

[Home](#) > [Invitation to Islam](#) > [Part 2: Islamic Practices](#) > 10. Turning away from the enemies of Allah (tabarri min a'daa Allah)

Part 2: Islamic Practices

Islam is like a tree whose roots are its beliefs and whose branches are its practices. If the roots are not firm and healthy, the tree will not survive – but the roots only form the foundation of the tree.

The Islamic Practices are referred to as such because they are the ways in which the theory of Islam – the Beliefs – are turned into reality. The different forms of outward worship translate a person's inner love and connection with the Almighty into a physical form.

Islam has ten fundamental Practices: prayers, fasting, two types of necessary almsgiving, pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah, jihad, enjoining good, forbidding evil, supporting those who walk in the path of God, and turning away from the enemies of God.

1. Prayers (Salaat)

Prayers are the pillar of religion. Through prayer, people establish communication and dialogue with the Almighty, and they realize that they are not alone in this universe and that they have been created for a legitimate purpose. Allah created human beings to recognize and appreciate His grace and blessings.

Just as the body needs food to survive and grow, so does the soul, and the food of the soul is prayer. So that people receive their necessary spiritual nourishment and maintain a strong connection to Allah, Islam orders them to pray at five particular times of the day:

Establish regular prayers from mid-day till the darkness of the night, and recite the Qur'an in the early dawn; verily, the recitation of the Qur'an in the early dawn is an act witnessed. (17:78-79)

The necessity of connection with the Absolute

People offer their prayers to Allah for many reasons, the first being the greatness of the Creator. In society, whenever people meet others whom they perceive to be of a high rank – such as celebrities, politicians, doctors, scholars, and so on – they show considerable respect to them at the expense of

their own dignity. If people show so much respect to other human beings who were also created, like themselves, from dust, how much respect should they show before their Creator whose knowledge, superiority, and grandeur is limitless and eternal? Shouldn't they, at least, stand before Him many times a day and bow in respect and gratitude?

Allah refers to those "endowed with understanding" as such:

Those who remember Allah always – standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides – and contemplate the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying, "O Lord! You have not created all this without purpose. Glory be to You! Grant us salvation from the torment of the Fire." (3: 191)

Human beings feel frail in front of the Absolute Power in this universe. If they try to act on their own without the help of their Lord, they will certainly fail because the source of all power and might is Allah. Those who accomplished great feats for humanity – scientists in the laboratory, soldiers in the battlefield, astronauts in space, doctors in the hospital – all sought help from their Lord before embarking on their adventures. Alone, human beings are poor and in need of Allah:

"O mankind! You are the ones who are in need of Allah, but Allah is free from all needs, worthy of praise. If He wanted, he could destroy you and bring about a new creation, and that is not hard for Allah." (35: 15–17)

The need for prayer is great, and a deep and strong feeling inside people drives them towards the Absolute Power to seek His help and assistance.

The instinct to worship has been born with human beings as part of their natural disposition (fitra). Since the dawn of humanity, people have worshipped God in many different ways; prehistoric implements used for this purpose have been found. The need to worship is as strong as the need to eat, and just as the person who lacks proper food will eat anything to put an end to hunger, the person who does not find the proper spiritual nutrition will be led to unlawful worshipping such as the worship of animals, fire, stars, science, art, materialism, or anything else that has no power to help or harm anyone. Whether people have a proper religion or not, everyone worships something, but they should only worship Allah and nothing else.

The regular Islamic prayers have innumerable practical benefits, such as discouraging those who perform them from committing bad acts:

"Truly, prayer restrains from evil and shameful deeds." (29:45)

But one must remember that the Qur'an differentiates between merely saying the prayers and "establishing" them. While reciting prayers is simply a physical act, establishing prayer encompasses complete mental and spiritual concentration and the commitment not to leave them aside. Those who do establish the prayers and show their devotion through them have mastered one of the foremost qualities

which the believers show:

"Successful are the believers – those who offer their prayers with humility and submissiveness... and those who guard their five compulsory prayers. These are indeed the inheritors who shall inherit Paradise and abide forever therein." (23: 1; 23:9–11)

Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) has said: "If a prayerful person knew to what extent he was surrounded by His mercy, he would never raise his head from prostration."¹

When a Society Ceases Prayer

Leaving behind the prayers is dangerous and leads to disaster:

"There has succeeded them a posterity who have given up the prayers and followed their lusts, so they will be living lost, in confusion and disarray...." (19:59)

Details of the Five Prescribed Prayers

Preconditions

Times

The dawn prayer (al-fajr): This prayer should be done between the time the first ray of light appears in the sky and the time of sunrise.

The noon prayer (azh-zhuhr): The specific time for this prayer is right after the sun passes over from its noon position. However, it can be done up until sunset.

The afternoon prayer (al-'asr): This prayer can be done any time after the noon prayer and before sunset.

The sunset prayer (al-maghrib): This prayer should be done after the sun sets at the time when the red sky on the eastern horizon disappears but can be said up until midnight.

The night prayer (al-'ishaa): This prayer can be done any time after the sunset prayer and before midnight.

Direction (al-qiblah)

During prayer, all Muslims must face the Ka'bah, the House of Allah built by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael (peace be upon them). The Ka'bah is located in the city of Makkah in the Arabian Peninsula in the Middle East. One way to determine the precise direction of prayer (called al-qiblah) is to use a compass. In America, Muslims face north-east to find the shortest path to Makkah.

Place

The place where a person is going to say prayers should either belong to that person, or else that person must have permission to pray there (unless the place is public, in which no permission is required). The spot where the forehead touches the ground should be clean (taahir), and prostration must be done on earth or inedible plants (including paper and wood). If a man and woman are praying together, the woman must stand behind the man so that he cannot see her.

Purity of the Body

Just as the soul must be pure, concentrated, and calm before prayers, the body must also be free from impurities. Certain items are considered ritually impure and must be avoided, removed, or purified before the prayers. A specified washing (wudhu) must also be done before the prayers:

O you who believe, when you intend to offer prayers, wash your faces and your hands from the elbows to the fingertips. Rub [with wet hands] your heads and your feet up to the ankles, and if you are in a state of sexual impurity (janaba), purify yourself [by bathing your entire body]. (5:6)

If water is unavailable, dust may be used out of necessity:

But if you are ill or on a journey and you come from the call of nature or have been in contact with women and do not find water, then take clean sand and rub your faces and your hands. Allah does not want to place you in any difficulty, but He wants to purify you and to complete His favor on you that you may be thankful. (5:6)

Clothing

During prayer, a man must wear at least enough clothing to cover his private parts, and a woman must cover her entire body (including the head and hair) except the face and hands. Clothing worn during prayer must be clean and lawfully obtained and may not have been stolen or borrowed without permission.

The Call to Prayer (Adhaan)

Although not required, the call for prayer is highly recommended and is one of the distinguishing emblems of the Islamic faith. The call to prayer consists of two parts: the adhaan and the iqaama.

The person reciting the adhaan should stand facing the direction of prayer and say:

Allahu akbar – God is the Greatest (4 times)

Ashhadu an laa ilaaha illa Allah

I testify that there is no God but Allah (2 times)

Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasul Allah

I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah (2 times)

Hayya 'alaa as-salaah

Hasten to prayer (2 times)

Hayya 'alaa al-falaah

Hasten to success (2 times)

Hayya 'alaa khayr al-'amal

Hasten to the best of deeds (2 times)

Allahu akbar

God is the Greatest (2 times)

Laa ilaaha illa Allah

There is no God but Allah (2 times)

The iqama should be said immediately before the prayer and is identical to the adhaan with three exceptions: (a) the initial phrase, "Allahu akbar," is only said twice; (b) the final phrase, "La ilaaha illa Allah," is only said once, and (c) the phrase "Qad qaamat as-salaah" ("Prayer is being offered") should be inserted after "Hayya 'alaa khayr al-'amal."

The Prayers

Each of the prayers consists of a specific number of units (rak'aat). The dawn prayer has two units, the noon and afternoon prayers have four units, the sunset prayer has three units, and the night prayer has four units. The simplest prayer to learn is the two-unit dawn prayer which will be described here.

Once all of the preconditions above have been fulfilled, and the person intending to offer prayer is facing the proper direction (al-qiblah), the prayer may be begun. First, a sincere intention should be made to say the particular prayer (in this case, the dawn prayer). Then the hands should be placed behind the ears and the following said:

Allahu akbar God is the Greatest [2](#)

The first chapter of the Qur'an (al-fatiha) must be recited:

Bismillah ar-rahmaan ar-rahim

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Al-hamdu lillaahi rabb al-'alamin

Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds

Ar-rahmaan ar-rahim

The Merciful, the Compassionate

Maaliki yawm-id-din

Master of the Day of Judgement

Iyyaaka na'budu wa iyyaaka nasta'in

You alone do we worship, and from You alone do we seek help

Ihdina-s-siraat al-mustaqim

Guide us the straight path

Siraat alladhina an'amta 'alayhim

The path of those whom You have blessed,

ghayr al-maghdubi 'alayhim

not of those on whom is Your wrath,

wa laa adh-dhaalin

nor of those who have gone astray.

Next, another full chapter of the Qur'an must be recited. The example given here is the chapter entitled "The Oneness of God"[3](#)

Bismillah al-rahmaan al-rahim

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Qul huwa allahu ahad

Say, He is Allah, the One

Allahu-s-samad

Allah, the Eternal

Lam yalid wa lam yulad

He begets not, nor was He begotten

Wa lam yakun lahu kufwaan ahad

And there is nothing comparable to Him.

At this point, "**Allahu akbar**" should be said and the person should bow, placing the hands on the knees and keeping the back straight. While bowing, the following should be recited:

Subhaana rabbi al-'azim wa bihamdih

Glory be to my Lord, the Great, and praise be to Him

Then, resuming the standing position, the following should be said:

Sami'a Allahu liman hamidah

God hears the one who praises Him

Then "**Allahu akbar**" is said, and the person does prostration (*sujud*) on the ground. In *sujud*, the forehead, palms of the hands, knees, and tips of the toes must all touch the ground, and the following must be said one or three times:

Subhaana rabbi al-'alaa wa bihamdih

Glory be to my Exalted Lord, and praise be to Him

"**Allahu akbar**" should be said, and the person should sit up on the knees and say:

Astaghfirullaaha rabbi wa atubu ilayh

I seek forgiveness of God, my Lord, and turn towards Him

Again, "**Allahu akbar**" should be said, and *sujud* repeated. Then the person should stand up and repeat the same process, i.e. recite the first chapter of the Qur'an, recite another chapter of the Qur'an, bow, and do the two *sujuds*. Finally, sitting on the knees, the following must be said:

Ashhadu an laa ilaaha illa Allah

I testify that there is no God but Allah

wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan 'abduhu wa rasuluh

and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.

Allahumma salli 'alaa Muhammadin wa aal-i- Muhammad.

O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad.

Assalaamu 'alayka ayyuha an-nabiy wa rahmatullahi wa barakaatuhu.

Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy of God and His blessings.

Assalaamu 'alayna wa 'alaa 'ibaad allahi-s-saalihin.

Peace be upon us, and upon all the righteous Servants of God.

Assalaamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakaatuhu

Peace be upon you, and the mercy of God, and His blessings.

It is recommended that "Allahu akbar" be said three times, raising the hands each time to the side of the face. This action concludes the two-unit prayer although it may be followed by supplications or other recitations.

2. Fasting (sawm)

Almost every religion on earth encourages some form of fasting. Prophet Muhammad (S) and the prophets before him (peace be upon them) all called upon their followers to fast:

"O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you just as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may be pious and learn self-restraint." (2: 183)

Islam prescribes complete fasting – complete abstinence from food, drink (including water), smoking, and sexual activity from dawn until the time of the sunset prayer (about twenty minutes after the sun actually sets).

Although fasting is recommended on many days, it is required during every day of the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. One reason why the month of Ramadan was decreed by Allah for this honor is because the Qur'an was first revealed during the month of Ramadan on a night called "The Night of Destiny" (laylat al-qadr). Muslims believe that on this night, every year, Allah determines the fate of all people for the year to come, and a chapter of the Qur'an was revealed about this night:

Verily, We have sent it [the Qur'an] down on the Night of Destiny

And what would make you know what the Night of Destiny is?

The Night of Destiny is better than a thousand months;

He sends down the angels, and the Spirit during it by His will for every matter;

Peace! Till the rising of the dawn. (Chapter 97)

So that people would worship Allah copiously for many nights, the exact night of the Night of Power has been kept a secret, but it most likely falls on the 19th, the 21st, or the 23rd of the month of Ramadan.

As with prayer, the benefits of fasting are innumerable and can only be appreciated by those who practice it. Fasting strengthens the willpower, teaches discipline, encourages sympathy with the poor, breaks bad habits, improves the health, and establishes a sense of religious brotherhood and sisterhood. But the strongest benefits are spiritual; Fatima al-Zahra (peace be upon her), the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (S), has said: "Fasting is to deepen and strengthen faith." Fasting sharpens the spiritual awareness and imbues a sense of gratitude towards Allah.

Aside from giving up their own food and drink, those who fast are also encouraged while fasting to give charity towards the poor and needy in society.

3-4. Almsgiving (Zakaat and Khums)

Every material possession that people acquire comes through the generosity of Allah. Although people must work to earn a living, Allah is the one who determines what sustenance they will receive. To some, such as Mary, the mother of Jesus (peace be upon them), He gives unconditionally:

"Every time Zachariah entered the sanctuary to visit her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said, 'O Mary! From where did you get this?' She said, 'This is from Allah; verily, Allah provides sustenance to whomever He wills without limit.'" (3:37)

Not only human beings but also all the plants, animals, and other creatures in this universe are sustained by Allah: "Many are the creatures that carry not their own provision; Allah provides for them and for you." (29:60)

Since everything people possess is from Allah, when they are told to return some of their wealth in charity, they are not actually giving up their own property but merely what Allah has lent them for use in this world. Allah says: "O you who believe! Spend out of what We have provided for you." (2:254)

Giving charity benefits the individual as well as society since almsgiving purifies the soul from stinginess and meanness:

"Take alms from their wealth in order to purify and sanctify them." (9: 103)

For society, the money from the obligatory charities (zakaat and khums) provides security and dignity by providing for the needy, bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, and eliminating poverty. The money collected is used for food, shelter, education, health care, orphanages, libraries, pavement, and other public services. From a moral standpoint, the obligation to pay the obligatory charities is no less important than the obligation to pray; whenever the Qur'an refers to those who establish prayers, it immediately refers also to those who pay the obligatory charities.

Charity is not a gift for the poor but rather is a right:

"And in their properties is the right of the beggar and the destitute." (51:19)

A community in which everyone pays the zakaat and the khums will be successful, but a community in which people do not pay them will fall apart. Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

"My community will continue to live fairly they are faithful to each other, return deposits to their owners, and give alms (zakaat) to the poor. But if they do not fulfill these duties, they will encounter famine and scarcity."[4](#)

Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) has also said:

"Allah the Glorified has fixed the livelihood of the destitute in the wealth of the rich. Consequently, whenever the destitute remains hungry, it is because some rich persons have denied him his share."[5](#)

These sayings and legislations only refer to the obligatory charities; in addition to them, people are encouraged to give voluntary charity of every kind – in money, word, or deed. Voluntary charity is called sadaqa and, like the zakaat and khums, benefits both the individual and society.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said: "Give charity and cure your sick persons by it because charity can surely remove your bad fortunes and ailments, and it causes prolongation of your lifetimes and increases your rewards."[6](#)

He also has said:

When charity is delivered out of the hand of its owner, it says five things: at first, I was perishing and you gave me life I was insignificant and you made me great. I was an enemy and you turned me into a friend. You used to protect me then, but now I will protect you up till the Day of Resurrection.[7](#)

Allah says in the Qur'an: "Surely those who recite the Book of Allah and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them secretly and openly hope for a gain which will not perish." (35:29)

Specifics of the zakaat and khums

Zakaat. The zakaat is a type of almsgiving which must be paid yearly on the following items if they are possessed in sufficient quantities: wheat, barley, dates, raisins, gold, silver, camels, cows, and sheep.

Khums. Khums should be paid yearly on 20% of the excess profit that a person acquires. "Excess profit" refers to the profit that remains after a person pays for food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities for himself and his family. It must be given to one authorized to collect it (usually, a religious scholar) so that it can be distributed in the appropriate way. Khums must also be paid on six other items, such as gems obtained while diving, but these cases in modern society tend to be rare.

The khums has been ordained in the Qur'an:

"And know that whatever profit you may attain, one fifth of it is assigned to Allah and the Messenger, and to the near relatives [of the Messenger] and the orphans, the destitute, and the wayfarer, if you have believed in Allah and that which We sent down to our servant [Muhammad]." (8:41)

5. Pilgrimage to the City of Makkah (Hajj)

Everyone who can must, at least once, make the pilgrimage (hajj) to the holy city of Makkah. This pilgrimage occurs every year during Dhul Hijjah, the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Those who make the pilgrimage follow in the footsteps of Abraham (peace be upon him), the father of the prophets.

4,000 years ago, Abraham (peace be upon him) along with his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael set out on a vast journey wandering through Babylon, Syria and Arabia crossing vast hills, rivers, and deserts until arriving in the holy land of Makkah where Abraham (peace be upon him) received revelation from Allah:

"Do not associate with Me anything, and purify My house for those who circle around it and stand to pray and bow and prostrate themselves. And proclaim among the people the pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel from every remote path that they may witness the benefits for them and mention the name of Allah during the appointed days over what He has given them." (22:26-28)

First, Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them) had to raise the cubic structure, the Ka'bah, on the foundations of the

"first house made for mankind" (3:95) –

built originally at the dawn of creation by Adam (peace be upon him).

Then Abraham (peace be upon him) had to proclaim the pilgrimage to mankind. Unconcerned as to who would hear his voice in this desert land, he climbed atop a nearby mountain and proclaimed to humanity the divine message of the hajj. This call has passed through the distances of space and time and still reverberates to the millions of people around the globe who answer his call and come to make the pilgrimage.

Significance of the Hajj

The hajj is the supreme symbol of universal brotherhood and is the greatest annual congregation in the world. Every year, in Makkah, millions of people from diverse origins stand shoulder-to-shoulder. Clad in the barest of materials – two pieces of white cloth – and performing the same rituals, no person can be distinguished from another on the basis of wealth, lineage, power, or education. The most powerful leaders are on the same level as the masses of the world. All artificial or human-imposed distinctions between human beings are lifted, and people have the chance to know each other solely as brothers and sisters in humanity for the span of a few days.

This sense of equality should translate back into everyday life; the person who has gone on the hajj should return home freed from erroneous notions of racism, classism, and so forth. For the Islamic people as a whole, the hajj serves as an enormous convention or conference in which news is passed on and problems are solved. Since the beginning of Islam, the hajj has been one of the major cultural unifying factors of the Muslim peoples since, every year, delegates from every civilization meet in one place.

The hajj also develops the human soul. Every human being, whether aware of it or not, is travelling towards Allah, and part of the essential spiritual development in life is to recognize and accept this journey. The hajj not only represents this journey physically but also forces the pilgrims to express their willingness to leave behind everything for Allah.

Allah has made known that among the ways to approach Him for forgiveness is to journey to His house, the Ka'bah in Makkah. Once Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) was with a group of his followers in the vicinity of the Ka'bah when they saw a man holding in his hand the cloth cover of the Ka'bah and supplicating: "O Keeper of the House! This house is Your house, and this guest is Your guest. Each guest sees goodness from its host. Tonight, let Your goodness be the forgiving of my sins." Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) asked his followers: "Did you hear the words of this man?" They said, "Yes, we did." Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) replied: "Almighty God is more forgiving than to drive away His guests."

The Rites of Hajj

The beginning of the pilgrimage is marked by proclaiming, "Labbayk, Allahumma, Labbayk" – "I am here, O Lord, I am here!" followed by, "You Who have no partner – I am here! Surely all praise and blessings are Yours, and the Kingdom – I am here, O Lord, I am here!"

During the hajj, all of the millions of people present engage in circling the Ka'bah (a practice called tawwaf). This constant circling around Allah's House symbolizes humanity's dependence on Allah and teaches the ones doing tawwaf to seek help only from Allah. It also illustrates how every person's ultimate being revolves around Allah.

After tawwaf, the pilgrims run between two small mountains called Safa and Marwa, re-enacting Hagar's search for water for her infant son Ishmael. Alone in the desert, she and her baby had been in desperate need of water, and she had been running back and forth looking for some hint of moisture in the sand. Seeing her effort, Allah produced for her the spring of Zamzam, a spring of cool, pure water which gushed forth at Ishmael's tiny feet and has continued to flow until this very day.

By imitating her search, the pilgrims not only remember her story but also assimilate into themselves the message that they cannot sit and wait for Allah's blessings to unfold magically upon them. Rather, if they are in need of something, they should work hard and then hope for the munificence of God in response.

The most significant day of the pilgrimage is the Day of Arafat. Arafat is a desert outside the city of Makkah in which all the pilgrims must stand from noon to sunset and communicate with Allah. The time in Arafat marks the real essence of the hajj; Prophet Muhammad (S) has said: "The hajj is Arafat."

In Arafat, the pilgrims leave behind all material possessions except for the two pieces of cloth they are wearing and are returned to the same condition in which they were born. The vast gathering – imagine, millions of people all dressed alike all standing in the same place all at the same time – represents the true origin and fate of humanity: born from dust, living for a short while, and then being resurrected from dust again. The scene of Arafat resembles what the Day of Resurrection will be like as countless individuals are pieced together from dust again to withstand judgement by the Almighty.

At a place called Mina, the pilgrims throw pebbles at Satan. This act is extremely difficult and dangerous and represents probably the only case in human society where people would voluntarily enter a mob of people throwing stones in all directions. By stoning pillars, which are physical representations of Satan, the pilgrims reinforce inside themselves how they should treat Satan, who has sworn to be the enemy of mankind. This act is also another historical re-enactment; on his way to fulfill the command of Allah in slaying his son, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) met Satan in each of these three places and, instead of listening to his dissuasions, threw stones at him.

At the end of the hajj, each pilgrim must sacrifice an animal just as Abraham (peace be upon him) did in lieu of his son. The sacrifice indicates the pilgrims' willingness to sacrifice anything in life for Allah. The meat of the animal should not be wasted, though; one-third may be kept for personal use while one-third should be given to friends and the final third to the poor.

6. Jihad

The literal meaning of jihad is "to strive hard" to progress in all aspects of life. Although this word, in English, has taken on purely military connotations, in reality it covers the vast range of human enterprise – family life, work, spiritual development, and, at the end of all this, justified defensive warfare.

The most important jihad is the struggle to purify the soul, and this jihad far outweighs any military jihad. Once, Prophet Muhammad (S) met a group of soldiers returning from a defensive battle and addressed them: "Welcome to the people who have concluded the minor jihad(struggle)." Astonished, the soldiers asked, "Was this the minor jihad? Then what is the major jihad?" Prophet Muhammad (S) replied: "The major jihad is the jihad to purify one's self."

The beginning of the jihad to purify the soul is to restrain the self from committing sins and thereby corrupting the soul. The next step is to control material desires and ambitions and free the self from the things that distract it from Allah. All of the forms of worship in Islam – prayers, fasting, charity, and so on – exist to purify and perfect the soul. Only in the upward development of the soul do human beings find happiness in this life and the next, for if the soul is unhappy, a person will be miserable regardless of how materially wealthy he or she may be.

"And by the soul and Him Who perfected it, then showed it what is right and what is wrong for it – indeed, he succeeds who purifies his soul, and, indeed, he fails who corrupts his soul." (91:7)

The soul is the essence of man; it is the part which will outlast this life and be judged in the next, and one of the main reasons human beings were placed in this world is to test and develop their souls.

Jihad does also refer to the legitimate struggle to defend human rights, such as personal and religious freedom as well as the defense of land, property, and families. Those who are being attacked have the right to defend themselves in jihad:

Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully and offensively waged, and surely Allah is able to give them victory. Those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly, only because they said, "Our Lord is Allah..." (22:39–40)

The believers are in fact commanded to defend human rights and integrity:

And why do you not fight in the way of Allah and the utterly oppressed men, women, and children who are crying out, "O Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors, and raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help." (4:75)

Jihad as fighting must be for just causes and to defend the freedom, liberty, and integrity of societies – and when these issues are at stake, fighting is not only permitted, but required. "Fight

against aggressors until oppression is stopped." (2: 193)

None of the powerful countries today could have achieved their stature without a war for independence and a struggle for freedom, nor would they have retained their positions without strong military development. In life, struggle will always exist between good and evil, truth and falsehood, and societies cannot progress if tyrants are left alone to do what they want to do.

7-8. Enjoining good (amr bil-ma'rouf) and forbidding evil (nahiy an al-munkar)

"Let there arise from you a group of people inviting to what is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong; these are the ones who will be successful." (3: 104)

In order for religion to progress and society to flourish, people must take the initiative and attempt to guide each other towards the right and away from the wrong. This kind of advising is mandatory on those who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement. Giving sincere advice is not, as some may argue, meddling in someone else's business, but is in fact a valuable favor and one of the best forms of charity.

9. Supporting those who walk in the path of Allah (tawalli li awliyaa' Allah)

This entire phrase means to be a friend and a helper of the righteous, pious people who are on the side of Allah and religion. Specifically, it includes the prophets and imams (successors to the prophets) as well as those who work to establish order, justice, and religion on earth:

"And whoever takes Allah, His messenger, and those who have belief as protectors and guardians, then the party of Allah will be victorious." (5:56)

10. Turning away from the enemies of Allah (tabarri min a'daa Allah)

This phrase refers to the opposite of tawalli li awliyaa' Allah. Those who sincerely believe in Allah must dissociate themselves from those people who obstruct truth and justice and prevent the light of Allah from reaching others:

"Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity. It is regarding those who fought against you on account of religion and have driven you out of your homes and helped to drive you out that Allah forbids you to befriend them, and whoever will befriend them, then such are the wrongdoers." (60:8-9)

"O ye who believe, take not for protectors and helpers those who take your religion as a mockery and fun from among those who received the scriptures before you, nor from among the disbelievers, and fear Allah if you indeed are true believers." (5:57)

"Let not the believers take the disbelievers as supporters and helpers and friends instead of the believers. And whoever does that will never be helped by Allah in any way." (3:28)

It is for the good of the believers that Allah warns them against being friends and associates of the unbelievers and the tyrants and the enemies of Allah and humankind.

- [1.](#) Ghurar al-Hikm, p. 175.
- [2.](#) Saying the prayers in Arabic is highly recommended. However, if a person is absolutely unable to say the prayers in Arabic, the prayers may be said in another language which the person understands, such as English.
- [3.](#) Al-tawhid/Chapter 112.
- [4.](#) Wasaa'il ash-Shi'a, vol. 6 p. 13
- [5.](#) Nahj al-Balagha (The Peak of Eloquence).
- [6.](#) Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 6 p. 31
- [7.](#) Al-Ithna'ashariyyah, p. 23.

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