50) It is not for any Messenger to bring a sign, except by God's permission. (40:78)***

\* \* \*

This lesson is based on the following: Dar Rah-e Haq Board, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982. It has been compiled and edited extensively to suit the purpose of this course by S.M. Rizvi.

## Question Paper on Lesson 8

*Question 1:* [20 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

- (a) The purpose of our creation is to serve humanity.
- (b) Social dimension of our life is related to our attitude towards other members of the society.
- (c) The purpose of our creation is to achieve perfection by observing the limits imposed by our spiritual dimension upon our material and social dimensions.
- (d) Human conscience is sufficient to guide human beings to perfection.
- (e) Perfection means submitting to the will of God to the extent that the individual's will merges with God's will.
- (f) Conscience is a power within every human being that identifies the good and the evil.
- (g) Prophets must perform miracles when demanded to prove their truthfulness.
- (h) Human intelligence and knowledge can guarantee the implementation of good ideas.
- (i) Prophets were sent to train human conscience and intelligence towards perfection.

(j) A miracle that is beyond human capacity distinguishes a real prophet from an imposter.

*Question 2:* [10 points]

What is the function of human conscience? Explain, with an example, how conscience identifies universal good and evil values.

*Question 3:* [10 points]

Describe at least two reasons why Divine guidance is needed and why prophets and messengers were sent.

*Question 4:* [10 points]

How would you distinguish a real prophet from an imposter? What kind of miracle would you expect from a real prophet?

## Lesson 9: The Purity Of The Prophets

### 1. Why must the Prophets be Ma'sūm?

The Wise and Merciful God sent the prophets so that human society may recognise the right way as opposed to the precipitous way, and may be able to stride up to the highest peaks of true pride, perfection and laudable virtues, and stay on that way.

With the same intention, God also made His prophets and messengers immune from every kind of sin and error, and, in one word, made them “infallible” (*ma'sūm*), so that they may be able to lead mankind towards God without any error or mistake.

It is obvious that the very same reason which prompted the need for prophethood also requires that the prophets be immaculate and immune from all kinds of sin, impurity, error and fault. Since the aim and purpose of sending prophets is to lead society towards God's commands, this aim is to be secured through the infallibility of the prophets, for it is clear that to do things which are repulsive or indecent, to sin, and also to be a source of error and fault is a reason for people to be averse to and diverted from these things, and thus the aim, which was the guidance and teaching of society, would be lost.

Of course, we know that no wise person does things against his aim, and that he takes regard for what is effectual in attaining and reaching his aim. For example, someone who wants a number of distinguished individuals to take part in a celebration in his honour knows that no one without an invitation can honourably attend. He will never send an invitation to someone who is averse to him, rather he will try to send his invitations in such a way that they will all be accepted, and, if he doesn't do

this, his work will not have been prudent and wise, and it will be regarded as having been unseemly and unbecoming.

The Merciful and Wise God also takes account of what basically interferes with the guidance and education of society, and does not want people to depend on and follow the will of capricious and impure men, and so to end up far from, and be deprived of their true development. Therefore, He has sent immaculate prophets so that the guidance and instruction of society may be in the best possible way.

And now we shall read in more detail why the prophets must be without fault.

### **(A) The Principle Of Instruction**

The purpose of sending the prophets was to educate humanity; and we know that in education, the teacher's behaviour is a more effective instrument than his speech and verbal instructions.

The character and actions of the teacher can bring about a radical transformation in man, because, on the basis of the principle of imitation, man gradually adopts the manner and conduct of his teacher, and becomes of the same colour so that it is as if he is the clear, limpid surface of a pool which reflects the image of the sky above him.

Speech alone cannot play the part of instruction, rather it serves instruction, and this is the idea of the prophetic mission, that prophets must possess praiseworthy habits and qualities and be untainted with sin and error so that they can effectively attract the people of this world towards the sacred aim.

It is clear that one who has soiled his hands with sin, even though in secret and without anyone being aware, will never have that unwavering strength of mind and spirit to bring about a radical transformation in the area of the human spirit. For example, a person who taints his lips with wine can never dissuade others from drinking it, and raise the voice of truth and mobilise his iron will in combating this act.

The secret of the prophets' success in their mission was the coordination in their words and deeds, and it is this moral strength which enabled them to transform the fundamentals of human thoughts and lead societies towards perfection.

### **(B) Confidence & Acceptance**

The greater the degree of faith and confidence that people have in a speaker, the more their agreement with him increases, and vice versa. For this reason, the prophets, who divulged the Divine commands and restrained people from sin and immorality, must, according to this assertion, be endowed with the greatest, most admirable qualities, and be free from every kind of sin and indecency, every error and mistake. This is so that people's confidence and faith in them may be greater and they may accept their guidance and what they say, and so that people may strive more assiduously in carrying out the plans and putting into practice the reformatory instructions of the prophets, and understand from the depths of

their hearts their leadership.

Thus the aim of the prophetic mission, that is to say the leading of the human race to development on all sides, will be accomplished; the aim of the prophetic mission will not be obtained under any other circumstances, and that would be very far from the wisdom of God.

This purity and worthiness of the prophets was so extraordinary that people became devoted to them to such a degree that their followers felt great love towards them and gave up their lives in following and obeying them, without heed for the consequences.

However, the question as to how one man can be completely free from sin and error is a matter to which we shall now turn our attention.

## **2. How can a person be Ma'sūm?**

### **(A) Real Love Of God:**

The holy prophets were deeply devoted to God, and why should they not have been? They, who with their senses and profound insight knew God better than anyone, who understood His Greatness, Splendour and Majesty to be above all things, who deem Him alone worthy of love, devotion and obedience, who had nothing except His Pleasure in view, who gave their hearts to none but Him, who did everything with devotion to Him, and who knew Who they were worshipping.

It was for this very reason that the prophets welcomed difficulties and formidable situations, and also paid attention to God with smiling, open faces even when they were in the most critical circumstances. And so, when, in their beloved, true way, they met with difficulties, they became overflowing with joy.

History has recorded the endeavours of these heavenly, torch-bearing men of guidance, as also the condemnable behaviour of people towards them. Could steadfastness in these difficulties have had another motivation apart from love of God and the performance of His command? Surely not.

How can it be imagined that those who are completely engrossed in their beloved way, and who utter nothing except according to His wish, and in whose heart, soul, spirit and thoughts not one corner is empty of remembrance of Him, can disobey His commands? Or can give themselves up to sin? Rather, they followed the path of obedience to Him and were devoted to Him.

Someone asked the Prophet of Islam, why he himself indulged in worship of God to such an extent that he would physically suffer since he was purified and had no sins. His answer was that why should he not be a grateful and thankful slave of God?<sup>1</sup> So it was not out of fear of punishment that the Prophet used to worship God to such an extent, it was out of a sense of gratitude.

Thus we can understand that the perfect knowledge of the prophets and the deep and true love which

they had for God resulted in infallibility and absolute purity, so that, in addition to precluding sin from their will and thinking, they withheld themselves from sin.

## **(B) The Deep & Perfect Insight of The Prophets**

Perceptiveness is not the same in everyone. Someone who is ignorant and illiterate will never think like a doctor does about microbes and the contamination of vessels by them. A doctor who has spent years investigating microbes, has watched them multiply under a microscope, and has witnessed the fate of those who were infected by them can never neglect microbes and their dangers.

Thus we see that the ignorant person proceeds to drink water contaminated with microbes and has no worry, whereas the doctor would never be prepared to drink such water and would never even entertain the idea.

The only motive for refraining from drinking is the knowledge and information which this doctor has concerning the bad effects of microbes. So, for example, the illiterate, ignorant person would also keep himself from eating something filthy, for, in this case, he is aware of the impurity and harmful effects of it. But a one year old child into whose reach that filthy thing falls would probably put it into his mouth.

Another point is that there are some people who attach little importance to incremental harm, although they fear sudden, unexpected dangers and avoid them. For example, someone may be rather lazy about extracting a decayed tooth and may procrastinate about resorting to a dentist, till such time as his other teeth become affected, and a great deal more discomfort comes his way. The toll for this is that he may be affected by very serious ailments. However, the very same person, as soon as the pain of appendicitis appears and there is a possibility of real danger, will entrust himself into the hands of a surgeon without any delay.

Ordinary people take a superficial view of evil, and do not take sufficient note of its physical and spiritual, bodily and psychological effects.

However, the prophets, who, with the help of a higher power, have supremacy in their vision and knowledge over the rest of mankind, who have a profound and perfect insight into all the effects of evil, and who, by a secret witnessing, see even those effects of evil which will materialize in the next world, will never come under the influence of their own bodily desires and soil their hands with the contamination of sin; even the thought of it will never enter their hearts.

In short, remembrance of judgment and the preview of the effects of sin in the next world was the best way to keep the prophets from sin and indecency.

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This lesson is based on the following: Dar Rah-e Haq, *The Roots of Religion* (1981) Qum, Iran.

## Question Paper on Lesson 9

*Question 1:* [16 points]

Fill in the blanks from the pool of words given below by simply placing the number of the correct word in the blank space.

- (a) A teacher's conduct undoubtedly \_\_\_\_\_ his students' \_\_\_\_\_.
- (b) For greatest impact, a prophet must instill \_\_\_\_\_ in his followers.
- (c) It was their true \_\_\_\_\_ and real \_\_\_\_\_ of God that made prophets free from sins and impurities.
- (d) The reason why prophets refrained from committing sins was that they could \_\_\_\_\_ the effects of evil deeds.
- (e) The prophetic mission required prophets to demonstrate extremely high \_\_\_\_\_ character and ethical \_\_\_\_\_.

1. foresee
2. love
3. standards
4. character
5. moral
6. affects
7. knowledge
8. confidence

*Question 2:* [10 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

- (a) Infallibility means complete immunity from sins.
- (b) Prophets cannot commit sins because of the nature of their creation.
- (c) An imperfect teacher cannot deliver perfect teaching.
- (d) Mas'ūm refers to those prophets and imams who are free from errors and sins.
- (e) Prophets were immune from sins but they could make unintentional sins.

*Question 3:* [12 points]

Briefly discuss two reasons on why the prophets must be ma'sūm.

*Question 4:* [12 points]

Is infallibility an acquired quality or is it bestowed upon the prophets by God?

1. Nūr al-Thaqalayn, vol. 3, p. 367.

## Lesson 10: Prophets & Scriptures

Almighty God did not leave man alone; he sent guidance in the form of prophets and messengers. According to the common belief of all Muslims, God sent 124,000 prophets and messengers to guide mankind in all parts of the world. The first was Prophet Adam and the last was Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them both).

The basic faith of all the prophets was the same: to call people to the One and Only God (*tawhīd*) and bring peace in human society; the differences are only in the codes of law. However, not all the 124,000 prophets were of the same rank and status; some were greater than the other; some were sent as assistants to those messengers who came before them; some were given a holy scripture while others were not.

There were some prophets who came with divine laws which their followers were to implement. Such prophets were higher in rank over the others, and are known as *ulu 'l-'azm* prophets. *Ulu 'l-'azm* means "those who possess great responsibility". The *ulu 'l-'azm* prophets are five:

1. Prophet Nuh (a.s.) known in English as Noah.
2. Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) known in English as Abraham.
3. Prophet Musa (a.s.) known in English as Moses. A person who believes in the message of Prophet Musa (a.s.) is known as a Jew.
4. Prophet 'Isa (a.s.) known in English as Jesus. A person who follows the message of Prophet 'Isa (a.s.) is known as a Christian.
5. Prophet Muhammad (a.s.). A person who follows the message of Prophet Muhammad (a.s.) is known as a Muslim.

The divine laws brought by Prophet Nuh were followed till the advent of Prophet Ibrahim and the more advanced divine laws were sent by God through him. Then Prophet Musa was sent with a new set of

laws which were even more elaborate; Musa was followed by Prophet `Isa who modified the laws of Musa. Last of all came Prophet Muhammad with the most perfect and comprehensive divine law. No prophet or holy scripture is to be sent after Muhammad (a.s.).

Many prophets were also given scriptures—God commandments sent to mankind through His prophets and messengers. The scriptures that were revealed to Prophet Nuh and Prophet Ibrahim are not well-known. The Qur`ān talks about scrolls (*suhuf*) of Ibrahim which shows that many books were revealed to him.

The most famous scriptures revealed to the prophets are the following:

1. The *Tawrāt* (Torah) revealed to Prophet Musa.
2. The *Zabūr* (Psalms) revealed to Prophet Dawud (a.s.) known in English as David.
3. The *Injīl* (Gospel) revealed to Prophet `Isa.
4. The *Qur`ān* (pronounced as Qur-aan) revealed to Prophet Muhammad.

\* \* \*

This lesson has been prepared by S. M. Rizvi.

### Question Paper on Lesson 10

*Question 1:* [1.5 points for each answer]

Fill in the blanks from the pool of words given below by simply placing the number of the correct word in the blank space.

- (a) According to Islamic belief, God sent \_\_\_\_\_ prophets in all parts of the world.
- (b) In Qur'anic terminology, all prophets were Muslims and their fundamental mission was to preach \_\_\_\_\_ of God and \_\_\_\_\_ on earth.
- (c) The name of the first prophet was \_\_\_\_\_ (a.s.) and the name of the last prophet was \_\_\_\_\_ (a.s.).
- (d) All prophets were not \_\_\_\_\_ in status and rank.
- (e) The prophets who came with a divine law are called \_\_\_\_\_ prophets.
- (f) Christians are those who believe in \_\_\_\_\_ known in Arabic as \_\_\_\_\_.
- (g) \_\_\_\_\_ are the people who believe in Prophet Musa known in English as \_\_\_\_\_.
- (h) Prophet Nuh (a.s.) is known in English as \_\_\_\_\_.
- (i) Zabur, known in English as \_\_\_\_\_, was given to Prophet Dawud (a.s.) known in English as \_\_\_\_\_.

(j) Torah, known in Arabic as \_\_\_\_\_, was given to Prophet \_\_\_\_\_ (a.s.).

(k) Prophet `Isa (a.s.) was given the book called \_\_\_\_\_ in Arabic and \_\_\_\_\_ in English.

(l) The Qur`ān was revealed to Prophet \_\_\_\_\_ (a.s.).

(m) The Qur`ān talks about certain scrolls called \_\_\_\_\_ revealed to Prophet \_\_\_\_\_ (a.s.).

1. Psalms

2. Tawrat

3. 124,000

4. Ibrahim

5. Ulu `l-`azm

6. unity

7. equal

8. `Isa

9. David

10. Muhammad

11. Suhuf

12. Jesus

13. Injil

14. Musa

15. Jews

16. Bible

17. Noah

18. Adam

19. peace

20. Moses

*Question 2:* [10 points]

Listed below are some of the Prophets mentioned in the Qur'<sup>ān</sup>. Circle the letter before the names of those who came with a divine law.

- (a) Prophet Ya`qub (Jacob).
- (b) Prophet Ayyub (Job).
- (c) Prophet Musa (Moses).
- (d) Prophet Yahya (John).
- (e) Prophet Muhammad (a.s.).
- (f) Prophet Yunus (Jonah).
- (g) Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham).
- (h) Prophet Yusuf (Joseph).
- (i) Prophet `Isa (Jesus).
- (j) Prophet Nuh (Noah)
- (k) Prophet Ismail (Ishmael).
- (l) Prophet Zakariyya (Zacharia).

*Question 3:* [10 points]

- (a) Specify the names of the Divine Books in the order in which they were revealed, and also write the names of the Prophets who received those Books.
- (b) Which Divine Book contains the most comprehensive and eternal laws?

## **Lesson 11: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)**

Muhammad bin `Abdull<sup>āh</sup> is the last and final messenger of God. The message he brought from God is known as “al-Isl<sup>ām</sup>,” and the scripture he was given by God is known as “al-Qur'<sup>ān</sup>.”

## 1. Arabia at the Prophet's Birth

The Arabs prior to Islam were idol-worshippers; they believed that apart from the life of this world there was no other life. It was a society in which respect depended on wealth and family. Woman was a commodity, counted as wealth of the father, husband and son; and after death she was inherited like the other possessions. It was a disgrace to have a daughter, and in some tribes the family buried this shameful thing with their own hands.

The situation of the poor, women and society was not much different in other parts of the world.

Every human society at that time was sunk in darkness, decline and oppression. Throughout the whole world, no glow or gleam of light met the eyes. A darkness like a thick heavy cloud in the sky had submerged the daily life of all societies in a deep sleep; and a horrible, powerful obscurity reigned which only the rising of a radiant sun could disperse.

This darkness was more overpowering in Arabia than in any other place, as if they had been invaded to the depths of degradation and debasement. See what Imam 'Ali (a.s.) says about those days:

'...You people of Arabia followed the worst religion; you dwelt amongst rough stones and poisonous serpents. You drank putrid water and ate filthy food. You shed the blood of one another and paid no heed to relationships. Idols are established among you, and sins cling to you.' (*Nahju 'l-Baligha*, sermon 26.)

## 2. The Birth of the Prophet of Islam

Muhammad opened his eyes to the world on the 17th of Rabī'ū 'l-Awwal in the 53rd year before the hijrah (570 AD). His father, 'Abdullāh, was from the family of Prophet Ismā'il, and had died before he could see his son. His mother was one of the most pious women of that time.

Muhammad was entrusted to a virtuous woman called Halīmāh, who suckled him and nursed him.

One day, Muhammad (s.a.w.) who had not yet reached the age of four years, asked Halimah if he could go into the desert with the other boys. Halimah said, "I bathed Muhammad and anointed his hair with oil. I put collyrium on his eyes and hung a Yemenite stone on a string and put it round his neck so that no harm could come to him from the spirits of the desert. But Muhammad tore the stone from his neck and said, 'Don't worry about me. My God is taking care of me!'"

So we see that from childhood he was blessed with God's favour and grace, and was always guided by Divine friendship and help in works that were in their right time and place.

Muhammad's behaviour and speech in childhood were such that everyone's attention was attracted. In his youth, also, he was far from all the evil deeds which tainted those people in its environment. He took

no part in their riotous poetry gatherings. He drank no wine, was an enemy of the idols; he was perfect in his speech and behaviour.

Years before he became a prophet, the people called him *as-Sādiq* (the truthful) and *al-Amin* (the trustworthy). He had a pure mind and radiant intellect, and a godly and heavenly character. Every year for one month he went to the cave of Hira and was with God in His mysteries and in prayers. At the end of the month, before returning to his home, he went to the Ka`bah and made seven or more circumambulations.

### **3. Commencement of the Mission**

At the age of forty, while busy in worship in the cave of Hira, he was proclaimed as the Messenger of God.

For three years, the Prophet of Islam received no command to call the people openly to Islam, and during that time only a few people had accepted the message of God brought by Muhammad (s.a.w.). Among men, the first person who loved and followed him was Imam `Ali (a.s.), and among women, Khadijah<sup>1</sup>.

Then after three years, he received the command to invite people openly to Islam. First he invited his relatives as guests; about forty of them assembled together. The food which the Prophet had prepared was no more than enough to satisfy the appetite of one man, but by the power of God that little food filled everyone, and this was the cause of much amazement. Abu Lahab, without thinking what he was saying, cried out: "Muhammad is a magician!" That day the relatives dispersed before the Prophet could speak. So he called them again the next day. After they had partaken of the food and hospitality, he spoke: "O Sons of `Abdul Muttalib! No youth has brought to his people better than what I bring to you. I have brought to you the best of this world and of the here-after. I have been commanded by God to call you to Him. Which of you will extend his help to me and become my brother and successor?" Apart from `Ali (a.s.), no one answered. The Prophet placed his hand on `Ali's shoulder and said, "This is my brother, the executor of my will and my successor among you. Listen to what he says and obey him."<sup>2</sup>

One day the Prophet went up on to Mount Safa and called the people around him. He said, "If I told you that an enemy was going to fall on you this morning or this evening, would you trust me?" All together they replied, "Yes!" He said, "I warn you of a severe torment that is soon to fall on you." Out of fear that the speech of Muhammad (s.a.w.) would take effect in the hearts of those present, Abu Lahab broke the silence and said to him, "Did we assemble here just to listen to this nonsense?"

The Prophet of Islam started his call with the slogan of *tawhīd* and the worship of one God, and established *tawhīd* as the basis of all other beliefs. He made known to men Allāh, who is nearer to man than man himself; he abolished all forms of idol-worshipping, revolutionized the atmosphere of Mecca, and drew people to his religion.

Meanwhile, the Quraysh (the most powerful tribe in Mecca to which the Prophet belonged) were becoming ill at ease with the progress he was making and tried hard to stop his preaching, even once trying to kill him; but with the help and protection of God all their tortures, persecutions and schemes were without effect and came to nothing. Day by day the call to Islam, and also the acceptance by people, spread, even to those who came from outside Mecca. People rose up with their souls in answer to this Divine invitation.

In the eleventh year of the prophethood, some people from the tribe of Khazraj of Medina came to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. The Prophet invited them to Islam and they accepted, with the promise that when they went back to Medina they would call the people to Muhammad's religion. They went to Medina and spread the invitation of the Prophet. The next year, twelve Medinese accepted the faith of the Prophet of Islam at Aqaba and resolved: not to associate anything with Allah, not to steal, not to fornicate, not to indulge in infanticide, not to bring malicious accusations against anyone, not to disobey the Prophet in any thing which he indicated. Then the Prophet sent a man by the name of Mus`ab bin `Umayr with them to teach the Qur'an, and thus a large group in Medina pledged their faith in the Prophet.

## 4. The Prophet's Migration (Hijrah)

Till the thirteenth year of his mission, the Prophet called the people of Mecca to Islam, and stood firm when faced with the persecutions of the Quraysh. Eventually he got to know that the Quraysh had hatched an incredible plan to kill him, so he put Imam 'Ali (a.s.) to sleep in his bed in his place and left Mecca at night; he hid in a cave, and then migrated from there to Medina.

The hijrah of the Prophet opened an entirely new chapter in the history of Islam from which a stimulating and surprising lead forward was made. For this very reason, the hijrah of Muhammad (s.a.w.) became the beginning of the calendar of the Muslims.

The two tribes of Medina, Aws and Khazraj, were bitter enemies of each other for generations. But with the presence of the Prophet of Islam in Medina, they became brothers for life in the shadow of the teachings of Islam, and blessed sincerity and cordiality was established between them. The example of Muhammad's behaviour, his spiritual and moral superiority, and the natural aspect of his pure religion, caused the people to come to Islam by the score, and in the end to accept it.

The Prophet of Islam was from the people and with the people, and did not maintain a distance from them. He shared with them in their gains and losses. He firmly criticised oppression and aggression, which he refrained from and prevented. He set forth all the principles which were, in the light of Islam, effective for the development of the position of women, and put an end to the tyranny they had been subjected to previously, but he also vehemently fought against their unchastity and licentiousness, for he wanted them to attain real development on the basis of the true principles of Islam.

He defended the rights of slaves, and had comprehensive programmes for their freedom. The Prophet of Islam created a society where black and white, rich and poor, great and small, were all equal and could enjoy the benefits of being human beings. In such an atmosphere, there could be no question of 'racial discrimination,' for there was a much higher basis in virtue, knowledge, piety, human values and ethical greatness.

\* \* \*

This lesson has been adapted from Dar Rah-e Haq,  
*The Roots of Religion* (1981) Qum, Iran.

## Question Paper on Lesson 11

*Question 1:* [17 points]

True or False:

- (a) The Prophet of Islam was born in 560 AD.
- (b) Arabs, before Islam, followed a monotheistic religion.
- (c) The essential ingredient of the Prophet's message was the unity of God.
- (d) Before the commencement of his mission, the Prophet used to meditate in the cave of Thawr.
- (e) Prior to Islam, the Arabs were completely submerged in the darkness of ignorance and moral degradation.
- (f) Abu Jahl repeatedly interrupted the Prophet when he was calling people to Islam on Mount Safa.
- (g) According to the historian, at-Tabari, Imam 'Ali was the first among men to accept Islam.
- (h) Muhammad (a.s.) commenced his prophetic mission at the age of 40.
- (i) The Prophet openly started inviting people to Islam when he was 43 years old.
- (j) The Prophet preached in Mecca for 11 years.
- (k) In the 11th year of prophethood, 12 people from Medina accepted Islam.
- (l) Aws and Khazraj were two historically friendly tribes of Medina who strongly supported the Prophet.
- (m) It was the universal truth of the Prophet's message and his superior moral qualities that attracted people to Islam in large numbers.
- (n) Islam strongly condemns mistreatment of women by their male counterparts.
- (o) Islam promotes equality, piety, peace and justice.

(p) When the Prophet invited his family members to embrace Islam, Imam 'Ali, according to at-Tabari, was the only person to offer help in the prophetic mission.

(f) The Prophet asked Imam 'Ali to sleep in his bed on the night of his migration to Medina.

*Question 2:* [12 points]

When the 12 Medinese accepted Islam at Aqaba, what were the six things that they promised they will never do?

*Question 3:* [6 points]

What are the two titles by which the Prophet of Islam was known among his people even before he proclaimed his prophethood.

*Question 4:* [15 points]

In a five line paragraph, describe in your own words the message of Prophet Muhammad (a.s.) and his teachings.

[1.](#) At-Tabari, Ta'rikh, vol. 3, p. 1159; Ibn Hisham, Sirah, vol. 1, p. 240-245.

[2.](#) At-Tabari, Ta'rikh, vol. 3, p. 1171-1173.

## Lesson 12: Al-Qur'an : The Miracle of Islam

### 1. Prophets & Miracles

The prophets and messengers of God are given miracles to prove the truth of their claim. However, not all prophets were given the same miracle. Prophet Musa was given the staff which could turn into a serpent; Prophet 'Isa was given the ability to cure the blind and the leper, and to bring the dead back to life.

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was given the Qur'an as a miracle. The difference between all other miracles and the miracle of the Qur'an is that the other miracles were for those who witnessed them or they ended with the death of the prophets. For us they are news which may be believed or suspected according to the trend of mind of the hearer. But the Qur'an is in our hands, a book complete in itself; it claims and brings the proof within itself. And its miracles are being unfolded every day. As long as the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, the Qur'an will remain as the final miracle of God.

## 2. Al-Qur'ān : the Everlasting Miracle

The Qur'ān is a multi-dimensional miracle: it is a miracle of Arabic language and style; it is a miracle of prophecies; it is a miracle of scientific revelations; it is a miracle of the best code of life. Not only a miracle, it is a miracle-performer: it caused the transformation of an extremely ignorant and unlettered people into the guardians of knowledge and learning. This has also been realized by non-Muslim scholars.

Hartwing Hirschfeld writes, "We must not be surprised to find the Qur'ān the fountainhead of science. Every subject connected with heaven or earth, human life, commerce and various trades is occasionally touched upon, and this gave rise to the production of numerous monographs forming commentaries on parts of the Holy Book. In this way, the Qur'ān was responsible for great discussions, and to it was indirectly due the marvelous development of all branches of science in the Muslim world... This again not only affected the Arabs but also induced Jewish philosophers to treat metaphysical and religious questions after the Arabs' methods. Finally, the way in which Christian scholasticism was fertilised by Arabian theosophy need not be further discussed... In the same manner, the Qur'ān gave an impetus to medical studies and recommended the contemplation and study of nature in general."<sup>1</sup>

Such contributions are quite apart from the religious subjects which were initiated because of the Qur'ān: the development of literature, the codification of grammar and other related subjects which were founded because of the Qur'ān. In fact, all Islamic subjects, all subjects connected with Arabic literature and all subjects related to philosophy and theology came to the Arabs through the Qur'ān.

Below, we shall study some of the miraculous aspects of the Qur'ān.

### (A) The Eloquence Of The Qur'ān

The language of the Qur'ān is of such high standard that nobody could meet its challenge. Arabs of the time of the Prophet were proud of their language since it was a very rich and sophisticated one. Poets and eloquent speakers were almost idols of their tribes. Poems were learned and read on every occasion, and yearly competitions were held for the best pieces of poetry in a place called Suq Ukadh. Thus language and literature was the best art the Arabs had mastered very well.

The Qur'ān came and its miracle, to the Arabs' surprise, was its language and style. The Qur'ān was the challenge; God asked them to produce a similar Qur'ān:

***“Say: If the whole of mankind and jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like of it, even if they helped each other.” (17:89)***

Then the challenge was reduced to ten chapters (surahs), to show them their weakness:

***“Do they say that `He has forged it'? Say: Then you bring ten surahs like it, forged and call (to***

***your aid) whomsoever you can --other than God-- if you speak the truth.” (11:14)***

Again the Arabs could not answer the challenge of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān. The challenge was then reduced to one surah only. One surah may be only one line. Still the proud eloquent Arabs could not face the challenge:  
“

***Do they say `He forged it'? Say: Then bring one surah like it and call to your aid anyone you can --other than God-- if you speak the truth.” (10:39)***

You can see the logical reasoning and rational approach to convince the Arabs of its miraculous quality. A surah may be only one line but the Arabs (and non-Arabs too) could not succeed in their attempts to meet the standing challenge.

The beauty of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān, the strength of its conviction, its logic and simplicity, and its depth and wisdom was far above what the Arabs or non-Arabs know or conceive. When the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān was read, the idolaters used to close their ears; some used to make noise, whistling and chanting, so that they may not hear the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān and be `bewitched'. The non-believers could not give any reasonable explanation to this irresistible beauty and power of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān. However, they had to find some excuse to put people off and to justify their opposition. They invented lies and said, `The Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān is nothing but poetry or magic.' God refuted their statement: “Therefore proclaim you the praises of your Lord, for by the grace of your Lord you are no soothsayer, nor are you one possessed.”

The Arabs waged war after war to silence the Prophet of Islam. But the easiest way would have been to produce a short surah (like al-Kawthar) of equal standard and the claim of the Prophet would have been refuted. No sane person would use a sword when a few words could serve his purpose in a more effective way. But the Arabs preferred war and it proves that they found the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān unanswerable.

To discover the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān's eloquence, non-Arab speakers can turn to the sayings of those Arabs who were experts in the language of those days and which are recorded in history, and also to the present day authors who write on this subject. From the days of the Prophet till now, all specialists in the art of Arabic eloquence have confessed to the unparalleled eloquence of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān and have been overwhelmed in the face of it. For example, the famous contemporary writer `Abdul Fatt<sup>ḥ</sup> Tabari writes, “Arab history tells us of many famous men, knowledgeable in the best poetry and prose, like Ibn al-Muqaffa, Jahiz, Ibn `Amid, Farazdaq, Bashshar, Abu Nuwas, Abu Tammam and so forth, but all of them have shown humility when faced with the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān, and have of necessity confessed that the great Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān is not the word of man, but a Divine revelation.”

Dr. Taha Husayn, the famous contemporary Egyptian writer, said, “The Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān transcends the limits of prose and poetry, because it has special qualities which cannot be found in any poem or prose. So the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān cannot be called poetry or prose, rather it should be said, `It is the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān, that is all.”

## (B) Harmonisation of its Themes

The Qur'ān is a book which covers many subjects and events. The discussions of its topics are not separated as is the case with normal books. It discusses many topics in one page at times, but without losing purpose and without going away from the main aim. Considering the range of the topics the Qur'ān comments on, the repetition of some stories, the non-classification of the topics, it is hard to find such a book without contradictions and errors.

By human standard, practically no book --of any subject-- is without errors and mistakes. But here is a book which was not written at one time. It is a collection of piece-meal revelations, covering a span of about twenty three years. Can any scholar believe that any human being, unlettered, will remember every single word which he had uttered during the previous twenty three years? It is impossible and hence the chances of contradictions. But the Qur'ān has no contradiction; and, according to that test, it is the word of God.

Moreover, if someone reaches a stage of mastery over a special subject, he may display brilliance in that subject; but if he undertakes something on a subject of which he is not a master, he will not be able to produce any distinctive work. Although the Qur'ān contains many different subjects, it has succeeded in retaining consistent style and unity of expression.

## (C) Scientific Revelations

Now, a non-Arab may rightly wonder about the claim of literary miracle. He does not know Arabic, so the miraculous aspect of language might not be appealing to him at all, or even, to some extent, to the illiterate Arabs of our days whose colloquial language is a far deviation from the classical style of the Qur'ān.

In modern days, we need a miracle in science, telling us what is in the heavens and within ourselves. The Qur'ān, although not a scientific text, reveals many secrets and wonders of the heavens and of ourselves as part of its call to believe in the Creator of the universe.

### **The Moon & The Sun:**

The Qur'ān says: ***Do not you see how God created seven heavens in harmony; and made the moon a light therein, and the sun a lamp? (75:16-17)*** The moon is a solid object which reflects light, hence it is a 'light'. But the sun is a source of energy and light, so it is described as a 'lamp'.

The sun is not static but moving in a path exactly computed. The Qur'ān declared these facts 1400 years ago: ***And the sun is moving on the course determined for it. That is the decree of the Almighty, the All-Knowing; and the moon, We have determined for it mansions (to traverse) till it becomes like the old (and withered) lower part of a date-stalk; the sun is not allowed to catch up with the moon, nor can the night outstay the day. Each swims along in (its own) orbit. (36:39-41)***

## Exploring The Space:

The Qur'ān says: ***O Company of jinn and men, if you have the power to penetrate the regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them); you will not penetrate them except with a power. (55:34)*** This verse comes with undoubted encouragement to explore and travel through outer space.

Here one should pause and think of the society in which the Prophet of Islam lived. The means of transportation were camels, horses and donkeys. The people lived in tents and worshipped idols. They had not even dreamt of a car or an aeroplane or even a machine of any kind. How does the Qur'ān put such a high idea to encourage people not only to fly but to travel to other planets and heavens? In materialistic thinking, such a task is impossible because they claim that human thoughts are reflections of his material environment. Then the only solution in this case is to believe that the Qur'ān is not a product of the human mind, but is a revelation from God. No human being could definitely put forth such an idea even if he were the greatest astronomer or scientist.

## Pharaoh's Body:

People in our times are proud of their knowledge and the Qur'ān baffles them even now. There are so many examples of verses which remained a puzzle for commentators until the discoveries of recent times made their meaning clear. Here is one example:

Speaking about the drowning of Pharaoh, the Qur'ān says: ***And We brought the children of Israel across the sea; and Pharaoh and his horse persuade them wrongfully and aggressively; till, when the calamity of drowning overtook him, he said, 'I believe that there is no God but He in whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit to Him.' What! Now! While you were disobedient before this and were of those who create disorder (in society). So this day We will save you in body only, so that you may be a sign to those who come after you. (10:91-93)***

These verses clearly say that Pharaoh's body was recovered and it became a sign of warning to later generations. But this thing is not mentioned in the Bible. Still the Qur'ān claimed that the body of Pharaoh was recovered; and 1300 years after this revelation, excavations have brought into light that body which was mummified and preserved for future generations, and even after these long centuries his face and body clearly show the effect of drowning.

If the Qur'ān was the work of a man, how did he know of this fact which was not known even to the Jews and the Egyptians of that time?

\* \* \*

In the end, it is necessary to remind the Muslims that if they get to know the Qur'ān, or get to know it better and put its great, magnificent and precise project into action, greatness will be theirs, and more.

The huge edifice of the greatness of Muslims collapsed when they stopped putting the commands of this heavenly book into practice. So they fell down, they were satisfied only with the name of Islam.

Our departed greatness will return when we leave this crooked way and, starting again, become true Muslims and put the Qurʾān at the top of the sights of our hearts and our wisdom, and make it an example for life, as the Prophet said, “When calamities encompass you like the darkness of the night, reach for the Qurʾān.”

\* \* \*

This lesson has been adapted from S. Saʿeed Akhtar Rizvi, *The Qurʾān & Hadith* (1971) Dar-es-salaam, Tanzania with few passages added from Dar Rah-e Haq, *The Roots of Religion*.

## Question Paper on Lesson 12

*Question 1:* [16 points]

Fill in the blanks from the pool of words given below by simply placing the number of the correct word in the blank space.

The Qurʾān is a \_\_\_\_\_ miracle. Its beauty, \_\_\_\_\_ style, simplistic \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ appeal is, on one hand, impossible to reproduce; and, on the other hand, it penetrates the heart of a person who \_\_\_\_\_ seeks knowledge and \_\_\_\_\_.

The Qurʾān has only one single purpose and that is to \_\_\_\_\_ mankind to the path of God. In this contest, it discusses various subjects such as chemistry, \_\_\_\_\_, biology, \_\_\_\_\_, environmental and social sciences, etc. But with a single consistent objective throughout and that is to \_\_\_\_\_ human intellect to the level where he can understand the purpose of his \_\_\_\_\_ and willingly \_\_\_\_\_ to the will of God.

Thus some of the miraculous aspects of the Qurʾān are its unique style, its \_\_\_\_\_ and consistency of purpose and \_\_\_\_\_ of scientific facts that the modern science can only \_\_\_\_\_ as it progresses with time.

1. creation
2. unity
3. group dynamics
4. logic
5. guide
6. verify
7. multi-dimensional

8. consistent
9. guidance
10. eloquent
11. sincerely
12. submit
13. linguistic
14. elevate
15. astro-physics
16. revelation

*Question 2:* [20 points]

True or False:

- (a) The Prophets were given miracles to give them power and overcome opposition.
- (b) Prophet `Isa was given a stick which turned into a huge snake.
- (c) Some miracles of other prophets exist even today.
- (d) The Qur`ān was revealed piecemeal over a period of 21 years.
- (e) Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was given the Qur`ān as a miracle.
- (f) The Qur`ān is the creator of Arabic grammar.
- (g) `Abdul Fattāh Tabari, the famous Arab scholar, wrote “The Qur`ān transcends the limits of prose and poetry.”
- (h) The Qur`ān's main miraculous feature is its strength of conviction and unity of purpose.
- (i) The Qur`ān contains statements that modern science, despite its great advancement, is neither able to verify nor deny.
- (j) The Qur`ān's challenge to mankind to produce just one chapter like its own remains unfulfilled even today.

*Question 3:* [4 points]

What was the final challenge of the Qur`ān to the Arabs?

Question 4: [10 points]

Describe at least three miraculous aspects of the holy Qurʾān.

For 5 Bonus Points: Give an example of a scientific fact which the Qurʾān stated 14 centuries ago which was later verified by modern science.

1. New Researches into the Composition & Exegesis of the Qurʾān [London, 1902] p. 9

# Lesson 13: The Last Message & The Last Prophet

## 1. Muhammad, the Last Prophet

Islam, from the very beginning, has said that it is the last divine message to mankind, the final manifestation of revelation and prophethood, and the culmination of the previous revealed religions. The Muslims believe that the Prophet of Islam is the last Messenger of God, and that the Qurʾān is the final revelation of God.

The Qurʾān has explained the universality of Islam and has shown that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the last messenger sent by God. For example, verse 40 of chapter 33 says:

***“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets; Allah has knowledge of everything.”***

Prophet Muhammad (a.s.) himself once said to ‘Ali (a.s.): “In all respects, your relationship to me is like that of Hārūn to Mūsā (i.e., if Hārūn was Mūsā’s brother, I also take you as a brother; if he was Mūsā’s successor, you also will be my successor). Except that Mūsā was not the last prophet, and I am the last.”<sup>1</sup> He also said, “I am the last brick in the building of prophethood. With my coming, the prophets have come to an end.”

Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said, “With the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad’s (a.s.), revelation came to an end.”<sup>2</sup> The eighth Imam, ‘Ali ar-Rīzā (a.s.), said, “The pure religion of Muhammad (a.s.) will not be abrogated till the day of resurrection, and also no prophet will follow him.”<sup>3</sup>

What we have just recounted is only a sample of tens of hadith which clearly and succinctly explain the conclusive status of the Prophet (a.s.) and the perpetuity of his pure religion; they leave no room for doubt.

## 2. The Universality of Islam

Islam is an everlasting religion because it is all-inclusive. It is a comprehensive project based on human disposition, and it embraces all aspects of life: individual, social, material, spiritual, doctrinal, emotional, economic, legal and so forth, and it explains the basis of each in the most realistic manner for all peoples, in every time and place.

So now let us study some aspects of this universality.

### (A) The God of Islam

The God of Islam is the Preserver of all worldly things. He is not the god of a tribe or of a special group only. In their prayers, the Muslims say: ***“Al-hamdu lil Iḥi Rabbi l-`amin — Praise be to Allḥ, the Lord of the Universe.”*** (Qurḥn 1:2)

God is a reality without parallel, beyond all human attributes and likeness; He is not like the gods of some religions who are presented in the form of a human, an animal or a thing.

The God of Islam is One without equal; He has no son or mother or father; neither partner nor associate. This is the message of a short chapter of the Qurḥn which the Muslims recite every day in their prayers so as to be far away from the possibility of associating anything with Him.

### (B) Equality In Islam

Superiority of race or segregation is not only eliminated and void in the eyes of Islam, but the equality of man is an absolute reality in Islam. Islam says that all human beings are equal, all are from one father and one mother, and are members of one family—so from the aspect of nobility, origin and connections, they are equal partners. No one is better than anyone else, except in purity and devotion to God.

The Qurḥn says: ***O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into races and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allḥ is the most God-fearing of you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-aware.*** (49:13)

### (C) Islam & Freedom of Thought

Islam is a firm supporter of rational argument and freedom of thought. Imposition of ideas or beliefs, or the stifling of voices does not exist in Islam. The Qurḥn says: ***There is no compulsion in religion [because] the truth has become clear from the error.*** (2:256)

In Islam, investigation of the foundations of beliefs is a duty for every individual, and it is an obligation for everyone not to accept anything without proof. Islam censures those who blindly follow the beliefs of their fathers and ancestors, and commends self-investigation and deep examination. It rejects feeble-

mindedness and vain speculation, and urges only to the perusal of knowledge and certainty. The Qur'<sup>ān</sup> says: ***And pursue not that you have no knowledge of; the hearing, the sight, the heart – all of these shall be questioned of.*** (17:36)

Islam grants its opponents the right to set forth their queries in reasonable discussion and to enumerate their proofs and listen to the answers. Say, ***“Produce your proof, if you speak truly.”*** (2:111) This was the reason that many Jews, Christians and those from other groups who took a stand against Islam, came to the Prophet or the Imams, and sat down and discussed their religious ideas.

### **(D) Islam & Knowledge**

Islam lends great value to thinking. It asks the learned and wise to think and think again about creation, time, night and day, the sky, the earth, animal life, man and the universe and what is in it. The Qur'<sup>ān</sup> says:

***“Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and day, and the ship that floats in the sea with profit to men, and the water Allah sends down from the sky therewith reviving the earth after it is dead, and His scattering abroad on it all types of crawling things, and the turning about of the winds and the clouds suspended between heaven and earth – surely there are signs for a people who use their mind.”*** (2:164)

The Qur'<sup>ān</sup> also asks people to study the lives of the nations who came before, their thoughts and the causes of their decline and fall, so that they may keep far from the precipices of their destruction. It says, ***“Indeed many events have taken place before you, therefore travel on the earth and see what was the outcome of those who rejected [the message of God]. This is a clear statement for mankind, and a guidance and an admonition for the pious people.”*** (3:136)

In short, Islam desires that man should think deeply and freely and travel across the far horizons of thought and knowledge and take everything that is best for the improvement of his being.

For this reason, Islam values scientific advances and discoveries which are for the help of humanity, and this is why scientists and scholars emerged in the centuries following the advent of Islam, to decorate the high road of human civilization with the jewel of their scientific endeavours, so much so that their great names will shine forever at the summit of scientific history. They include J<sup>ā</sup>bir ibn Hayy<sup>ān</sup>, R<sup>ā</sup>zi, Ibn Sin<sup>ā</sup> (Avicenna) and Nas<sup>ī</sup>ru 'd-Din Tusi, who were celebrities in all the sciences of their time: philosophy, natural science, astronomy, alchemy, etc. The books of Ibn Sina were even taught in European universities up to the end of the last century. Jurji Zayd<sup>ān</sup>, the famous Christian writer of Lebanon, says in his *Ta'rikh at-Tamaddun al-Islami*, “As soon as Islamic civilization found its feet, and the new sciences spread among the Muslims, Muslim scholars appeared whose thinking was more important than the founders of some of the branches of the sciences. In fact these sciences took on a fresh colour with the new researches of Islamic scientists, and progresses due to Islamic civilization.” (p.

### **(E) Islam's Concept of Life**

There is no opposition, in Islam, between the material and the spiritual life. Islam does not approve of those who do not work in this world or make no effort; but neither does it accept those who only work for their material betterment without any regard to the spiritual life. Imam Ja`far as-S`adiq (a.s.) said: "He who abandons this world for the next (i.e., he who withdraws from the worldly life in the name of asceticism) and he who gives up the next world for this world — both are not from among us."<sup>4</sup>

So it can be said that in this matter Muslims should adjust their actions with equal movement in this world, by advancing with its happiness, and in the spiritual world, by enriching with its contentment. There is no monasticism in Islam if monasticism means being a burden on society, withdrawal from social life, egoism or seclusion. The Prophet said, "There is no monasticism for us; the monasticism for my followers is to struggle in the way of Allah."<sup>5</sup>

### **(F) Islamic Laws & Change in Lifestyle**

The transformation, evolution and development of the means of living and progress in the various elements of civilization have no kind of incompatibility with the eternity of the laws of Islam. How? Because the incompatibility of a law with this kind of progress can only happen if the law depends on the specific material means available at the time and place the law was made.

For example, if a law is made that only the hand must be used in writing, or only a donkey must be used for traveling, etc. then this kind of law becomes outdated with the advance of science and technology. But if the law was not based on specific and transitory means of life, and instead it pertained to the basic and permanent need of mankind, then there will be no clash between that law and the new means of life.

Islamic laws are of the latter category, that is, they do not look especially at the means of life at a given period in history. For example, they say, "A Muslim nation must be strong enough to protect itself from foreign powers." This law, even though made at a time when sword was a means of defence, looks at the permanent need of a Muslim society. However, if Islam had said that a Muslim nation must defend itself with swords, then this law would become obsolete in the twentieth century.

Whatever changes take place in the means of life, it will not be outside the all inclusive domain of the laws of Islam — this is, indeed, the secret of Islam's eternity.

## **3. The Continuation of Divine Assistance**

Some people imagine that since Muhammad (a.s.) is the Last Messenger, the divine guidance from God has stopped completely. This is not valid because the meaning of the finality of prophethood is only that after the Prophet of Islam, no other prophet, messenger, book or religion will come. It does not mean

that the connection between the unseen world and this world has been severed.

The divine guidance of God for human society is everlasting and is continued, according to the Shi'a Muslims, by means of the twelve Imams of Ahlu 'l-bayt. According to Mulla Sadra, in *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, "Revelation, that is to say the descent of the angel to the delegated and prophetic eyes, has been forever cut off [after the Prophet of Islam], but the door of inspiration and illumination has not and will never be closed, and it is not possible for it to be interrupted."

You will learn more about this in the next lesson.

\* \* \*

This lesson adapted from Dar Rah-e Haq, *The Roots of Religion*, and has been edited to suit the need of this course by S.M. Rizvi.

## Question Paper on Lesson 13

*Question 1:* [15 points]

True or False:

- (a) Islam preaches belief in a God who is the sole Creator and Sustainer of all things.
- (b) Islam does not allow dissenting views.
- (c) Muhammad is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets.
- (d) Islam discourages theological speculation.
- (e) Islam provides a comprehensive code of conduct to its followers.
- (f) Islam gives more importance to spiritual life than material life.
- (g) Islam promotes monasticism.
- (h) Islamic laws are perpetually valid because they are independent of material means of implementation.
- (i) Islam promotes equality, encourages intellectual inquiry, exalts pursuit of knowledge and maintains a balance between material and spiritual life.
- (j) Islam encourages suppression of desires.

*Question 2:* [10 points]

Circle the letter of one correct statement:

- (a) According to Islam, Christianity and Judaism are valid religions even today.

(b) It is permissible to revise the fundamental Islamic principles to suit the needs of changing times.

(c) Imam 'Ali ar-Riza (a.s.) said, "With the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (a.s.), revelation came to an end."

(d) Muslims believe that the Prophet of Islam is the Last Messenger of God and that the Qur'ān is the Final Revelation.

(e) Islam is the continuation of Christianity and Judaism.

*Question 3:* [25 points: 15 for (a) & 10 for (b)]

(a) What is the fundamental criterion for a law to be eternal and permanent?

(b) Describe at least two Islamic laws that would fit the criterion you mentioned in (a).

[1.](#) This is an authentic hadith accepted by all Muslims, see al-Amini, al-Ghadir, vol. 3, p. 196–202.

[2.](#) Nahju 'l-Balaghah, sermon 133.

[3.](#) Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 2, p. 34.

[4.](#) Wasā'ilu 'sh-Shi'a, vol. 12, p. 49

[5.](#) Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 70, p. 114.

# Lesson 14: The Imāmat: Succession to the Prophet

## 1. Introduction

Eventually the inevitable occurred and the soul of the Prophet (a.s.) flew to its eternal abode. For in the words of the poet Nizāmi, 'he who has not died and will never die is only God'.

It was clear that with the death of this great man a storm would blow up over the peaceful ocean of Islam, and that turbulent waters would be churned up. The ambitious would try to benefit and to get as much as they could from this turbulence and commotion, to fish in these troubled waters. On the other hand, we know that the great mass of people believe in anything they see; they have always been thus and have always been fuel for a fire that anyone may care to kindle. They need constant training and continual taking care of, and without an educator they cannot reach their own perfection.

Now we must ask if such a society, in such conditions, needs a leader who can take the reins of command in the place of the Prophet or not, so that the result of all the pains the Messenger of Allah took should not be dissipated? Is there not a need for a knowledgeable, political authority who is

thoroughly acquainted with the Divine laws and who can guide and lead the people on the right path in the right way?

The Shi'a belief holds that the Love of God and His infinite wisdom demand that after the Prophet the people should not be without a leader. Such a leader must be sinless and wise, so that his correctness of speech and action may be a guarantee and a true sign of a superior man, someone selected by God. He must take the reins of the Muslim community in his hands and lead and guide them with the extensive wisdom and foresight, without error, and this he must take from the Prophet of Islam. Because there is no reason for God, Who was considerate of the people in the time of the Prophet to change His judgment and to withdraw His loving concern.

How could it be possible that God, Who by His Grace created thousands of elaborate details for the protection and growth of our bodies, has neglected to appoint a goodly successor to the Prophet? Does not the bringing into existence of the best of communities, which is the aim of Islam, need the selection of the best of leaders? Is not the appointment of a sinless leader, educator and Imam the basis of the contentment of society? Can Islamic society attain contentment and happiness without divine supervision and leadership?

So if there is a need for the divine, sinless leader, and Islamic society wants a divine educator, how can it be said that this matter has been ignored by Islam and that the people have been left to themselves?

In short, the same philosophy which demands the appointment of the Prophet also precisely demands that God should introduce and appoint a successor through the Prophet.

The Prophet of Islam (a.s.) said in the latter part of his life: "O People, I swear before Allah that I have explained what will make you nearer to heaven and what will take you far from the Fire." With this explanation, how can it be said that the Prophet of Islam did not appoint his immediate successor?

## **2. Is the Qur'an not Sufficient?**

The Qur'an is the fundamental basis for every kind of Islamic concept. Like a mighty rock, all the fruitful buildings of Islamic knowledge have been made steady on it. It is the clear spring from which all the streams of insight flow. The credibility and prestige of other religious foundations rest on it.

But, on the basis of the proofs we shall give, one cannot be content with the Qur'an alone to solve the problems of leadership, the differences which crop up in Islamic society, or to satisfy the needs of the Muslims people.

1. Firstly because the Qur'an and its great and abundant contents need commentary and explanation. Since all the verses are not alike in clarity, unacquainted readers in the first moments of their journey may become lost and not take the path to their destination.

So the Prophet himself or those appointed by him who have a spiritual link with what is beyond the external world, must be a guide in this valley also, so that they can interpret and explain the Qur'ānic verses according to Allāh's purpose. For if not, ordinary people will sometimes interpret incorrectly and will end up far from the truth. The Prophet himself has said, "Anyone who interprets the Qur'ān according to his own opinions will have a place in the Fire."

It is recounted that a thief was brought into the presence of the Abbasid caliph Mu`tasim so that he might be punished according to the punishment prescribed in the Qur'ān. The command of the Qur'ān is: "Cut off the hand of a thief." But Mu`tasim did not know from where the hand should be cut. He asked his Sunni `ulama.

One of them said, "From the wrist."

"From the elbow," another said.

Mu`tasim was not satisfied. He was forced to ask Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.), the ninth Shi'a Imam, who was present in that gathering. The Imam replied,

"Only four fingers must be cut off."

"Why?"

"Since Allāh has decreed in the Qur'ān, ***'And that the places of sajdah are for Allāh.'*** (72: 18) that is the seven places of the body [which touches the ground in prostration], ..... so they should not be cut off."

All those present accepted and were satisfied with his proof.

This kind of interpretation is in fact interpretation of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān, and is peculiar to the Ahlu 'l-bayt (a.s.), and no one, to whatever degree he may be a master of interpretation, is able to succeed in perfectly understanding interpretation in this way unless he has taken the lead from the Imams of the Ahlu 'l-bayt and has made them his example.

2. What we have said above is only in regard to the correct interpretation of the esoteric meaning and commands of the Qur'ān. But beneath the esoteric words and meanings of the Qur'ān, there are shades and layers of spiritual messages which can only be correctly explained by qualified guides. The Prophet of Islam (a.s.) said, "The Qur'ān has a beautiful outer meaning and a profound inner meaning."<sup>1</sup> He also said, "The Qur'ān has profundity, and its profundity is deep too, up to seven inner layers."<sup>2</sup>

According to the great exegetists, the entire Qur'ān has a hermeneutics and an inner meaning to it, and to arrive at them by thought and research alone is not possible. It is not explicable to all through words, for the ability to perceive and practice this is not given to all men. Only those near to God, the pure, those free from moral corruption, can comprehend this, and use it for the solution of the differences and incidents between men, and learn it, and then, by virtue of the immunity from error and mistake that they have from God, teach it to others.

Those who are spiritually near to God and free from error are the Prophet and his Ahlu 'l-bayt about whom the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> says: **Allah desires only to keep away from you, O the Ahlu 'l-bayt, abomination and to cleanse you. (33:33)** There is also a hadith which says that only the Prophet and his Ahlu 'l-bayt can perceive all the truths of the Qur'<sup>ān</sup>.<sup>3</sup> This implies that the Prophet (who was the recipient of the Qur'<sup>ān</sup>) and his Ahlu 'l-bayt (who were his close family-members) are more acquainted with the meaning of the Qur'<sup>ān</sup>.

It is because of this connection between the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> and the Ahlu 'l-bayt that the Prophet said, "I leave two things in your trust, the Book of Allah and my family; if you attach yourselves to these two you will never go astray."<sup>4</sup>

As a postscript, the summary of this lesson can be found in the discussion which students of Imam Ja`far as-S<sup>ā</sup>diq (a.s.) had with a Sunni in the presence of the Imam. A man from Damascus (which was the support base of the Umayyids) had come to Medina with the intention of debating with one of the students of Imam Ja`far as-S<sup>ā</sup>diq (a.s.).

The Imam said, "Introduce this man to Hish<sup>ām</sup>." Hish<sup>ām</sup> was the youngest of his students.

"O Child," said the man from Damascus, "ask me concerning the imamate of this man (referring to Imam Ja`far as-S<sup>ā</sup>diq)."

Hish<sup>ām</sup> was angered by his lack of manners and shuddered. But he concealed his temper and began: "Is your Creator more kind and loving towards His slaves, or the slaves themselves?"

"The Creator."

"What has the loving Creator done for his slaves?"

"He has appointed a clear guidance and proof, to protect them from differences and disunity, and to establish friendship and unity among them. He has made clear to them their religious duties."

"Who is that guide?"

"The Prophet."

"Who is it after the death of the Prophet?"

"The Book of Allah and the sunnah of the Prophet of Islam."

"Can the Book of Allah and the sunnah of the Prophet prevent us from differences today?"

"Yes."

"So why do you and I who are both Muslims have a dispute, or in other words, why have you come here from Damascus as a result of this difference?"

The man from Damascus was silent and said no more.

Imam Ja`far as-S<sup>ā</sup>diq (a.s.) said to him, "Why don't you speak up?"

"What shall I say?" he replied. "If I say we have no difference, then I lie. And just as I said the Book of Allah and the sunnah of the Prophet should take away the differences between us, so this also is untrue,

because, in many instances, the Book of Allah and the sunnah do not have a clear and obvious meaning that could dispel our differences.”

So the man from Damascus said that he wanted to ask the very same question from Hisham. The Imam agreed.

“O Hisham. Who is more loving towards people? God, or the people themselves?”

“God.”

“Did he send them someone to protect the unity of Muslims and to take over their control, to explain to them the truth and falsity?”

“Are you talking about the time of the Prophet, or about now?”

“In the time of the Prophet, it was him; no, tell me about now.”

“Today it is this man who is seated here and to whom people come from every corner of the land, and who gives us news of the heaven and the earth; and this knowledge was bequeathed to him from his father and so on back to the Prophet.”

“How can I verify and accept this statement for myself?”

“Go now and ask him anything you like.”

“That's right, there is no excuse; only I must ask.”

Then Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq (a.s.) told him about his journey and of the things that had happened to him on his way which only the man could know of. When he had explained so that no doubt remained for him, the man declared his belief in the Imam.

\* \* \*

This lesson has been adapted with minor changes from Dar Rah-e Haqq, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum, Iran.

## [Question Paper on Lesson 14](#)

*Question 1:* [14 points]

True or False:

- (a) Islamic society needs a divine educator who can guide people to the right path.
- (b) All Qur'anic verses are equally clear in their meaning and contain straight forward instructions.
- (c) An Imam is a divinely appointed person whose function is to interpret and explain the Qur'an according to God's purpose.
- (d) The Qur'an alone can guide people to the right path in the right way.
- (e) The Qur'anic verses have an inner meaning that can be derived by thoughtful research and

intellectual inquiry.

(f) An Imam is appointed by the Prophet to continue the office of prophethood after his death.

(g) The Qur'<sup>٤</sup>n has a beautiful outer meaning and a profound inner meaning.

*Question 2: [20 points]*

For each of the following statements circle the number of the most correct answer:

(a) If the Qur'<sup>٤</sup>n was sufficient to guide Muslims to the right path, then

(i) the history of the Muslims would have been different.

(ii) exegetists would not have disagreed on the interpretation of Qur'<sup>٤</sup>nic verses.

(iii) there would not be 73 sects in Islam each claiming its interpretation of the Qur'<sup>٤</sup>n as most accurate.

(iv) people would interpret the Qur'<sup>٤</sup>n according to their personal preference.

(b) Imams are appointed by

(i) people.

(ii) the Prophet.

(iii) prominent people of the community.

(iv) God.

(c) What is the most important quality of a divinely appointed Imam.

(i) honesty.

(ii) integrity.

(iii) truthfulness.

(iv) infallibility.

(v) trustworthiness.

(d) Exegetists are scholars and intellectuals who

(i) translate the Qur'<sup>٤</sup>nic verses.

(ii) interpret the Qur'<sup>٤</sup>nic verses.

(iii) narrate hadith.

(iv) explain the sunnah.

(v) describe history.

(e) is logical to conclude, based on this lesson, that an Imam should provide

(i) spiritual leadership.

(ii) temporal authority.

(iii) moral leadership.

(iv) a political leadership based on highest moral and ethical standards.

(v) both spiritual and political leadership based on the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> and sunnah.

*Question 3:* [8 points]

Describe the hadith narrated by the Sunni scholar, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, which undeniably proves not only the necessity but also the existence of a divinely appointed Imam.

*Question 4:* [8 points]

Explain and discuss the most powerful argument that a disciple of Imam Ja`far as-S<sup>ā</sup>diq (a.s.) presented to a man from Damascus against the belief that the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> is sufficient to guide the people to the right path.

[1.](#) Al-Kulayni, al-Usul min al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 599.

[2.](#) Al-Kashani, Tafsir as-Safi, vol. 1, p. 39.

[3.](#) Tafsir Mir'atu 'l-Anwar, p. 16.

[4.](#) Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3 (Beirut) p. 17; al-Amini, al-Ghadir, vol. 1, p. 55; Ghayatu 'l-Mar<sup>ā</sup>m, p. 212

## Lesson 15: Amir Al-Mu'min<sup>īn</sup> 'Ali: The Chosen Successor of the Prophet

### 1. The Successor of the Prophet

The Shi'a Ithn<sup>ā</sup> `Ashari Muslims believe that after the Prophet of Islam, the leadership of the world of Islam fell to Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Ali (a.s.), and then to his eleven infallible descendants. This belief is as clear as the rays of the morning sun, and those who are unprejudiced and impartial will have no cause to

doubt it.

Jabir bin 'Abdullah, one of the prominent companions of the Prophet (a.s.), said, "The day the verse concerning obedience to Allah, the Prophet and the Ulu 'l-Amr was revealed (4:59), I asked the Prophet: 'We know Allah and the Prophet, but who is the third?' He said, 'They are the Imams, my successors, the first of whom is 'Ali bin Abi Talib, then, in order, Hasan, Husayn, 'Ali ibn Husayn, Muhammad bin 'Ali, who was called Baqir in the Torah, and whom you, Jabir, will meet and to whom you will convey my salam; then, after him, Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq, Musa ibn Ja'far, 'Ali ibn Musa, Muhammad ibn 'Ali, 'Ali bin Muhammad, Hasan ibn 'Ali, and in the end the son of Hasan ibn 'Ali will come, whose name will be the same as mine (Muhammad Abu 'l-Qasim).'"<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The First Leader

No society, at any time or place, can stand free and liberated without a leader. We also know that if a ruler is dedicated to the wellbeing of the society, then he must strive to protect it and he must also take into consideration the present as well as the future of that society.

It is because of this necessity that rulers, even during short journeys, appoint a deputy. This is evident in every case of leadership. A head of the family, a principal or headmaster of the school, a foreman in a factory, all put a deputy in their place for the absence of even a few hours. This matter is so obvious that it needs no proof.

The great Prophet of Islam, who was the leader of the Islamic world, observed this very principle. Wherever the light of Islam shone for the first time, he always appointed an administrator for that place to look after its affairs. When he sent armies for jihad, he appointed a commander, and sometimes appointed several persons as deputy commanders so that if one was killed, the army would not be left without a commander. Thus we know of persons whom the Prophet appointed as his deputies and representatives whenever he traveled from Medina, so that Medina should not be without a leader during his absence.

The Shi'as ask how, with this evidence, it is consistent with the wisdom of the Prophet that he should die without appointing a successor. Which of the following possibilities seems reasonable:

Was the Islamic society, after the death of the Prophet, not in need of a leader again?

Or did the Prophet of Islam attach no importance to the Muslim community after he had gone?

Or were concerns and prudence something he could do nothing about?

Or did he not know who was the worthiest successor?

Which of these possibilities seems more reasonable?

With the quality of leadership and the concern for the affairs of the people which we see in the Prophet of Islam, how could he have not given any guidance or instruction on this vital matter of the Muslims'

leadership?

In the light of this reality, the Shi'as proceeded to investigate the original texts and documents of Islam and they came across an enormous quantity of sources which made them conclude that there are clear, sufficient, precise orders from the Prophet of Islam about his successor: the verse of wilayah, the hadith of Ghadir, the hadith of Safinah, the hadith of Thaqalayn, and many more, all of which are tested, examined and explained in the great works done on this subject.

From all these we shall select only the hadith of Ghadir and we shall seek to judge its value and implications in an unprejudiced manner.

### 3. The Historical Hadith of Ghadir

In the tenth year of the Islamic calendar (hijrah), the Prophet set out for Mecca to perform the pilgrimage (hajj). This hajj was undertaken in the last years of the Prophet's life, and for this reason history has given it the name of the "Farewell Pilgrimage" (*hajjatu l-wida'*). Muslims participated in extraordinarily large numbers in this journey of the Prophet to Mecca with the eagerness to learn and do the pilgrimage from the Prophet directly. They numbered about 120,000. Some groups joined him in the town of Mecca.

After completing the hajj, when the Prophet was returning to Medina, the following verse was revealed on the 18th day of Dhil Hijja at Ghadir Khumm:

***O Messenger, deliver that [message] which has been sent down to you from your Lord; for if you do not, then [it be as if] you have not delivered His message [at all]. Allah will protect you from men. (5:67)***

Thus a great message reached the Prophet from Allah. The edges of the caravan were slowly rolling along. Suddenly a herald proclaimed on behalf of the Prophet: "Allah has given a command...Let everyone await the command..."

Thereupon, the Prophet (a.s.) gave the order that everyone should stop moving and come to a halt; and they did. Many travelers stood there on the order of the Prophet to hear the news. We have been told that the desert of Ghadir Khumm is plain without water; it was midday and the heat of the sun was scorching. What is the news for which the Prophet is keeping the people standing in such a place, at such a time?

Then the sound of adhān was heard. The Prophet performs the prayer with the people, and then camel saddle-packs are built up to form a raised platform. The Prophet stands on the top of them. People catch their breath, and are as quiet as the sands of the desert. They are waiting for the news.

The Prophet starts. After praising Allah, the Prophet says, "Do you agree that I have fulfilled my responsibility by conveying the message of Allah to you?"

"We are the witnesses that you have delivered the message to us, and that you made every effort in this direction. May Allah give you the best reward!"

"Do you witness to the unity of God, the prophethood of his slave, Muhammad, and to heaven and hell, death and the resurrection, and to the life after death?"

"We do witness to these."

"May Allah be our witness!" And then he said, "O people; I and you, we shall see one another besides [the fountain of] Kawthar [on the day of judgment]. Be careful after me how you deal with two precious things."

"O Prophet, what are these two things?"

"The Book of Allah, and my descendants. Allah told me that these two are not be separated from one another till they reach me beside the Kawthar. Do not go ahead of them, for you will be ruined. Do not fall behind them, for you will also be ruined."

Then he raised the hand of 'Ali so that everyone could see him and know him. Then, in the same position, he read the divine order of succession.

"O people, who is more deserving among the believers to have wilāyah (authority) and guardianship over them?"

"Allah and the Prophet know best."

"Allah gave me wilāyah, and I am more worthy than the believers and the followers themselves. Therefore, to whosoever I am his wali (master) and guardian, 'Ali is his master and guardian too. O Allah, be the friend of his friends, and the enemy of his enemies. Help anyone who helps him, and punish anyone who rebels against him."

"Now everyone who is present must tell [the event to] those who are absent."

The people had not yet dispersed when the following verse was revealed:

***Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed my blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion. (5:3)***

Then the Prophet cried out: "Allāhu Akbar! The religion of Allah has been perfected, and He is pleased with my prophethood and the wilāyah of 'Ali after me."

After this ceremony, people felicitated Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali. Among the foremost of the companions who felicitated him were Abu Bakr and `Umar who said, "How good for you, O 'Ali, to have become the master of me and every believing man and woman."

## (A) The Authenticity of the Hadith of Ghadir

From the point of view of its chain of narration, the hadith of Ghadir is so strong that it is probably unique.

One hundred and ten of the companions (*sahābah*) of the Prophet who were present at Ghadir have narrated it from the Prophet without any intermediary, and also eighty four of the disciples of the companions (*tābi'iyin*). The unbiased scholars of the Sunni world have mentioned the event of Ghadir in their books with great documentation. `Allamah Amini has mentioned three hundred and fifty such scholars in his al-Ghadir. Many great Islamic scholars have written books exclusively on the event of Ghadir, and twenty-six such writers have been mentioned in al-Ghadir. Dictionary compilers have related the story of Ghadir under the entry of `Ghadir' or `Mawla' (master).

So there can not be the smallest doubt, nor the least shadow over the chain of narration of the hadith of Ghadir except for those handful of people who can stand in the light of the sun and feel its warmth on their skin but still say that there is no light or warmth.

## (B) The Meaning of "Mawla" in the Hadith of Ghadir

The hadith of Ghadir is so striking that everybody must in all fairness notice and then become certain that 'Ali became the first successor of the Prophet. So let us look at the crucial word and context of the hadith.

*Mawla*, in this hadith, means someone who has the status of wilayah and imamate, and can give his opinion and command on it; his command has priority over all other commands. For this reason, before he said, "He whose master (*mawla*) I am," the Prophet asked, "O People, who among the believers has more authority (*awla*)?"

Awla, or having more authority, means that the Prophet's wish comes before the wish of the people, and that whatever he says or does is an authority for the people. People follow him; he has wilayah and guardianship over them. Now, we can see that just as in the first sentence, the authority and wilayah of the Prophet is mentioned, so in the following sentence the word `mawla' for 'Ali must have the same meaning so that there can be some connection between the two sentences.

Therefore the correct meaning which we get from these few sentences is as the Prophet asked: "Do not I have more authority over you?" "Yes!" everyone replied. "So, whosoever among you on whom I have authority, 'Ali also has authority. After me, he will be the mawla of all Muslims and my successor."

Thus, in this hadith, there is no question of any other meaning for `mawla' apart from having authority or priority -- wilayah and imamate; and any other meaning in its place is entirely irrelevant. We should also note that the Prophet of Islam kept people standing in this great heat. This historical fact makes it clear that the matter has a special importance; for, if not, no reasonable man would suppose that the Prophet

would detain people under such conditions when his purpose was only to remind them of a trivial matter, for example, that 'Ali was his friend!

\* \* \*

This lesson has been adapted and abridged from Dar Rah-e Haqq, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum, Iran.

## Question Paper on Lesson 15

*Question 1:* [8 points]

True or False:

- (a) The Prophet predicted that Jabir bin 'Abdullah will meet Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.).
- (b) The Prophet of Islam considered his ummah capable of selecting a successor after his death.
- (c) When the Prophet sent armies for jihad, he used to appoint a commander & several deputy commanders.
- (d) Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali's name is mentioned in the original Torah as "al-Baqir".
- (e) The event of Ghadir took place in 11th year of hijrah.
- (f) The word "awla" in the hadith of Ghadir means "one who has more authority".
- (g) "Tabayyn" means the companions of the Prophet.
- (h) 'Allamah Amini has mentioned 350 Sunni scholars who have described the event of Ghadir.

*Question 2:* [15 points]

Name at least three authentic ahadith of the Prophet of Islam which clearly and undeniably settle the question of succession after his death.

*Question 3:* [6 points]

Circle the letter of the correct answer:

In the Qur'anic verse concerning the obedience to Allah, the Prophet, and the Ulu'l-amr, the term "*ulu'l-amr*" refers to:

- (a) the pious people of the community.
- (b) the rulers of the time.
- (c) the 12 Imams of the Ahlu'l-bayt.
- (d) the people of authority.
- (e) the people of prominence and great wealth.

*Question 4:* [6 points]

Describe the most crucial part of the hadith of Ghadir exactly in the Prophet's words.

Question 5: [15 points]

Fill in the blanks:

- (a) The hadith of Ghadir is narrated by \_\_\_\_\_ companions of the Prophet who witnessed the event personally.
- (b) \_\_\_\_\_ of the disciples of the companions have mentioned the hadith of Ghadir.
- (c) \_\_\_\_\_ Sunni scholars have described the event of Ghadir.
- (d) \_\_\_\_\_ great scholars have written books exclusively on the subject of Ghadir.
- (e) `Allamah Amini has written a book on Ghadir called \_\_\_\_\_.

1. Lutfullah as-Safi, Muntakhabu 'l-Athar, p. 101. Safi quotes 50 similar hadith from Sunni and Shi'a sources.

## Lesson 16: Khilafat & Consultation (a review of Saqifah)

### 1. The Authority of the Prophet

Muslims maintain that the Prophet of Islam is infallible and sinless, and that his speech is the same as reality and is the wish of Allah. If it were otherwise, they say, Allah could not have commanded unconditional obedience to him. So his command is Allah's command, and it is absolutely mandatory to obey him.

Moreover, the Prophet had the right to make laws for the people, and his orders took precedence over everyone else's idea or opinion, and his commands on social and other matters had to be carried out. Allah says, **"The Prophet has a greater authority over the believers than they themselves have."** (33:6) He also says, **"When Allah and His messenger have decreed a matter, it is not for any believing man or woman to have a choice in the matter."** (33:36)

An examination of the last verse and its explanation makes it clear that the decree of the Prophet in every matter, even in personal matters, is binding, since the verse was revealed concerning an individual matter, viz., the marriage of Zayd bin Haritha and Zaynab bin Jahash. Zaynab was the cousin of the Prophet whereas Zayd was a slave whom the Prophet had freed. In order to break the pre-Islamic custom whereby the noble and rich did not marry outside their own, the Prophet ordered Zaynab to

marry Zayd. The verse revealed above shows that even in personal matters like marriage, the Prophet's command has to be obeyed, and so Zaynab married Zayd and was content with him.

## 2. Is the Prophet Subject to the Opinion of the Majority?

Some Sunni Muslims say that in social matters the opinion of the majority takes precedence over the commands of the Prophet. A deeper look at the verses mentioned above would make it clear that this view is incorrect. Now we shall proceed to an investigation of their evidence and then answer them.

Their evidence is verse 159 from chapter 3 of the Qur<sup>ān</sup>:

***It was by some mercy of God that you are gentle to them; had you been harsh and hard of heart, they would have scattered from around you. So pardon them, and pray [to Allah] for forgiveness of their [sins], and take counsel with them in the affair; and when you have resolved, put your trust in God, surely God loves those who put their trust [in Him].***

The answer to this is that this verse itself gives clear evidence that the Prophet is not subject to the opinion of the majority. In other words, the right of decision-making belongs to the Prophet even in social matters, and he has a duty, after consultation, to put his view into practice, not the opinion of others. We say so because the above mentioned verse says: "Take counsel with them in the affair, and when you have resolved, put your trust in God."

If it had been otherwise, and the view of others was to be acted upon, then it should have said, "When the opinion of the people has been obtained on a matter, then accept it and carry it out." But we see that the verse was not revealed in this manner.

What is more, there is evidence in history against the view of the Sunnis. For example, the peace treaty of Hudaibiyyah.

The Prophet of Islam left Medina to visit Mecca for the sole purpose of the minor pilgrimage (known as 'umrah). Near Mecca, the Meccan forces stopped him and said that the unbelievers of Mecca were not prepared to admit him into their city. The Prophet replied that he had not come for war, but only to visit the Ka'bah.

After much discussion, the Meccans agreed to make a peace treaty. The Prophet also agreed to the treaty although it had some conditions with which the Muslims were not happy.<sup>1</sup> On hearing of the Muslims' reluctance, Prophet told them: "I am the slave of Allah, and His Prophet. I will never turn away from the command of Allah, nor will He let me go."<sup>2</sup>

A reasonable question at this point would be that: 'What then is the meaning of the Prophet consulting with the people at all?'

The Prophet's consultation was part of the policy of both respecting the views of the people, and of using reason and thought for the progress of Islam. But this does not mean that the Prophet subjected himself to the majority opinion, and if he paid attention to the opinion of some person or group, it was, in fact, because that was also his own opinion.

### **3. Did Consultation Take Place after the Prophet's Death?**

In light of the above, we can state that the Prophet was above the opinion of the people, even above the majority view. We also saw that the Prophet had selected Imam 'Ali to be his successor on the day of Ghadir and informed the people of his decision.

So consultations aimed at appointing a successor after the Prophet are clearly against the wish of Allah and His Prophet, and, therefore, lack any legal grounds. We want, however, to ask whether consultative meetings were held after the Prophet's death, and, if so, whether the majority view was upheld.

#### **(A) Brief Look at Saqifah**

The Muslims of Medina were of mainly of two groups: the Ansar (the 'helpers' — natives of Medina) and the Muhajirin (the immigrants — mostly the Qurayshi who migrated from Mecca). The Ansar themselves consisted of two tribes: the Aws and Khazraj who were enemies of each other in pre-Islamic days.

After the Prophet's death and even before his burial, the Ansar gathered in Saqifah and proposed to declare Sa'd bin Ubadah (an Ansari from the tribe of Khazraj) as the new leader of the Muslims. Some among them started a discussion about how should they respond if the Qurayshi disputed with them in the issue of leadership.

While this discussion was going on among the Ansar in Saqifah, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (a Qurayshi Muhajir) was informed about it. He sent for Abu Bakr who left the Prophet's body and joined 'Umar. In Saqifah, Abu Bakr gave a speech in which he exhorted the virtues of the Muhajirin and proposed that the leader should be from the Muhajirin. He ended his speech as follows: "So we are the rulers, and you are the ministers and the counselors. We will not do anything without consulting you."

Hubab ibn Mundhir, an Ansari, stood up and said, "O Ansar, beware! Take the reins of government in your hands; for the people [i.e., Muhajirin] are under your protection, no one can quarrel with you. Do not fall out between yourselves, so that what you do is ruined."

'Umar, a Muhajir, responded: "That can never be! The Arabs would never submit to your rule; they will not yield, for the Prophet was not from you." Then very heated words were exchanged between Hubab and 'Umar.

In the middle of all this chaos, 'Umar swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. Then Bashir ibn Sa'd, leader of the Aws tribe of Ansar, swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. Seeing this, the other Ansaris of the tribe of Khazraj

also pledged allegiance so as not to lose favour in the eyes of Abu Bakr against their rival Aws!

This is the basis of Abu Bakr's khilafat.

### A Short Review of Saqifah:

The event narrated above, which is based on Sunni historical sources, shows that the khilafat of Saqifah was not a consultation among the Muslims, but was a plot to usurp the khilafat of Imam 'Ali (a.s.).

Firstly, while on his way to Saqifah, 'Umar sent word only to Abu Bakr, and not to anyone else. And Abu Bakr, who was in the house of the Prophet with the great companions and Imam 'Ali, did not tell anyone about the plot of Saqifah and left the corpse of the great man!

Does consultation mean that two or three people should go to the Ansār, create division among them and then impose themselves upon those people?

In consultation over such a great and important matter, should not at least the great companions and the Banu Hāshim have been called?

Secondly, the best comment on Abu Bakr's khilafat can be found in the words of 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb himself. During his own khilafat, 'Umar said, "We have heard that one of you said that if 'Umar dies I shall swear allegiance to so-and-so. Someone said to him that the allegiance to Abu Bakr was without consultation. It is true that allegiance to Abu Bakr took place all at once without much thought, but Allah protected us from mischief. However, no one should give you the example of Abu Bakr to follow." (Tabari, *Tārīkh*, vol. 4, p. 1820–1823)

Thirdly, 'Umar himself said, "After the Prophet, 'Ali, Zubayr and their companions rose up against us, and assembled in Fatimah's house." (ibid). We ask the Muslims whether this clear opposition to Abu Bakr's khilafat be ignored, especially as it is acknowledged by 'Umar himself?

Finally, if the matter of the khilafat was to be resolved on the basis of consultation, the Prophet of Islam would certainly have explained before his death, the way it should have been done. Is it thinkable that the Prophet would explain some very obscure commands, but make no mention of such a great matter as the leadership?

\* \* \*

This lesson has been adapted and abridged from Dar Rah-e Haqq, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum, Iran.

## Question Paper on Lesson 16

Question 1: [6 points]

State the Qur'ānic verse which clearly proves that the Prophet was not subjected to the majority opinion.

*Question 2:* [5 points]

What did `Umar ibn al-Khattāb say that historically proves that Abu Bakr's appointment as caliph had no moral, legal or ethical basis.

*Question 3:* [5 points]

Who were present at the Prophet's funeral.

*Question 4:* [5 points]

Describe briefly in your own words what happened at Saqifah.

*Question 6:* [5 points]

Explain how a head of the state is selected/elected after a sudden death of the President or the Prime Minister in the modern political system prevalent in the major western democracies.

*Question 7:* [24 points]

True or False:

- (a) Allah has commanded unconditional obedience to the Prophet.
- (b) The Prophet is subject to the majority opinion.
- (c) In the peace treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the Prophet followed the majority opinion.
- (d) The Prophet had greater authority over Muslims than they themselves have.
- (e) The Prophet was infallible in religious matters only but could make errors of judgment in social affairs.
- (f) Zaynab was cousin of the Prophet whom he ordered to marry Zayd bin Haritha.
- (g) The Prophet used to consult with people only to encourage rational thinking.
- (h) Some Sunni scholars maintain that in social matters, the Prophet is subject to majority opinion.
- (i) Aws and Khazraj were two friendly tribes of Madinah.
- (j) The leader of the tribe of Khazraj was first to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr.
- (k) Saqifah was a conspiracy to deprive Imam `Ali of his legitimate right to khilāfat.
- (l) Upon receiving word from `Umar ibn al-Khattāb, Abu Bakr left the Prophet's corpse to attend Saqifah's meeting.

1. Ibn Hisham, Sirah, vol. 3, p. 321.

2. Tabari, Ta'rikh, vol. 3, p. 1546.

# Lesson 17: Twelve Caliphs Or Imams

## 1. The Hadith on Twelve Imams

After studying about the leadership of Imam ‘Ali and briefly reviewing the khilāfat of Saqifah, it is now advisable to refer to several parts of the 77th chapter of *Yan‘abi‘u ‘l-Mawaddah* of a famous Sunni scholar al-Hafiz Sulaymān al-Qundūzi al-Hanafī (d. 1294AH/1877AD).

Al-Qundūzi first quotes a well known hadīth of the Prophet that: “There will be twelve caliphs, all from the Quraysh.” This hadīth has been quoted by many books of ahadith including that of Bukhārī, al-Muslim, Abu Dāwūd and at-Tirmidhi.

Then al-Qundūzi quotes many traditions to the effect that the Prophet said, “I, ‘Ali, Hasan, Husayn and nine of the descendants of Husayn are pure and sinless.” Then the author quotes that the Prophet said to Imam Husayn bin ‘Ali: “You are a chief, brother of a chief; you are an Imam, son of an Imam, brother of an Imam; you are Proof (of Allah), son of a Proof (of Allah), brother of a Proof (of Allah), and father of nine Proofs (of Allah), the ninth of whom will be al-Mahdi.”

After quoting many such traditions, he writes: “Some scholars have said that the traditions (which show that the caliphs after the Prophet would be twelve) are well known, from many chains of narration. Now, with the passage of time and through historical events, we know that in this hadīth the Prophet has referred to the Twelve Imams from his family (Ahlu ‘l-bayt) and descendants, because:

“This hadīth cannot apply to the four *al-khulafā‘u ‘r-rāshidun* from among his companions, as they were less than twelve.

“And it cannot apply to the caliphs from the tribe of Umayyad, because (a) they were more than twelve; (b) all of them were tyrants and unjust (except ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdi ‘l-‘Azīz); and (c) they were not from the Banu Hāshim as the Prophet has said in a hadīth that ‘all of them will be from the Banu Hāshim’...

“And it cannot apply to the caliphs from the ‘Abbāsids, because (a) they were more than twelve; and (b) they did not comply with (the demands of) the verse **Say, ‘I do not ask of you any recompense for it except the love for (my) near relatives’ (42:23)**, nor with the tradition of the Mantle.

“Therefore, the only way to interpret this hadīth is to accept that it refers to the Twelve Imams from the Holy Prophet’s Ahlu ‘l-bayt and descendants, because they were, in their times, most knowledgeable, the most illustrious, the most God-fearing, the most pious, the highest in their family lineage, the best in personal virtues, and the most honoured before Allah; and their knowledge was derived from their ancestor (the Prophet) through their fathers, and by inheritance and by direct teachings from Allāh.”\*

## 2. A Few Facts About the Twelve Imams

**First Imam:** Amiru 'l-Mu'minin Abu 'l-Hasan `ALI al-Murtaza, son of Abu Ṭlib, was born on 13th Rajab, 10 years before the declaration of the Prophethood (600 A.D.), inside the Ka`bah; became Imam, on the death of the Prophet on 28th Safar, 11/632; was fatally wounded by the poisoned sword of Ibn Muljim while engaged in prayers at the mosque of Kufa (Iraq), and expired two days later on 21st Ramadhan, 40/661 and was buried at an-Najaf (Iraq).

**Second Imam:** Abu Muhammad AL-HASAN al-Mujtaba, son of `Ali, was born on 15th Ramadhan, 3/625 in Medina; died of poison on 7th or 28th Safar, 50/670 at Medina.

**Third Imam:** Sayyidu 'sh-Shuhada' Abu `Abdillah AL-HUSAYN, son of `Ali, was born on 3rd Sha`ban, 4/626 in Medina; was martyred with his sons, relatives and companions, on 10th Muharram, 61/680 at Karbala (Iraq). He and his elder brother, al-Hasan, were sons of Fatimah az-Zahra, the daughter of the Prophet of Islam (may peace be upon them all).

**Fourth Imam:** Abu Muhammad `ALI Zaynu 'l-`Abidin, son of al-Husayn, was born on 5th Sha`ban, 38/659; died of poison on 25th Muharram, 94/712 or 95/713 in Medina.

**Fifth Imam:** Abu Ja`far MUHAMMAD al-Ḅqir, son of `Ali Zaynu 'l-`Abidin, was born on 1st Rajab, 57/677 in Medina; died of poison on 7th Dhu 'l-hijjah 114/733 in Medina.

**Sixth Imam:** Abu `Abdillah JA`FAR as-Ṣdiq, son of Muhammad al-Ḅqir, was born on 17th Rabi`u 'l-Awwal, 83/702 at Medina; died there of poison on 25th Shawwal, 148/765.

**Seventh Imam:** Abu 'l-Hasan al-Awwal MUSA al-Kazim, son of Ja`far as-Ṣdiq, was born in al-Abwa' (7 miles from Medina) on 7th Safar 129/746; died of poison on 25th Rajab, 183/799 in the prison of Harun ar-Rashid at Baghdad and was buried at Kazimiyyah, near Baghdad (Iraq).

**Eighth Imam:** Abu 'l-Hasan ath-Thani, `ALI ar-Riza, son of Musa al-Kazim, was born in Medina on 11th Dhu 'l-hijjah 148/765; died of poison on 17th Safar, 203/818 in Mashhad (Iran).

**Ninth Imam:** Abu Ja`far ath-Thani MUHAMMAD at-Taqi al-Jawad, son of `Ali ar-Riza, was born on 10th Rajab 195/811 in Medina; died of poison in Baghdad on 30th Dhu 'l-qa`dah 220/835; was buried near his grandfather at al-Kazimiyyah.

**Tenth Imam:** Abu 'l-Hasan ath-Tḥlith `ALI an-Naqi al-Hadi, son of Muhammad at-Taqi, was born on 5th Rajab 212/827 in Medina; died of poison in Samarra (Iraq) on 3rd Rajab, 254/868.

**Eleventh Imam:** Abu Muhammad `AL-HASAN al-`Askari, son of `Ali an-Naqi, was born on 8th Rabi`u 'th-Thani, 232/846 in Medina; died of poison in Samarra (Iraq) on 8th Rabi`u 'l-Awwal 260/874.

**Twelfth Imam:** Abu 'l-Q̣sim MUHAMMAD AL-MAHDI, son of al-Hasan al-`Askari, was born on 15th

Sha`ban 255/869 in Samarra (Iraq). He is our present Imam; he went into Lesser Occultation in 260/874 which continued until 329/844; then the Greater Occultation began, which still continues. He will reappear when Allah allows him, to establish the Kingdom of Allah on earth, to fill the world with justice and equality, as it would be full of injustice and tyranny. He is *al-Qa'im* (the one who shall stand to establish the rule of Allah); al-Hujjah (the Proof of Allah over His creatures); *Sayyiduhu 'z-Zaman* (the Lord of Our Time), and *Sayyiduhu 'l-Amr* (the one vested with Divine authority).

\* \* \*

This lesson has been adapted from chapters 16 & 17 of *Imamat: the Vicegerence of the Prophet* (Tehran: WOFIS, 1985) by Syed S. Akhtar Rizvi.

## Question Paper on Lesson 17

*Question 1:* [10 points]

(a) Name the famous Sunni scholar who narrated the following hadith: “There will be twelve caliphs, all from the Quraysh” and also the book in which he narrated it.

(b) Name at least four other Sunni scholars who also narrated the above mentioned hadith.

*Question 2:* [20 points]

Consider the hadith: “There will be twelve caliphs, all from the Quraysh.” Now state one reason why this hadith does not apply to:

(a) The Four al-Khulafatu 'r-Rashidun:

(b) The Banu Umayyah

(c) The Banu `Abbas:

*Question 3:* [10 points]

Answer the following questions:

(a) Which Imam/Imams did not die of poisoning?

(b) Which Imam/Imams is/are also known as Abu Muhammad?

(c) Besides Imam Husayn (a.s.) which later Imam/Imams had witnessed the massacre of Karbala.

(d) Which Imam had the shortest life?

(e) Which Imam/Imams died in prison?

(f) Which Imam had the title of “Amuru 'l-munin”?

(g) Name the person who martyred Imam 'Ali?

- (h) Which Imam/Imams is/are buried in Kazimiyyah?
- (i) Name the place where Imam Musa al-Kādhim (a.s.) was born?
- (j) Which Imam/Imams is/are buried in Samarra?

## Lesson 18: The Twelfth Imam: Muhammad al-Mahdi (a.s.)

The twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi (may Allah hasten his appearance) was born on the 15th of Sha`ban in the year 255 AH in Samarra. His imamat began at the age of five when his father died in 260 AH. His name (Muhammad) and his agnomen (Abu 'l-Qāsim) are the same as that of the Prophet of Islam.

His father was the eleventh Shi'a Imam, Imam Hasan al-`Askari; and his mother was the great lady Nargis (may the peace of Allah be with them both).

For various reasons, the Twelfth Imam, did not appear publicly; and for about seventy years, people were in communication with him through the intermediary of his special agents, in order of succession: `Uthman bin Sa`id, Muhammad bin `Uthman, Husayn bin Ruh, and `Ali bin Muhammad as-Samarri. This period of seventy years is known as the minor occultation (*al-ghaybatu 's-sughra*) and at the end of that period began the major occultation (*al-ghaybatu 'l-kubra*).

During the major occultation till the time of re-appearance, no one has been appointed as his special representative. As for legal issues, the people have the duty of referring to the *fuqaha* and *mujtahids*—those excelling in knowledge of the Islamic laws.

### 1. Belief in Al-Mahdi & the Universal Reform

The belief in the re-appearance of the expected Mahdi, the universal reformer is not confined to the Shi'a Muslims. Other Islamic groups and even non-Muslims like the Jews and the Christians believe in the appearance of a great spiritual reformer. In Psalm 37, we read:

“...Trust in the Lord and do good; so you will dwell in the land and enjoy security...

For the wicked shall be cut off; but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land...

But the weak shall possess the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity...

The Lord knows the day of the flawless, and their heritage will abide forever...

For those blessed by the Lord shall possess the land, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off...

The righteous shall possess the land, and dwell upon it for ever...”

## 2. The Qurʾān & the Belief in al-Mahdi

Allāh has promised the believers and worshippers of the True God that a time will come when they will take over the power of the world, and the glorious religion of Islam will reign all over the earth.

***For We have written in the Psalms, after the remembrance, `My righteous servants will inherit the earth.` (21: 105)***

***Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the land just as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them, and will give them in exchange, after their fear, security: `They shall serve Me, not associating with Me anything.` (24:55)***

***It is He who has sent His Messenger with the religion of truth, that he may lift it above every religion, though the unbelievers be averse. (61:9)***

***We desire to be gracious to those who were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors. (28:5)***

The above verses clearly show that in the end the world will fall into the hands of Allāh’s worthy and righteous servants and that they will become the leaders of the people of the world. Then Islam will be victorious over all religions.

## 3. Belief in the Mahdi & Sunni Authorities

In this subject, the scholars in the Sunni school have related many hadiths from the Prophet of Islam through trustworthy narrators. From among them are ahadith which say that the Imams are twelve persons and that they are all from the Quraysh.

Al-Mahdi, the promised one, is from the family of the Prophet and a descendent of Imam ‘Ali and Fatimah az-Zahra, and in many ahadith it is mentioned that he is from the line of Imam Husayn. The Sunnis have mentioned and recorded hundreds of ahadith about the Mahdi in more than seventy books through their own authorities of which we shall just mention a few examples:

*Al-Musnad* of Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 241 AH).

*Sahih* of al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH).

*Sahih* of al-Muslim (d. 261 AH).

*Sunan* of Abu Dāwūd as-Sajistāni (d. 275 AH).

*Sahih* of at-Tirmidhi (d. 279 AH).

The authors of the above books are among the most authoritative books of the Sunnis and, more interestingly, all died either before the birth of the Twelfth Imam (255 AH) or shortly after his birth.

## 4. The Hidden Reformer

We have at least three hundred ahadith from the Prophet and from five Imams about Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.). From these ahadith, it is clear that the Mahdi is the ninth son of Husayn bin 'Ali; that his father is Hasan al-'Askari and his mother is Nargis Khatun; that his name is the same as that of the Last Prophet; that the Mahdi would be born during his father's lifetime in Samarra; that his father would die when he would be young; that he will live as long as God wished it; that he will re-appear and the world will be filled with justice and equality at a time when there will be injustice everywhere.

And when he comes — may God hasten his appearance — he will lean against the Ka'bah and cry out and call for his followers, who will number 313 persons. Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) will come from the heaven down to the earth, and will pray behind the Mahdi. The Twelfth Imam will enforce the commands of Islam all over the world; and the earth will be like heaven.

There are many ahadith related by the Shi'a and Sunni scholars on many aspects connected with this great Imam, and these are mentioned in books like *Bih̄ru 'l-Anw̄ar* of 'All̄mah Majlisi (d. 1010 AH) and *Muntakhabu 'l-Athar* of Shaykh Lutfullah as-Safi.

When we look at the ahadith on this subject, we come to realize the ahadith mentioning al-Mahdi (a.s.) have been narrated most frequently, and that there are few subjects in Islam which have been mentioned in hadith so often. Thus, in this light, anyone who believes in Islam and its Prophet must necessarily declare his belief in the existence of the promised Mahdi who is now in occultation.

Now we shall relate two ahadith on this issue from the famous Sunni book, *Yan̄bi'u 'l-Muwaddah*:

1. The Prophet said, "Al-Mahdi is a descendent of mine. He will be in concealment, and when he manifests himself, the earth will become filled with justice just as it was previously filled with injustice."
2. Salman al-Farsi says that he went to the Prophet when Husayn bin 'Ali was sitting in his lap and the Prophet was kissing his eyes and mouth, and then the Prophet said to Husayn, "You are a chief, son of a chief, and the brother of a chief; you are an Imam, son of an Imam, and the brother of an Imam. You are the Proof (*hujjah*), son of a proof and the brother of a proof; you will be the father of nine proofs of whom the ninth will be the *q̄'im* (one who will establish the divine rule on this earth)."

## 5. The Length of al-Mahdi's Life

We believe that the lengthening of a man's life is not an impossibility, because it is explicitly stated in the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> that, "***We sent Nuh to his people and so he lived among them a thousand years, all but fifty.***" (29:14) Even modern science does not deny the possibility of lengthening the human lifespan.

If a greatly extended life is not an impossible event, there is nothing to prevent God from keeping a man alive for thousands of years because the regulations of a man's life is in the hands of God. He can bring a new order into existence which has precedence over the usual order of things, just as He did in the case of all the miracles. The miracles of the prophets: the cooling of the fire for Ibrahim, the turning of Musa's staff into a serpent; bringing the dead to life through `Isa, and so forth, are all against the usual flow of things but God brought another order into existence by His own power and a miracle occurred. All the Muslims, the Jews and the Christians believe in these miracles.

Similarly, for the length of the life of Imam Mahdi, there remains no place for any kind of objection, because if someone says that such a length of life is impossible, then his claim cannot be at all accepted after the stipulation of the Qur'ān concerning the length of Prophet Nuh's life. If someone says that a prolonged life is possible but against the normal natural order of things, then it can be retorted that the length of life of Imam Mahdi is against the natural order just as the miracles of the prophets are against the natural order but within the power of God.

Someone who believes in the power of God and in the miracles of the prophets cannot have the slightest objection to the length of Imam Mahdi's life.

\* \* \*

This lesson is based on *The Roots of Religion* of Dar Rah-e Haq.

## Question Paper on Lesson 18

*Question 1:* [7 points]

Fill in the Blanks:

- (a) The 12th Imam was born on the \_\_\_\_\_ of Sha`bān in the year \_\_\_\_\_ AH in \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (b) The Minor Occultation lasted for \_\_\_\_\_ years.
- (c) The name of the 12th Imam's mother was \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (d) The 12th Imam's imamate began at the age of \_\_\_\_\_ in the year \_\_\_\_\_ AH.
- (e) During the Minor Occultation, Imam \_\_\_\_\_ with the outside world through his special \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (f) The 12th Imam's name was \_\_\_\_\_ and his agnomen was \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (g) According to the Qur'ān, Prophet Nūh lived for \_\_\_\_\_ years.

*Question 2:* [15 points]

Is the belief in the re-appearance of an expected universal reformer unique to Shi'a Muslims? What

other religions and Muslim sects believe in the re–appearance of the Mahdi? Name the Biblical chapter and verse number that confirms this belief.

*Question 3:* [5 points]

Narrate one hadīth that describes the existence and the re–appearance of the 12th Imam.

*Question 4:* [10 points]

What is the fundamental purpose of the re–appearance of the 12th Imam?

*Question 5:* [13 points]

Passages from the Psalm 37 and the Qurʾān quoted in this lesson describe various qualities of the people who will inherit God's land and to whom God will bestow the leadership of this world. But there are two qualities which have been mentioned both in the Psalms and the Qurʾān. What are those two qualities?

## Lesson 19: The Return & Resurrection (Al-Maʿād & Al-Qiyāmah)

All revealed religions have clearly stated that death is not an end to the existence of man, by death a man only goes from this world to another world, a world where he will reap the fruits of his deeds.

All prophets and their followers have mentioned that we have not been in vain, and that after we are removed from this world, we shall stand accountable for our deeds and be rewarded or punished accordingly.

The belief in the Return is known as *al-maʿād*, and the resurrection is known as *al-qiyāmah*. This belief is based on the wisdom and justice of God.

### 1. The Wisdom & Justice of God

God's wisdom requires that those who do good should not be left without reward, that those who do evil should not be left without punishment and that the oppressed be delivered from their oppression. We can see that this world is not a place of complete reward and punishment, and that many good–doers and evil–doers die before they receive complete recompense for their deeds.

Thus if the records of these people were to terminate right here and there is no return and resurrection, what would have happened to God's infinite justice, wisdom and mercy? How can it be said that the Just, Wise and Merciful Creator brought a world into existence where good people are troubled with

oppression and injustice, and after a while become nothing?

We all know that this would be nothing less than injustice. How is it possible that a God who had no need to create us, and whose aim in creating us was only to train us and make our existence productive, could be satisfied merely with this present world? How could He cut the root of man's existence before he became aware and reached fruition and annihilate him?

God, no doubt, will give complete reward and punishment for all deeds and behaviour in another world, and will neglect nothing. He says, ***Or do those who commit evil deeds think that We shall make them as those who believe and do righteous deeds, equal their living and their dying? How ill they judge! Allah created the heavens and the earth in truth, and that every soul may be recompensed for what it has earned; they shall not be wronged. (45:21-22)***

Moreover, there are certain deeds for which a person cannot be adequately punished in this world. For example, a person who drops an atom bomb and blows millions of people away cannot be adequately punished by his death—his full punishment will only come in the next world which is an eternal world. Similarly, there are certain good deeds for which a person cannot be rewarded properly in this world.

## **2. The Return in Islam**

Islam has laid most emphasis on the issue of the Return (al-ma`ād). More than a thousand verses of the Qur'ān refer especially to the Return and life after death, whereas the verses related to the individual and social laws scarcely reach five hundred.

The belief in the Return is one of the foundations and basis of Islam. A person who does not believe in the Return and Resurrection cannot and is not considered a Muslim.

Now a few verses from the Qur'ān on the Return and Resurrection.

On the necessity of the Return:

***What, does man reckon that he shall be left to roam at will (after death)? (75:36)***

***We have not created the heavens, the earth, and what is between them for vanity; such is the thought of the unbelievers; wherefore woe unto the unbelievers because of the Fire! Or shall We make those who believe and do righteous deeds same as those who cause corruption in the earth, or shall We make the God-fearing same as the transgressors? (38:27-28)***

***Do not think that Allah is heedless of what the evildoers do; He is only deferring them to a day when eyes shall stare. (14:42)***

On the possibility of the Resurrection:

One day Ubayy ibn Khalaf brought some decaying bones before the Prophet and crumbled them in his

own hands, saying: **"Who shall quicken these bones when they are decayed?" (36:78)** In answer, Allah said,

***Say, 'He shall quicken them Who created them the first-time [from nothing]; He is well-aware of all creations.' Is not He, Who created the heavens and the earth, able to create the life of them? Yes indeed; He is the Perfect Creator, the All-Knowing. (36:79)***

On Reward & Punishment:

***Then as for him who was insolent and preferred the life of this world, surely Hell shall be the abode. But as for him who feared the station of his Lord and protected the soul from its caprice, surely the Garden shall be the refuge. (79:37-41)***

***Whosoever does an evil deed shall be recompensed only with the life of it, but whosoever does a righteous deed, be they male or female, as long as they are believers, they shall enter the Garden, therein they shall be provided without any limitation. (40:40)***

***O Men, fear your Lord! Surely the earthquake of the Hour is a mighty thing; on that day when you behold it, every suckling woman shall neglect the child she has suckling, and every pregnant woman shall deposit her burden, and you shall see mankind drunk, yet they are not drunk—however, Allah's chastisement is terrible. (22:1-2)***

If these and hundreds of other verses concerning the day of judgement are considered with care and attention, they will transform man's behaviour in this world to such an extent that he will not undertake a thing without first thinking about the hereafter and fearing God's chastisement. Good Muslims, out of fear of the next world, will carefully weigh their acts and words and even thoughts; they will not do things dictated by their pleasure, and will spend the night and day thinking how to improve themselves and the community.

\* \* \*

This lesson is based on Dar Rah-e Haqq, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum.

## **Question Paper on Lesson 19**

*Question 1:* [15 points]

True or False:

- (a) Belief in the life after death is unique to the religion of Islam.
- (b) God's infinite justice, mercy and wisdom demand that there should be a Day of Judgement and a life after death.
- (c) Man can be adequately punished or rewarded for all kinds of deeds in this world.

(d) The Qur'ān has only five hundred verses on the Resurrection and the Day of Judgement.

(e) Belief in the life hereafter is an essential part of a Muslim's faith.

*Question 2:* [20 points]

Explain in your own words the possibility of resurrection.

*Question 3:* [15 points]

Explain how the belief in the Resurrection and the Day of Judgement affects the life of a good Muslim.

(You may use some real examples from your own life.)

## Lesson 20: After Death

That which does not die is Allah. We, human beings, will one day eventually leave this world. The setting of the sun each day is a poetical metaphor for our passing away. The sunset is inevitable; similarly, death is a reality which, like it or not, must happen.

So we have no control over our death; but what we must think about is the following: What will happen to us after death? Will we become nothing? Will we merely “end” by death? Or will we “remain”, and if so, what will our “remaining” be like?

Those who do not believe in God consider death as the end of human beings, and life is just limited to one or two days. But those who believe in God say that human beings are immortal and that death is just a ladder which will take us through the world purgatory to Resurrection and the everlasting abode in the hereafter.

### 1. Purgatory (Barzakh)

According to the Qur'ān and many ahadith from the Prophet and the Imams, death is not our end. The human spirit, after death, remains and experiences blessings or torment up to the time of the turmoil of Resurrection.

This period from death to Resurrection is called barzakh. Allah says, ***“Count not those who were slain in the way of Allah as dead, but rather they are living with their Lord, being sustained and are rejoicing in the bounty which Allah has given them.” (3: 169–170)***

It is clear that if the life after death was not real, the phrase “living with their Lord, being sustained” would be meaningless.

## 2. The Questioning in the Grave

It can be seen from many ahadith that the spirit has a very special relation with the body in the grave, although the nature of this relationship is not clear. The sixth Imam, Ja`far as-Sadiq (a.s.), said, “Those who deny the questioning of the grave are not from our party (Shi‘ah).”

When the dead person is laid in the grave, the angels of the questioning present themselves and ask him about his faith, beliefs and deeds. If the person has faith and has done good, he joins the believers; if not, he joins the unbelievers and evil-doers. And everyone will pass the period of Barzakh until the Resurrection with their respective group.

Shaykh Saduq writes in his Risalah al-I`tiqadat: “In our opinion, the questioning in the grave is a truth, and he who answers rightly will benefit in the grave from comfort and blessings, and the next world from the Garden. He who cannot answer rightly will see torment in the grave, and in the Resurrection he will go to the Fire.”

## 3. The Torment of the Grave

Man's placing in Barzakh is intimately connected with his deeds in this world. For those who are virtuous, Barzakh will be a sample of Heaven, and they will see the result of their good deeds. Imam Hasan al-`Askari (a.s.) said, “When a believer dies, six beautiful youths will hurry with him to his grave, one of them more fragrant and more beautiful than all the others. They will come and stand on his right, on his left, above him and below him and in front of him and behind him. Then the most beautiful of them will ask, ‘Who are you all.’ The one standing in the front will say: ‘I am prayer’; the one on the left: ‘I am zakat’. The one standing in front will say: ‘I am fasting’; the one behind: ‘I am hajj and `umrah.’ The one at his feet will say: ‘I am the goodness which he did to his brothers.’

“Then they all will ask the most beautiful one: ‘You, yourself, who are you and who is more perfect?’ He will answer, ‘I am the wilayat and love of the Ahlu `l-bayt of Muhammad (peace be upon him).’

“However, those who committed indecent acts and created chaos on the earth, when they enter the grave, they only face constraint and darkness; and the angels of torment will inflict chastisement on them.”

The questioning of the grave and its torments are not necessarily to be perceived by the physical eyes. That power by which the prophets, the Imams, the pure and righteous servants of God spoke is enough and must be accepted.

## 4. The Paradise & Hell in the Qur’ān

A few verses from the Qur’ān describing the Paradise:

***Surely the God-fearing shall be in the gardens and fountains [of Paradise]. `Enter them in peace and security!` We shall strip away all rancour that is in their hearts; they shall be upon couches sitting face to face as brothers; no fatigue there shall suite them, neither shall they be driven forth from there. (15:47-48)***

***Those who rank first [among the good-doers], they will be brought near the Throne, in the gardens of delight...they will be reclining upon close-wrought couches, sitting face to face while immortal youths going round about them with goblets, ewers, and a cup from a spring..., such fruits as they choose, such flesh of fowl as they desire, and wide-eyed houris as the likeness of hidden pearls, a recompense for what they had done. (56: 11-24)***

A few verses of the Qur'ān describing the Hell:

***Surely those who disbelieved in Our signs — We shall certainly roast them at a Fire; as soon as their skins are wholly burned, We shall give them in exchange other skins, so that they may taste the chastisement [repeatedly]. Surely Allah is All-mighty, All-wise. (4:56)***

***As for the unbelievers, garments of fire shall be cut for them, and boiling water shall be poured over their heads whereby whatsoever is in their bellies and their skins shall be melted; hooked iron rods await them; as often as they desire in their anguish to come forth from it, they shall be restored into it, and `Taste the chastisement of the burning!` (22: 19-23)***

***Behold, the Jahannam has become an ambush, for the insolent a resort, there to tarry for ages, tasting therein neither coolness nor drink save boiling water and pus for a suitable recompense. (78:21-23)***

Amiru 'l-Mu'minin, 'Ali bin Abi Tālib (a.s.) said:

“Know that the delicate skin of your body cannot tolerate or bear the fire of Hell. So pity yourselves. You who have experienced the discomforts of this world, and who know your own incapability, and who have seen how when a thorn enters your foot and makes it septic, the warm stones of the ground burn it, you take the pain. So how will it be when you are between two walls of fire, when you lie on stones and your companion is Satan.

“O those who are slaves of Allah; remember Allah, remember Allah, remember Allah while you are well before you become ill; while you have the opportunity before you become constrained; strive to be free of the fire of Hell before the way of salvation becomes impossible for you. Give yourself to the way of Allah with eyes clear of sleep, and your stomach empty (i.e., fasting). Walk in His path; give away your possessions in His path; use your body to the benefit of your spirit, being sparing.”

\* \* \*

This lesson is from Dar Rah-e Haqq, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum.

## Question Paper on Lesson 20

*Question 1:* [30 points]

True or False:

- (a) Muslims believe that death is the end of our existence.
- (b) “Barzakh” refers to the period from time of death to the day of Resurrection.
- (c) Questioning in the grave is not an essential part of the faith.
- (d) Paradise and Hell are just metaphors and not a reality.
- (e) The angels will question you in the grave.
- (f) Those who are killed in the way of Allāh are alive only in the symbolic sense; not in the real sense.
- (g) Barzakh will be a sample of what one will get in the hereafter.
- (h) The hadith describing the “six beautiful youths” was narrated by Imam Hasan bin ‘Ali (a.s.).
- (i) Wilāyat and love of the Ahlu ‘l-Bayt of Muhammad (peace be upon him) will help the believers during the period of Barzakh.
- (j) Death is a doorway or a passage to the eternal life in the hereafter.

*Question 2:* [20 points]

Explain how the saying of Imam ‘Ali quoted at the end of the lesson affected you.

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