

NOT FOR SALE

**“Our Dialogue”  
— *Seventh Edition***

the Religious Editor  
Arab News  
Jeddah

apkar pk

***Vol. IV [Q-Z]***

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We do wish to avoid overseas mailing costs, which are very heavy indeed.

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**Hadith —**

**Indeed,  
the creation of each one of you  
is brought together in the mother's belly  
for 40 days in the form of a drop of sperm,  
then he is a germ cell for a like period,  
then an embryonic lump for a like period,  
then there is sent to him the angel  
who blows the breath of life into him  
& who is commanded about four matters:  
to write down his means of livelihood,  
his life span, his actions  
and whether happy or unhappy**

**By Allah,  
other than whom there is no God,  
one of you may behave like the people of paradise  
until there is but an arm's length between him and it,  
and that which has been written overtakes him  
and so he behaves like the people of hell fire  
and thus he enters it;  
and one of you behaves like the people of hell fire  
until there is but an arm's length between him and it,  
and that which has been written overtakes him  
and so he behaves like the people of paradise  
and thus he enters it."**

**(Related by Al Bukhari & Muslim.)**

## “Our Dialogue” — advice & consent

### • Publishing 'Dialogue' answers in book form

Has “Our Dialogue” been published in book form?

I have mentioned that such publication requires an extensive editing work if it is to be done properly. What I mean is that questions should be sorted out according to subject and related ones should be consolidated in a more comprehensive way. This will mean some expansion of certain answers so that they treat the subject rather than the specific case the reader puts. It will also mean grouping together various answers so that the treatment of the subject is more complete. I pray God to enable me to undertake this task at some point in the future.

Meanwhile, I do not permit any publication, which is intended to generate financial profit, without my prior agreement. Those who had produced compilations seeking no profit, but aiming only to make such answers known to people, who may need them, are generous with their effort. May God bless them and reward them. I hope that God will also grant me a share of that reward.

“Our Dialogue” was compiled and printed by some people at their own initiative. I have not had any role in that. They state that copies may be obtained from apkar pk (Muhammad Arif), 404 Qamar House, M. A. Jinnah Road, Karachi - 74000 [Telephone Work/Home 92•21•231 24 95 — Roaming].

Knowing that readers have put majorities of questions to me from the countries of the subcontinent, I realize that if “Our Dialogue” were made available in Urdu, it would serve a good purpose. Therefore, I have no objection, in principle, to its translation into Urdu. [Added: One such compilation in the form of the books called *Islami Tarze Fikr* is also being offered by apkar pk for the benefit of those who prefer that the material be presented to them in their national language. A Sindhi version of these books called *Islami Soch Jo Andaz* is also obtainable.]

[From: Adil Salahi Arab News, Saudi Arabia's First English Language Daily]

## apkar pk & “*Our Dialogue*”

Let me introduce apkar pk. Well, apkar is simply an abbreviation from Allied Promoters Karachi, the company I organize, while the suffix pk stands for Pakistan. And under this brand name, we present a series of publications such as you hold in your hand.

A friend, Ateed Riaz, has been involved in copying and gratuitously circulating pages from Adil Salahi’s religious columns of the Jeddah-based paper, Arab News. I was also favored with these pages, and finding them very interesting and deeply thought provoking, decided to start compiling the columns. In 1989, and a hundred pages later, I showed the result of this exercise to some friends, who were very enthusiastic in their response.

We felt that such a compilation would serve as a useful and handy guide for anyone keen to learn more about the ways of Islam, but who could not get convincing answers from accessible Ulema. Several friends even offered to help with the printing of such a book, and the first version of this work, comprising just 125 pages, emerged under the title “A Question and Answer Session, the Religious Editor, Arab News, Jeddah.” This was our beginning.

Encouraged with the response to our first book, I continued with this compiling work and brought out an enhanced version of the same book under the title, “Our Dialogue,” named after the title of the original columns appearing in Arab News, Jeddah. (These columns are now called “Discourse.”) Yet another volume, “Our Dialogue — Volume IV,” contained further selections from the religious columns which have appeared in Arab News, Jeddah up to July 2003. A handy version based on selected quotations from these books — entitled ‘Our Dialogue in a Nutshell’ is also available for those readers who are too busy for voluminous reading. In 1996, a compilation covering ‘Pilgrimage’ was issued and since that year through fine work by Br. Abdus Salam Salami, an Urdu version is also being provided under the title of “Islami Tarze Fikr”. A second volume of “Islami Tarze Fikr” — translated by Br. Kaleem Chughtai — has since been launched in 1999. Since 1998, through initiative of Br. Noor Ahmad Memon, a Sindhi translation of ‘Islami Tarze Fikr’ has been presented under the title of ‘Islami Soch Jo Andaz’.

Alhamdulillah, the scope has been enlarged and improved since, and a consolidated, improved and revised version of all the previous issues of “Our Dialogue” is now presented to you in four Volumes under the title of “Our Dialogue — Seventh Edition”.

Much thought and effort have gone into the body of works presented in the “Our Dialogue” series. All this would come to naught except for the enlightenment provided through the original material presented by Adil Salahi under his worthy columns ‘Islam in Perspective’ in Arab News, Jeddah. We are also deeply indebted to a host of supporters from our very inception. Valued advice and kind assistance has come in varied and special ways from people who are too many to enumerate, but without whose help, this series of books could certainly not have been presented. [A list of supporters is appended on p.7, but we may have missed out to mention some.] May Allah in His Mercy accept the efforts of all of us.

Tasbahoona Alal Khair

Muhammad Arif

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November 2005

Answers to questions in  
**“Our Dialogue”**  
are provided by more than one scholar  
and edited by  
Adil Salahi  
Arab News Jeddah, K.S.A.



***There is a main rule in Islamic Law  
that a particular regulation,  
which is made for a particular reason  
is enforced only when that reason  
is clearly in evidence***

***“Our Dialogue”  
— Seventh Edition***

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*Colleagues At My Office & the Members of My Family*

*AND MANY MORE WHOSE NAMES ARE NOT MENTIONED*

*\* They Had All Suffered Cancer And Have Preceded Us To Their Final Abode.  
May Allah In His Infinite Mercy Reward Them Plentiful. Amen*

*apkar pk • Karachi 74000 • Pakistan*

Questions on religious matters may be sent to the following address, which will be forwarded to the appropriate channel for reply and clarification.

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### ***Qur'an: A Surah Not To Be Read Frequently — But Why?***

An old man told me that one should not recite the Surah entitled "A'bas" or "The frowning" very often. He gives the reason saying that the Surah contains a reproach to the Prophet, peace be upon him, for having frowned on a blind man who came to him to seek guidance. Please comment.

It is true that the Surah you have mentioned tackles the incident when a blind man, a companion of the Prophet, came to him requesting that the Prophet, peace be upon him, teach him a passage of the Qur'an. At the time, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was speaking to a few people who commanded high position in Makkah. The Prophet, peace be upon him, had high hopes to win them over to Islam. He felt that if they gave him a positive response, Islam would become much stronger in Makkah. Therefore, he wanted to devote all his attention to them at that time. The blind man, however, pressed his request time after time. The Prophet, peace be upon him, did not like that, but he did not express his displeasure in any words. He simply frowned, obviously unnoticed by the blind man. Allah then revealed this Surah telling the Prophet, peace be upon him, that his attitude was not the right one. It was not up to him to make people follow divine guidance. It is Allah who guides whomsoever He pleases to the right path. The Surah contains a strong reproach telling the Prophet, peace be upon him, [that] he could not refuse to teach anyone who sought to be taught. No person of high position is to be preferred to a humble person.

To suggest that this Surah should not be read often may be motivated by a noble feeling. A person may feel that he does not wish to read the reproach to the Prophet, peace be upon him, often. This feeling, however, is mistaken because it misses out on the lesson to be learned and concentrates on appearances and superficial elements. The message of the Surah is one of the essential elements of the Islamic faith. All people are equal and all deserve to be called upon to believe in Allah and His messenger. None is to be preferred on account of his high position. None is to be ignored on account of his humbleness. That Allah has chosen to give this very important principle in the way He has, making use of the incident I had just described in order to drive the point home is His own prerogative. We read this Surah in the same way as we read other parts of the Qur'an. Every portion is highly relevant and highly important. We cannot ignore any part of it for any consideration whatsoever.

The old man who told you not to read this Surah often might have spoken out of love for the Prophet, peace be upon him. We should remember, however, that no matter how dearly we love the Prophet, Allah loves him more. If we were to ignore this Surah our attitude represents a protest against its inclusion in the Qur'an. This is not up to us to do. Every part of the Qur'an is as important as the rest. The old man is mistaken and we treat this Surah in the same way as we treat the other 113 Surahs.

***Qur'an: Abandoning the Purpose For Which Qur'an Was Revealed***  
***Commentary By Adil Salahi — Arab News***

When Muslims broke their covenants with their Lord and abandoned the Qur'an, they suffered the set backs and calamities known to everyone. It is true that they continue to be enhanced with musical recitations of the Qur'an and may use it as charms, but this is not the purpose for which the Qur'an was revealed. Indeed, when the Qur'an is not implemented in the lives of the Muslim community, it is effectively abandoned by it, regardless of how much lip service is paid to it.

***Qur'an: Accidental Mishandling***

If one accidentally drops the Qur'an on the floor, how does he seek forgiveness?

If you dropped the Qur'an on the floor accidentally, taking proper care to hold it firmly, there is no blame to be attached to you. It is when you are careless that you commit an offense. In this case, you need to repent, pray for forgiveness and resolve to be more careful in future.

***Qur'an: As A Cure — But Not A Substitute For Appropriate Medication***

I believe that the Qur'an is most powerful and that it cures every kind of illness. I do not know, however, the Surahs, which should be used for curing illness. I wish to depend only on the Qur'an for the rest of my life. Could you please explain which Surahs one should read in cases of illness.

Allah certainly describes the Qur'an as a cure and mercy to mankind. In another verse, the Qur'an is described as a cure for what lies in the hearts of people. The Prophet, peace be upon him, also speaks of "The two cures: Honey and the Qur'an." Hence, it is perfectly correct to say that the Qur'an helps overcome illness and get rid of its effect. There is no particular Surah, which is required to be read to cure any particular illness. However, the Prophet, peace be upon him, says that Surah 36, entitled Ya'Seen, helps achieve the purpose for which it is read.

Having said that, I wish to emphasize that we must not view the Qur'an as a substitute for medical treatment. The Prophet, peace be upon him, instructs us: "Seek medical treatment, for Allah has not created an illness without creating a cure for it." This Hadith should be taken as encouragement to try to discover a cure for any illness, which remains without a cure. Moreover, when the Prophet, peace be upon him, was ill, he sought medical treatment. It is needless to say that the Prophet, peace be upon him, knew the Qur'an by heart and he recited it all the time. Yet, he wished to show us that trying to overcome an illness by a powerful medicine or herb is necessary to help the human body against the attack of germs and viruses. An illness may weaken the body considerably and the defense mechanism of the body may be in certain cases in bad need of external help in the shape of drugs and medicines. It is not acceptable, from the Islamic point of view to deny the body that, saying, that the Qur'an is a better substitute. The Prophet, peace be upon him, often emphasized that the rules of nature which Allah has set in operation work in the same way for and against the believers and non-believers.

Moreover, the Qur'an does not have the same effect on illness as the appropriate medication. What it does is to reassure a believer and strengthen his faith. That is very helpful in curing any psychological disorder. On the other hand, the sense of relaxation derived from reading the Qur'an helps the body in its fight against the attacking germs. If this method is urged on by the use of appropriate medication, recovery can be achieved in a short period of time.

### ***Qur'an: Compilation Of the Qur'an — Arrangement Of the Surahs***

We know that the first verses to be revealed of the Qur'an were the opening of Surah 96, entitled "Blood Clots" [Al-Alaq]. Could you then please tell me why this Surah is not placed at the beginning of the Qur'an, and why it begins with Surah "Al-Fatihah" or "The Opening"? Could you please let me know when was the compilation of the Qur'an completed and whether it was done during the life of the Prophet, Muhammad, peace be upon him.

It is true that the first revelation that the Prophet, peace be upon him, received from on high consisted of the first five verses of the Surah you have mentioned. These may be translated into English as follows:

***"Read in the name of your Lord Who created man from clots of blood. Read! Your Lord is the most bounteous Who has taught the use of the pen, has taught man what he did not know."*** [Al-Alaq — "Blood Clots" 96: 1-5]

If you examine carefully these few verses, you will find that they are an announcement made to the Prophet, peace be upon him, of his forthcoming mission. They tell him about his Lord who is the Creator of man and His word and Who has given man the ability to read and learn. That announcement was highly significant because it inaugurated an era of direct contact between God and man through the Prophet, peace be upon him. It was an era in which the constitution that ensures man's happiness in this life and in the life to come was to be given in detail. The rest of the Surah was revealed at a later date.

This announcement was of the highest importance to the Prophet, peace be upon him, so that he knew what was expected of him as a messenger from God. The revelations he received in the following period also stressed his role as a messenger. They defined for him how to proceed with calling people to Islam and whom he should approach for that purpose. Later on, revelations dealt with events that took place in the Muslim community and provided legislation for social problems. They also identified the way ahead for the Prophet, peace be upon him, and what strategy he should adopt in conveying His message to mankind. We read, for example, in Surah 15, Al-Hijr, which occurs close to the middle of the Qur'an, God's order to the Prophet, peace be upon him, to declare his message in public. That took place about three years after the start of Qur'anic revelations during which the Prophet, peace be upon him, preached his new faith in secret. In other words, twenty years of revelation followed. This suggests that a much larger part of the Qur'an, was revealed after this order was issued to the Prophet, peace be upon him. Nevertheless, it occurs about midway in the Qur'an. Certain Surahs or verses comment on events that took place during the lifetime of the Prophet, peace be upon him. A larger part of Surah "Al-Anfa'al", or the "Spoils of War", comments on the battle of Badr, while a long passage in Surah "Aale Imran" comments on the battle of Uhud, which took place a year later than Badr. In the arrangement of the Qur'an, four very long Surahs separate the two with the one commenting on the second battle occurring first. What this shows is that there is a great difference between the chronological revelation of the Qur'an, and its arrangement.

As you are probably aware, the revelation of the Qur'an took 23 years to complete, with a long or a short passage revealed each time, according to what was determined suitable at the particular time of each revelation. Certain verses provided legislation, which is to be implemented in certain cases, such as punishments for crimes, or dealings with other communities. These verses were not revealed until the need arose or until God deemed it appropriate to reveal them. For example, the Prophet, peace be upon him, signed a peace treaty with the polytheists in Makkah which stipulated that he would return to Makkah any individual who came to him, declaring that he was a Muslim, if he did not have the permission of his tribe to emigrate.

Subsequent to the signing of this agreement, a verse was revealed, which made it absolutely clear that the Muslim community was not allowed to return any woman believer who might have come to them from Makkah. This was so done since it was not permissible for a Muslim woman to be married to a non-believer. In other words, the Qur'anic verse, made a qualification of a condition which was included in a peace treaty concluded by the Prophet, peace be upon him.

This however, meant that two or more longer Surahs were being revealed concurrently. The question arises here: how were they arranged and who gave instructions in connection with their arrangement? The answer is that instructions came from God. Every time the Angel Gabriel came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, with a new revelation, he told him to include it at its specific position in the Surah to which it belonged. Thus, the arrangement of any particular Surah was not left to the Prophet, peace be upon him, God ordered it.

Nor was the arrangement of Surahs left to the discretion of anyone. Some people, especially among Orientalists, may suggest otherwise, but the correct opinion is that the arrangement of Surahs of the Qur'an, was given to the Prophet, peace be upon him, by God through Gabriel, the angel. We have a highly authentic Hadith which tells us that the Prophet, peace be upon him, recited the Qur'an in the presence of Gabriel during the nights of the months of Ramadhan each year. In the last year of the Prophet's life, they recited the Qur'an in full twice. It goes without saying that the ordering of the Surahs was part of the purpose for which these recitations were made. Had there been any instructions with regard to the arrangements of the Surah, those would have been given to the Prophet, peace be upon him, through Gabriel. On the other hand the Prophet, peace be upon him, recited the Qur'an in his prayers when he prayed with his followers according to its proper arrangement. Some of his companions report that they heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, reciting every Surah of the Qur'an in his prayer. It is probably well known that to recite in the second Raka'ah a Surah that precedes the one that has been recited in the first Raka'ah is discouraged. We have other reports which tell us that the Prophet, peace be upon him, recited a number of Surahs in the same Raka'ah as they are arranged in the copies of the Qur'an, which we have in our hands. This could not have come by coincidence.

The first full compilation of the Qur'an was done by Abu Bakr, who was the first ruler of the Islamic state to succeed the Prophet, peace be upon him. Abu Bakr ruled for a brief period, lasting a little over two years. He formed a committee of the most competent and suitable persons among the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him. He himself supervised the work of that committee. The copy thus compiled was kept in the home of Hafsa, a wife of the Prophet, peace be upon him. When more copies of the Qur'an were written, during the reign of Osman, some twelve years later, that copy served as a reference. One copy was sent to each province of the Islamic State to be easily accessible as a reference for any new copies. The work that was undertaken at the time of Abu Bakr and the time of Osman was highly publicized. No one among the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, objected to any part of the work. This in itself is a clear indication that the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, realized that the compiled copy followed the same arrangement indicated by the Prophet, peace be upon him, in his recitations of the Qur'an.

Moreover the present arrangement is the proper one. When you read at the beginning Surah "Al-Fatihah" or "The Opening", it gives you in a few short verses the most essential elements of Islamic faith. It stresses the Oneness of God, the only Lord in the universe, His compassion to all His creation, the Day of Accountability, and Judgement, and that people should offer their worship to Him, pray Him for help and guidance. The second Surah is very long one, starting with a discussion of the three types of men: believers, disbelievers and hypocrites. These are the three attitudes

that any human being can take toward Islam. It moves on to speak of the creation of man and his need of God's guidance before it gives a long discussion of the history of the Israelites, the nation which was entrusted with divine guidance in the past and did not discharge its trust properly and fully. This serves as a warning to the Muslim community, which has succeeded the Israelites in the position of trustees of divine message. This is followed by detailed legislation of different aspects of the life of a good Muslim community.

No matter what is the particular subject, any Surah of the Qur'an, which addresses it is always intertwined with a discussion of the most essential elements of faith. This gives us a feeling that whatever we do and whatever situation we find ourselves in, we must never lose sight of our beliefs in the Oneness of God and in the Day of Judgement.

### ***Qur'an: Compilation Of the Qur'an — the Present Order***

May I ask how was the Qur'an compiled? It is said that at first it was written on leaves, pieces of skin, stones and also memorized by many people, some of whom died before all verses of the Qur'an were compiled and brought from different areas in Makkah and Madinah. Who started the work of its collection and publication? Since it was not checked finally by the Prophet, peace be upon him, who was the final authority then? Some people claim that the Qur'an is not published in its real sequence. There are also claims that some leaves were accidentally eaten by goats and some were not included due to political reasons. Please comment.

2. The present order of the Qur'an is not according to its revelation. What was the reason for this? Did the Prophet, peace be upon him, do it according to a particular directive?

1. The Qur'an is the final message Allah has sent to mankind. It was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, through the Archangel Gabriel, who brought the Prophet, peace be upon him, complete verses or parts of verses, or passages or complete Surahs, as he was commanded by Allah. When the angel brought down to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, a passage of the Qur'an, he did not bring it written on a piece of paper [or other material]. He recited it to him and the Prophet, peace be upon him, immediately memorized it. In his keenness to learn it by heart straightaway, the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to vocalize the words as he heard them from the angel. He was then asked by Allah not to do so. Allah promised him that He Himself will see to it that the Qur'an is kept complete and intact and properly read. This order is contained in verses 16-19 of Surah 75. As you are well aware, the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, did not read or write. When he received a portion of the Qur'an, he called in one or more of his scribes to write it down. He employed for this task a number of his companions whose number totaled 29. Many of these were of the highest caliber in their faith and integrity. They included all the first five caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman, Ali and Muawiyah. However, the task of writing the revelations was most particularly associated with two of them, Muawiyah and Zaid ibn Thabit, despite the fact that Muawiyah was a latecomer to Islam.

Paper, as we know, was not yet invented. Those scribes wrote the Qur'an on various forms of writing material which was available to them. These included sheets cut out of the branches of the beet tree or other writing sheets made of wood, animal hide, stone or bones. This started even in the period when the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions were a small persecuted community in Makkah. Many of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, had some parts of the Qur'an written down and treasured in their homes.

The Qur'an is divided into 114 Surahs, some of which are short, while others are very long. The revelation did not proceed with only one Surah at a time, but the Prophet, peace be upon him, might have continued to receive parts of several Surahs at the same time. When a passage was sent down to him, it was followed by an order from Allah, through the Angel Gabriel, indicating its position in the Surah to which it belonged. These manuscripts did not form a single or coherent set. The Prophet, peace be upon him, did not keep anything written down in his own home. But most of his companions who were with him in Makkah and Madinah memorized much of the Qur'an, and some of them were able to learn it all by heart. The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to teach his companions either individually or in-groups. We note that Abdullah ibn Massoud, a learned companion of the Prophet, was pleased to assert that he memorized more than 70 Surahs as he learned them directly from the Prophet, peace be upon him. In Ramadhan every year, the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to revise the Qur'an with the Angel Gabriel to ensure that he did not overlook any verse or part of it. In the last year of the Prophet's blessed life, Gabriel recited the Qur'an to him twice. To the Prophet, this was an indication that his life on earth was approaching its end.

It was in the first year after the Prophet, peace be upon him, had passed away that the need to compile the Qur'anic documents in a single, easy to use, set became apparent. Omar ibn Al-Khattab made the proposal to the first caliph, Abu Bakr, shortly after the battle of Yamamah in which several hundred Muslims were killed; seventy amongst those killed were the ones who had learned all or most of the Qur'an by heart. Omar feared that the number of those people would rapidly decrease as a result of battles the Muslim state might have to fight. Abu Bakr approved the proposition and entrusted the task to Zaid ibn Thabit, who was not merely a scribe entrusted by the Prophet, peace be upon him, to write down the Qur'anic revelations but he was also a young man who had learned all [of Qur'an] by heart and witnessed the Prophet's final recitation of the Qur'an. Certain rules were laid down including one which stipulated that no written text would be acceptable unless two people of integrity would testify that it was indicated by the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself as a part of the Qur'an. When Zaid completed the task, he handed it over to Abu Bakr who handed it over to Omar whom he nominated his successor when he died a year later. During the reign of Osman, the third caliph, the need to have reference copies of the Qur'an became apparent. Osman instructed Zaid ibn Thabit and four others to write down five more copies and he sent one copy to each of the main centers in the Muslim State to serve as reference to scholars and students of the Qur'an. Osman also ordered that all documents which were at variance with these copies be burned down. This was to make sure that those pieces of writing materials on which parts of the Qur'an were written and to which the writer might have added a word of explanation, as was the habit of some of them, were burned, so that they would not be confused later as having a fuller text. We should realize that Osman's action was a highly commendable one and enjoyed the support of all the surviving companions of the Prophet, many of whom had learned the Qur'an by heart. People were thus able to have their own copies of the Qur'an and check these against the master copies that Osman sent to the various cities. Needless to say, the memorization of the Qur'an was not only encouraged but widespread among Muslims in those early generations, and indeed in subsequent generations up to our present time. The fact that we do not have any differences in the Qur'an we read and recite today and the copies that have been preserved from various generations up to the time of Osman is a testimony to the fact that Allah has preserved the Qur'an intact as He indeed promised to do.

It is not true that some Iranians make any claim about the correct order of the Qur'an which is at variance with what the Sunnis have. If you pick up any copy of the Qur'an published in Iran today, you will find it identical to copies that are available in all Muslim countries. According to some Iranians, however, the number of Surahs in the

Qur'an are 111, because they consider the Surahs 8 and 9 to be one Surah; and Surahs 93 and 94 also as one Surah and also Surahs 105 and 106 to be one Surah. In other words, they have identical text, in the same order, but three different parts of Surahs are classified by them as three single Surahs. Even this insignificant shifting is not common to all copies of the Qur'an printed in Iran. Some of these have the same number or Surahs as we find in our copies of the Qur'an. As for the absurd claim that some leaves were eaten by goats and some were hidden away or disregarded for political reasons, these remain without proof. Moreover, if there was only one copy of each document, that might have been a disaster, but the Qur'an was committed to memory by so many of the Prophet's companions that not a word of it could have disappeared without it being pointed out by those companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him. The compilation of the Qur'an in its reference sets was undertaken in the first year after the Prophet, peace be upon him, had passed away. At that time, those who learned the Qur'an by heart in Madinah were in hundreds, if not in thousands. No distortion could have crept in without its being immediately discovered. [How can it be when we have Allah's own statement that He Himself will see to it that the Qur'an is kept complete and intact.]

2. The Qur'an is Allah's Book which He revealed to the Prophet, peace be upon him, through the Angel Gabriel. Everything that has to do with the Qur'an is, therefore, directed by Allah. It is true that the Qur'an was revealed at different times and places and some verses were revealed to provide guidance with regard to particular occasions and events. However, the Prophet, peace be upon him, could be receiving Qur'anic revelations of different Surahs at the same period in time, with all of these Surahs not being complete yet. When he received such revelation, he also received guidance as to its place in the Qur'an. The Angel Gabriel would tell him : these verses come after such and such verse of such and such a Surah. Nothing was left to discretion or to competent scholarship. Allah's Book is given in the order Allah has chosen.

The same applies to the arrangement of the Surahs. It is true that the arrangement does not follow a chronological order. It is arranged in the best order, which a book meant to provide guidance to all generations of humanity should take. It was often the case that Qur'anic revelations dealt with particular events as and when they happened in the life of the Muslim community. Hence the order of revelation suited that particular and additional purpose. As for later generations, they have the Qur'an complete and they refer to any part of it as suits their circumstances. The ordering of the Surahs is also divine. The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to receive the Angel Gabriel when the two of them recited the Qur'an to each other, once every Ramadhan. In the last year of the Prophet's life, they recited the Qur'an to each other twice. Moreover, the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to read the Qur'an in the order we have now.

The compilation of the Qur'an which took place after the Prophet, peace be upon him, had passed away was ordered by Abu Bakr, the Prophet's first successor as a ruler of the Muslim state. You are certainly aware that Abu Bakr's reign lasted only two years. He put in charge of this task a young companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who knew the Qur'an by heart and had a full command of its recitation and ordering. He completed his task before Abu Bakr had passed away. Some fifteen years later, the third caliph, Uthman, appointed the same man, Zaid ibn Thabit, as the head of a commission charged with writing six copies of the Qur'an, making use of the earlier compilation, to send one copy to each capital of the Islamic provinces to remain as a reference for Qur'anic scholarship.

[Added: Preservation of the original text of the Qur'an, in its unadulterated form, is guaranteed by Allah Himself. It is no wonder that we see no change in the order of the Qur'an, in its every detail.]

### ***Qur'an: Discussing the Interpretation & Stirring Disputes***

#### ***Commentary By Adil Salahi — Arab News***

Abdullah ibn Amr mentions that he once went to the Prophet, peace be upon him, near midday when it was very hot. Two people were in dispute about a particular verse of the Qur'an. The Prophet, peace be upon him, overheard them and he came out with anger clear in his face. He then said to us: "Communities before you were destroyed as a result of their being in dispute over their scriptures." [Related by Muslim and Ahmad]. A different version of this Hadith mentions that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said to those people: "Read the Qur'an as long as your hearts are in agreement over it. Should you be in dispute, disperse."

The destruction the Prophet, peace be upon him, mentions in this Hadith is that which results from differences about faith that lead to deviation and disbelief. This may start as an argument, and then as the disputants try to support their respective views, they stretch certain points or seek outlandish interpretations, or import arguments from other religions. These may not be compatible with the concept of God's oneness that is the central issue in all divine religions. Thus, their efforts could lead them to disbelief that would incur God's punishment.

It has to be explained though that the disputes this Hadith warns against are those concerning what is unacceptable from the Islamic point of view, such as a dispute over the Qur'an itself or over a meaning or concept that is at variance with Islamic faith, or over something that leads to a quarrel or division within the Muslim community. As for differences of opinion on how a Qur'anic verse dealing with matters of detail should be interpreted, these are perfectly acceptable. Indeed, such discussions are encouraged, and when people differ, their differences are seen as an aspect of God's grace, because they mean that different approaches or practices are acceptable to Him.

All Muslim generations and scholars, beginning with the Prophet's companions, are in full agreement on this point. This is also seen in practice, where followers of different schools of Fiqh, or Islamic law join together in the same prayer, led by one of them. No one imagines that such differences could affect the unity of the Muslim community.

### ***Qur'an: Disposing Of the Sheets Of Qur'an***

What is the appropriate method to eliminate old and worn out sheets of the Qur'anic text?

What is forbidden in respect of the disposal of sheets of paper on which Qur'anic verses are written is any method which could lead to desecration of the Qur'an. Thus, if you throw such a sheet of paper in the dust bin which will be later thrown on a rubbish heap where every sort of dirt and refuse is thrown, then this is a bad method of disposal of such sheets, as it leads to their desecration, unintentional as that may be. Perhaps the best method of disposal of sheets of paper on which Qur'anic verses are written is to burn them. This may not be easy in some modern houses or apartments as it represents a fire hazard. In such cases, it should not be done. An alternative is to bury these papers, but one should be careful to dig a deep enough hole not to allow them to surface again. It may be better to put these sheets of paper in polyethylene bag and warp them before burying them.



***Qur'an: Emphasis Not Limited To Religious Knowledge Only***

Many people argue that modern scientific education is not the right one for Muslims because a Muslim should concentrate only on the Qur'an and Hadith. If we were to take this view, Muslims will certainly be at a disadvantage in this world. Since there is repeated emphasis in the Qur'an on knowledge, could you please explain whether it refers to knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith only or to other branches of knowledge as well.

It is not true that the proper education is that which concentrates on the Qur'an and the Hadith. There are important branches of knowledge and it is essential that individuals in every Muslim community should specialize in them and attain a standard of excellence in these disciplines. To suggest, however, that religious are the only disciplines of knowledge required of Muslims is wrong. To start with, we cannot achieve any degree of excellence in these branches of knowledge unless we also acquire a standard of excellence in other fields and, indeed, in all branches of knowledge. The Qur'an invites people to look around them in the universe and to try to fathom its secrets. How can they do that unless they acquire appropriate knowledge?

Moreover, Allah has made everything in the universe subservient to us. He wants us to use these in order to build human life. This is the task required of mankind. How could they build human life, or build the earth, without knowledge? Moreover, Allah calls on people to reflect on his signs all over the horizon. For them to appreciate these signs requires good knowledge of the universe around them. That again requires an in-depth study of the world and everything relevant to it. If we were to abandon all branches of knowledge under the pretext that we should concentrate only on the Qur'an and the Hadith, then we shrink into a little shell and that is exactly what the enemies of Islam want us to do. An ignorant person can cause only harm to himself and to his community. If the community is composed of ignorant people, then they have no hope of a good future. The task of the Muslim community is to provide a model of everything good in life. That can only be achieved through excellence in all fields of knowledge. This was how the early Muslim generations understood their task. They were able, as a result, to build a civilization, which was unique in the history of mankind. Those who want us to concentrate only on the Qur'an and the Hadith do not themselves know what the Qur'an requires of us. They do not know what they are talking about. I should say that Islam opens all the horizons of knowledge for its followers to excel in them, be they men or women. [In your keenness towards pursuit for "other horizons of knowledge" you must not neglect your basic obligation towards knowledge of Qur'an and the Hadith, through which you realize the need for such a pursuit.]

***Qur'an: Following the Qur'an Or Something Else***

The Prophet, peace be upon him, is known to have said in his farewell speech: "I have left with you two things which ensure that you will never be in error if you hold fast to them: Allah's revelations and my Sunnah." Is it not true that this statement means that we only need to follow the Qur'an and Hadiths in order to ensure that we follow the right path? If so, what need is there to follow a school of thought? Some of my friends argue that a person who does not follow one of the [four] schools of thought violates Islamic teaching. Please explain.

You have quoted the statement by the Prophet, peace be upon him, in his farewell speech correctly. Moreover, it is a basic principle of Islam that every Muslim must follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This is indeed the practical meaning of the declaration that one believes in the Oneness of Allah and the message of Prophet

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Muhammad, peace be upon him. As you realize, it is this declaration that brings a person into the fold of Islam. As such, every Muslim is required to follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah. If he does not, he is bound to be in error and he will go astray.

Some people seem to think that if they are to follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah correctly, they have to abandon schools of thought and indeed all the work of scholars over the centuries. This is a very mistaken notion. Indeed, the schools of thought and the work of other scholars point for us the way to following the Qur'an and the Sunnah. You may realize that in many cases, the Qur'an and the Sunnah give us general principles without explaining the practical way of following them. The Sunnah may provide details of those principles, but then you need to know the ruling concerning every point of detail. Take for example the case of prayer. Allah has repeatedly said in the Qur'an that Muslims should attend regularly to their prayers. There is nothing in the Qur'an to suggest that we have to pray in a particular fashion or five times a day. We rely on the Sunnah to provide these details. We know that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has said: "Offer your prayers in the manner in which you have seen me pray." This Hadith gives us a practical example for the fulfillment of Allah's order to pray. However, it is important to know what is obligatory in prayer and what is recommended. Do we have, for example, to read the Fatihah in every rak'ah or not? Do we have to do one bow or two prostrations in every rak'ah? Or is it possible to have the prostrations for all rak'ahs at the end of the prayer, rather than standing up and prostrating oneself in every rak'ah? What happens if one misses out a small part of prayer? What he should do if he cannot remember how many rak'ahs he has already completed? To know the answers to all these, we have Hadiths and reports by the Prophet's companions. Muslim scholars have studied all these details over the centuries and have clarified what a person should do at every point in his prayer, and indeed in all situations in life. They addressed the task of relating Hadiths to practical situations and deducting from the Qur'an and the Hadiths rulings concerning matters of detail. If one is to abandon all schools of thought, he is simply abandoning the long heritage of Islamic scholarship, which has helped Muslims over the centuries. He is like one who suffers from a particular illness. Rather than going to a specialized doctor who has spent years pursuing his studies and specialization, and who has treated a large number of people, this sick person goes to a book shop and buys several books on medicine and starts to read about diseases and illnesses. His aim is to try to determine what illness he has and how to treat it. I need not go into the details of what may happen to him as a result, but it is obvious that he could easily be mistaken about his illness and take the wrong medicine which aggravates his condition instead of curing it.

If a person does not want to follow a school of thought to the opinion of any scholar, he is actually setting himself a task of determining the Islamic ruling concerning every point of detail, by referring to the Qur'an and the Hadith. He does not know the rules of deduction and he does not have sufficient knowledge to relate different Hadiths, which touch on each particular condition. He cannot establish which Hadith is authentic and which is doubtful. As a result, he leaves himself open to committing grave errors.

I have explained that to follow a particular school of thought and adhere to it strictly is neither required nor practical. Moreover, it is not done by almost all people. He who has limited Islamic knowledge actually follows the school of thought of the scholar he consults. A scholar normally does not follow a single school of thought, but chooses opinions and verdicts from different schools of thought on the basis of the supporting evidence of each ruling. If he is convinced that the point of one school is more strongly supported, he chooses that. The next minute he may choose an opinion from a different school of thought.

What I have tried to explain is that schools of thought cannot be placed in a position of contrast with following the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Indeed, they are methods of

following the Qur'an and the Sunnah. No one can claim that by following them, he abandons Islamic teachings. Indeed, by following them he actually follows Islamic teachings.

***Qur'an: Glorify God To Stay Permanently Close To Him***

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

***“And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and with awe, and without raising your voice, in the morning and evening: And do not be negligent. Those who are with your Lord are never too proud to worship Him. They extol His glory and before Him alone prostrate themselves.”***

[the Heights — “Al-A'araf” 7: 205-6] Commentary by Sayyid Qutb — Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi

In his commentary on the Qur'an, the famous scholar, Ibn Katheer says: "God gives this general order that we should remember Him often at the beginning and end of each day, as He ordered that we should worship Him at these two times, when he says: 'Extol the praises of your Lord before sunrise and before sunset.' This used to be the case before the daily prayers were made obligatory and the night when the Prophet, peace be upon him, went on his night journey."

This verse was revealed in Makkah. Here God says that we should remember Him “in the morning and evening”, and this should be done humbly, and with awe, without raising our voices. This is the best way to remember God, not to address him loudly. The Prophet's companions asked him: “Is our Lord near to be addressed softly, or distant so that we should appeal to Him aloud?” In reply, God revealed the Qur'anic verse: ***“When My servants ask you about Me, I am near. I respond to the supplication of anyone when he addresses Me.”***

Both Al-Bukhari and Muslim relate in their "Saheehs" on the authority of Abu Moosa Al Ashari: “On some travel people raised their voices when they made their supplication. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said to them: “People watch what you do. You are appealing to someone who is neither deaf nor away. The One Whom you are calling hears all that is said, and He is close at hand. Indeed, He is close to each one of you than the neck of his camel.”

God's remembrance is not the mere mentioning of His name verbally; it can only be achieved when both heart and mind are brought into it. It is the type of remembrance that makes hearts tremble and minds react. Unless it is coupled with a feeling of humility and awe, it will not be true remembrance of God. Indeed, it could border on impoliteness toward God. When we remember God, we should think of His greatness, fear His punishment and hope for His mercy. Only in that way, can we achieve spiritual purity. When we mention His name as we remember His greatness and we bring the physical action with the spiritual one, we must show our humility, speaking in a low voice, without singing or showing off.

***“And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and with awe, and without raising your voice, in the morning and evening.”*** This is to ensure that our hearts remain in contact with God at both ends of the day. Remembering God is not limited to these two times; indeed it must be all the time. We should be on constant guard against slipping into error. But in these two particular periods we can observe the clear change that takes place in the universe as the night changes into day, and the day changes into night. Human hearts would feel in touch with the universe around them, as they witness how God accomplishes this transition of day and night and the great changes that take place as one gives way to the other. God [limitless in His glory] knows that at these two particular times, human hearts are most likely to be impressed and to respond positively. There are frequent directives in the Qur'an to

remember God and glorify Him at the time when the whole universe appears to interact with the human heart, sharpen its impressions, and motivates it to remain in touch with God the Almighty:

***“Persevere in the fact of what they say, and extol the praises of your Lord before sunrise and before sunset. Also in the depth of the night, glorify Him and do so after prayers.”***

***“At different times through the night do glorify your Lord, and also do so at both ends of the day so that you may be gratified.”***

***“Remember the name of your Lord early in the morning and before sunset. And in the depth of the night, prostrate yourself to Him and glorify Him through the long night.”***

There is no need to [repeatedly] say that this order to remember God at this particular time was before the daily prayers were made obligatory at their appointed times, because this may give the impression that these obligatory prayers have superseded this order. The fact is that this remembrance of God is wider than the obligatory prayers. Its timing and its form are not limited to obligatory prayers. It may be a remembrance in private, or something in which both heart and mouth share without the movements that prayer includes. It is indeed wider than that because it involves constant remembrance of God's Almightyness, when one is alone or with people, before any action, big or small, and before resolving to do something. However, the early morning, the end of day as the sun begins to set, and the depth of the nights are mentioned because these are times that have special appeal to human hearts. God Who has created man and Who knows his nature is fully aware of all that.

***“Do not be negligent.”*** This is a reference to people who neglect to remember God, not by word of mouth, but in their heart and mind. It is the remembrance that keeps the heart alive to deter man from doing anything or following any course in which he feels embarrassed to be seen by God and who watches God before doing anything. This is the type of remembering God that is ordered here. It would not be true remembrance of God if it does not lead to obeying Him and implementing His orders.

Do not let yourself be negligent of remembering God and watching your actions. Man needs to remain in constant touch with his Lord so that he is able to resist the temptation that Satan may place before him. ***“Should a tempting thought from Satan attract you, seek shelter with God. He hears all and knows all.”*** .....

### ***Qur'an: Gradual Revelations & the Wisdom Truly Relevant To It***

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent

***Thus against every prophet We have set up enemies from among the wicked. Sufficient is your Lord to provide guidance and support.***

***The unbelievers ask: "Why has not the Qur'an been revealed to him all at once?" Thus (it has been revealed) so that We might strengthen your heart with it, and We have imparted it to you by gradual revelation.***

***Whenever they come to you with an argument, We shall reveal to you the truth and the best explanation.***

***Those who will be gathered to hell on their faces - they will be worst in station and still farther away from the (right) path.***

(The Standard "Al-Furqan" — 25: 31-34) Commentary by Sayyid Qutb — Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi

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The prophets advocate the message of the truth, which is given at the appropriate time to rectify corruption that creeps into the life of the community or into human life in general. Such corruption is initiated, promoted and exploited by the wicked. Their opposition to the prophets aims to defend themselves and their interests. They fight the message of the truth tooth and nail. But it is only natural that it will emerge triumphant, because it promotes life and looks up to the sublime horizon, which binds it to God. ***"Sufficient is your Lord to provide guidance and support."***

The Surah goes on examining the arguments of the wicked who stand in opposition to the Qur'an: ***"The unbelievers ask: 'Why has not the Qur'an been revealed to him all at once?' Thus [it has been revealed] so that We might strengthen your heart with it, and We have imparted it to you by gradual revelation."***

The purpose of revealing the Qur'an is to re-educate a community and establish a new social order. Such a task requires time. In a process of proper education it is not enough to understand the words being said, but one must interact with them as also with the ideas expressed. This interaction should then be brought into the practical world. Human nature does not go through a total transformation overnight, as a result of reading a book providing a complete outline of a new way of life. It is more likely to be influenced day by day, and by one aspect of this way of life after another. This gives it a chance for a gradual, but thorough understanding of it, and to get used, bit by bit, to bear the responsibilities it requires. Thus, it will not be scared off as it might do should it have it presented in full, surrounded by difficulties. Its approach would be like one who is having a fresh nourishing meal every day, thus becoming stronger and better able to benefit by the next meal, enjoying it even more.

The Qur'an provides a comprehensive way of life, covering all its aspects, as well as a system of education that suits human nature. For it is revealed by God, the Creator of human nature who knows it thoroughly. For this reason, it has been revealed in parts, to suit the real needs of the Muslim community as it comes into existence and begins to grow. It is not meant to be a theoretical book, which is read for enjoyment or increasing one's knowledge. It is to be implemented in full, with every task accomplished and every detailed order carried out. Indeed its verses are "orders of the day" which Muslims receive and start to implement immediately, just like military personnel receive their daily orders in their camps or in the battlefield. They are keen to understand these orders properly, interact with, and implement them.

For all this, the Qur'an was revealed in small parts, explaining things first to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and strengthening his resolve to fulfill his task. Its revelation progressed, one passage or Surah after another, as suited the different stages along the road the Muslim community traveled. ***"Thus [it has been revealed] so that We might strengthen your heart with it, and We have imparted it to you by gradual revelation."*** The Arabic term *tarteel*, translated here as "gradual revelation", indicates successive steps according to God's knowledge of what suited the Muslims at the time and their readiness to receive more.

This method accomplished miracles in transforming the community, which received it in succession, interacting with it day after day and absorbing its message part after part. When Muslims ignored this method, viewing the Qur'an as a book for theoretical knowledge and recitation in worship only, they no longer benefited by it. They simply abandoned its method, which aimed to reshape their way of thinking and their practical life.

The Surah continues to reassure the Prophet, peace be upon him, that he will be given the ultimate argument and the final evidence whenever the unbelievers come up with a new suggestion or objection. ***"Whenever they come to you with an argument, We shall reveal to you the truth and the best explanation."***

Their argument is false, and God refutes it with the truth. Indeed the Qur'an aims to establish the truth in full clarity. It does not aim to win an argument or to be applauded in a debate. It has no time for any such pursuit.

God, limitless is He in His glory, promises to help His Messenger in any argument he may have with his people. He follows the truth, and God empowers him with the truth that overcomes all falsehood. How can their argument stand up to God's ultimate proof? How can the falsehood they advocate resist the overpowering truth revealed by God?

This passage of the Surah ends up with an image showing their resurrection and how they will be gathered in hell, as a punishment for their rejection of the truth and upholding twisted logic and values. ***"Those who will be gathered to hell on their faces, they will be worst in station and still farther away from the [right] path."*** The image of gathering them on their faces in hell is very humiliating. It is held in contrast to their arrogance and turning away from the truth. This image is placed before the Prophet, peace be upon him, to strengthen him against the opposition he was facing from them. It is also placed before them as a warning against what awaits them. The whole image is meant to undermine their arrogance and to show the weakness of their position. Yet despite such strong warnings, they stubbornly held on to their rejection of the truth.

### ***Qur'an: Guidance — No End To God's Blessings***

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent

***He said, "Do you see those which you have been worshipping — you and your forefathers of old? They are my enemies, except for the Lord of all the worlds.***

***It is He who has created me, and is the One who guides me. He is the One who gives me to eat and to drink. When I fall ill, He is the One who restores me to health, and will cause me to die and then will bring me back to life. It is He also who, I hope will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgement.***

***My Lord! Grant me sound judgment, and join me with the righteous, and grant me the advocacy of the truth in later generations, place me among those who will inherit the garden of bliss! Forgive my father, for he is among the ones who have gone astray. Let me not suffer disgrace on the Day when all shall be raised from the dead; the Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit, but only the one who comes to God with a sound heart (will be happy)."***

[the Poets — Al-Shu'ara 26: 75-89] [Commentary by Sayyid Qutb — Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi]

These verses represent an episode of Ibrahim's story. Here he outlines the attitude of his Lord and the bond that exists between them at all times and in all situations. As we listen to his description we feel the close, inspirational relationship that acknowledges God's hand in everything that happens in life:

***"It is He who has created me, and is the One who guides me. and is the One who guides me. He is the One who gives me to eat and to drink. When I fall ill, He is the One who restores me to health, and will cause me to die and then will bring me back to life. It is He also who, I hope will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgement."***

Ibrahim's description of his Lord and the bond between them imparts a feeling that every part of his constitution feels this bond. Hence, all his aspirations look up to

God with love and trust. It is as if Ibrahim actually sees his Lord and feels his grace with all his heart. As the Qur'an quotes Ibrahim's description, it give it a melodious tone that enhances a very relaxed atmosphere and spreads a soothing, tranquil ambience.

***"It is He who has created me, and is the One who guides me."*** He has originated me from where He knows but I do not know. This means that He knows everything about me. My constitution, nature, functions, feelings and ultimate destiny. He is the One to guide me and provide me with the line I should follow in life. It is as if Ibrahim feels himself like an elastic material, which God shapes the way He likes, giving it whatever form He chooses. He submits himself to God with full trust, perfectly assured that he is on the right course.

***"He is the One who gives me to eat and to drink. When I fall ill, He is the One who restores me to health."*** These are the aspects of he direct, compassionate and loving care Ibrahim feels his Lord takes of him in all situations of health and sickness. Ibrahim demonstrates the utmost standard of politeness with his Lord by not attributing his illness to Him, although he knows well that both sickness and health occur by God's will. He only attributes to him the blessings he enjoys and the care he receives. His food and drink as well as his health. When he is afflicted with illness, he does not attach this to God.

Again it is God who ***"will cause me to die and then will bring me back to life."*** This signifies faith that it is God who deals death, and that He is certain to bring the dead back to life.

***"It is He also who, I hope will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgement."*** Ibrahim, a Prophet and a messenger of God, who knows his Lord and feels his presence and care in such a way, acknowledging such a close relationship with Him, expresses his dearest hope that on the Day of Judgment, God will forgive him his faults. He does not entertain any thought that he is without fault. Indeed he acknowledges that he has. But hopes to receive more of God's grace. He does not feel that his deeds, good as they may be, deserve any credit, but hopes for God's mercy. He does not feel that his deeds, good as they may be, deserve any credit, but hopes for God's mercy and forgiveness. This is the best to hope for.

This statement combines feelings of God-consciousness, politeness and self-affecting, which is the right combination to truly appreciate the grace God bestows on us, which is great indeed, and the value of our actions, which is definitely petty.

In his description of his Lord, Ibrahim combines all the elements of the true faith: God's oneness, acknowledgement that He conducts all affairs of human life on earth including its minute details, resurrection after death, reckoning, God's grace and man's failings. His people denied these, as do all those who associate partners with God.

Now Ibrahim addresses a long, comprehensive and humble prayer to his Lord:

***"My Lord! Grant me sound judgment, and join me with the righteous, and grant me the advocacy of the truth in later generations, place me among those who will inherit the garden of bliss! Forgive my father, for he is among the ones who have gone astray. Let me not suffer disgrace on the Day when all shall be raised from the dead; the Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit, but only the one who comes to God with a sound heart [will be happy]."***

Nothing in Ibrahim's prayer concerns any aspect of the comforts and pleasures of this world, not even physical health. It looks to higher aspects, motivated by pure

feelings. It is a prayer made by a heart which has true knowledge of God and, as a result, gives little value to everything else. He has known God's grace and prays for more of it, and he entertains hopes and fears in accordance with his experience.

***Qur'an: Guidance — Steering Away From Sin***

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent.

***The true servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk gently on earth; and who, whenever the ignorant address them, say: 'Peace.;***

***And who stay up far into the night in adoration of their Lord, prostrating themselves and standing;***

***Who pray: 'Our Lord, avert from us the suffering of hell, for the suffering it causes is indeed a dire torment;***

***It is indeed an evil abode and a terrible station;***

***And who, whenever they put their money to use, they are neither wasteful nor niggardly, but always maintain a just mean between the two;***

***And who never invoke any deity side by side with God, and do not take any human being's life - (the life) which God has willed to be sacred - except for a just cause, and do not commit adultery. Whoever does any of this will face punishment,***

***And on the Day of Resurrection his suffering will be doubled, and he will abide therein in ignominy.***

[the Standard — Al-Furqan: 25: 63-69] Commentary by Sayyid Qutb — Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi

These verses begin the final passage of the Surah Al-Furqan, in which the true servants of God, the Most Merciful, are shown with their distinctive features. They appear to be the highest model of humanity that remains after the end of the long battle between true guidance and error, impertinent humans who deny God and His messengers who bring such guidance for humanity. They seem to be the fruit ripening after such a long struggle. They are the ones who bring comfort to the bearer of divine guidance, after they had been met with denial and rejection.

***"The true servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk gently on earth, and who, whenever the ignorant address them, say: 'Peace'."***

Their first feature is that they walk gently, with no affectation, pretension, or display of arrogance. Like every movement man makes, walking gives an expression of one's personality and natural feelings. A serious, reassured and sound personality demonstrates itself through walking. A person of this type walks with an air of seriousness and reassurance, reflecting clarity of purpose and strength. To 'walk gently on earth' does not mean that they walk hanging down their heads, showing weakness and lack of support, as understood by some of those who think that by so doing they show themselves to be God-fearing! God's Messenger used to bend forward when he walked. He was the fastest and best walker, with an air of serenity. Abu Hurairah reports: "I have never seen anyone more handsome than God's Messenger: He looked as if the sun was reflected in his face. And I have never seen anyone who walked faster than God's Messenger. It was as though the earth would shrink for him. [As we walked with him] we would put in our best effort, but he was most relaxed." Ali ibn Abi Talib describes: "When the Prophet, peace be upon him, walked he bent forward, as though he was walking fast downhill."

In their serious and dignified approach, and in their attention to their serious concerns, God's true servants do not bother themselves with other people's



absurdities and stupidities. They do not waste their time or energy in futile arguments with such people. They recognize that engaging in an argument with people who argue for argument's sake is fruitless. Hence, "whenever the ignorant address them, [they] say: 'Peace.' But this is by no means a sign of weakness or lack of ability. It is simply their dignified approach that does not permit them to waste time and energy over what is unbecoming of an honorable person.

Such is their conduct in daytime when they are with other people. At night they reflect their God-fearing nature.

***"Who stay up far into the night in adoration of their Lord, prostrating themselves and standing; who pray: 'Our Lord, avert from us the suffering of hell, for the suffering it causes is indeed a dire torment; it is indeed an evil abode and a terrible station."***

The two main movements Muslims do in prayer, namely prostration and standing up are highlighted here. Thus it reflects their action in the depth of the night, when others are fast asleep. Such true servants of God stay up prostrating themselves and standing before their Lord, addressing themselves completely to Him. They are not concerned about not being in bed, because they have something that they enjoy, something that gives them far more comfort, energy and happiness than sleep would ever give. They are preoccupied with their being close to their Lord, addressing Him with all their being. Hence, people go to sleep while they pray standing and prostrating themselves. Other people are concerned with their position on earth while these true servants of God look up to the throne of the Most Merciful.

In their prayers, with all its movements and all their inner feelings, they are fully conscious of their Lord, fearing to incur His displeasure, which would make them liable to His punishment. Thus they appeal to Him:

***"Our Lord, avert from us the suffering of hell, for the suffering it causes is indeed a dire torment; it is indeed an evil abode and a terrible station."***

They have not seen hell or its suffering, but they believe in it. They also visualize it according to its descriptions in the Qur'an and in the Prophet's statements. Thus their healthy fear of it is the fruit of true faith.

Humbly and most seriously they pray to their Lord to avert the suffering of hell from them. They do not feel safe simply because they spend part of the night in worship, prostrating themselves and standing in prayer. Their God-fearing sense make them think little of what they do, feeling always that they fall short of what is needed. Hence, they pray for God's grace and forgiveness so that he would spare them from suffering in hell.

The description in the passage implies that hell tries to engulf every human being, with its gates open and its hands outstretched trying to get them all. God's true servants who stay up far into the night in their devotion fear it and appeal most sincerely to their Lord to spare them such punishment and to save them from it. As they address such a prayer, they shiver with fear: ***"for the suffering it causes is indeed a dire torment."*** It engulfs its victim, not allowing him any room for escape. This is what makes it dire indeed. Moreover, ***"it is indeed an evil abode and a terrible station."*** Could there be a worse station than hell as a place of abode and settlement? How can anyone settle within the fire? How can there be an abode in a place of continuous burning?

The true servants of God lead a balanced life that is exemplary in its seriousness and moderation:

***"Whenever they put their money to use, they are neither wasteful nor niggardly, but always maintain a just mean between the two."***

Balance is the distinctive feature that Islam establishes in the life of the individual and the community. Its achievement is what Islam aims for through educating its followers and its legal system. Its whole structure is based on balance and moderation.

Although Islam approves private ownership, a Muslim is not free to spend his money without restriction, as is the case in the capitalist system and in communities that do not conduct their lives in accordance with the divine law. A Muslim is required to strike a balance between extravagance and miserliness. Both extravagance and miserliness are bad for the individual, society and for money itself. Indeed, a miser does not only deprive himself of the benefits of his money, but also deprives the community of the benefits of keeping money in circulation. Indeed money is meant to provide services for the community. Both extremes of overspending and withholding money produce social and economic imbalance, leading to crises, in addition to their unhealthy effect on people's hearts and ethics.

As Islam regulates this aspect of human life, it begins with the individual, making a balanced approach a feature of faith. Thus, whenever the true servants of God, the Most Merciful put their money to use, they "are neither wasteful nor niggardly, but always maintain a just mean between the two."

The next important quality of the true servants of God, the Most Merciful is that they

***"Never invoke any deity side by side with God, and do not take any human being's life — [the life] which God has willed to be sacred — except for a just cause, and do not commit adultery. Whoever does any of this will face punishment, and on the Day of Resurrection his suffering will be doubled, and he will abide therein in ignominy."***

To believe in God's oneness is the cornerstone of the Islamic faith. It is the point where clarity, straightforwardness and simplicity of beliefs are separated from ambiguity, confusion and complexity.

Similarly, prevention of killing anyone, except for a legitimate reason, is central to the achievement of security in society so that human life is given its rightful value and due respect. Otherwise, human life would become like a jungle where no one is safe or able to do any constructive work.

Likewise, preventing adultery is basic to the establishment of a clean social life where man rises above the naked physical desire, and where he feels that the union of the two sexes has a nobler purpose than the mere satisfaction of desire. Otherwise, life sinks low and men and women become preoccupied with the satisfaction of unrestrained physical desire.

### ***Qur'an: Handling During Janabah [Ceremonial Impurity]***

1. Could a woman hold the Qur'an and read it when she is in her period, if she is wearing gloves? Also, is it obligatory to perform the ablution before reading the Qur'an?

2. Could you please let me know whether it is permissible for a woman to touch or hold the Qur'an, when she is in her period.

1. A woman in her period may hold the Qur'an without touching it, which means that she should have something to hold it with, either a glove, or a piece of cloth. The same applies to a man who is in a state of ceremonial impurity, i.e. Janabah. Neither

is allowed to read the Qur'an, whether holding a copy of it or from memory, because the Prophet, peace be upon him, is quoted as saying: "I do not permit holding the Qur'an to any man in the state of Janabah or a woman during her menses." This is the view of the majority of scholars, but there are small minorities of distinguished scholars who say that no Hadith speaking about such prevention is reasonably authentic. Hence, they say that the prevention is wrong and the reading is permissible.

It is always better to perform the ablution before any act of worship, or before glorifying God. Needless to say, reading the Qur'an is an act of worship, so it is strongly recommended to perform ablution before reading it.

2. According to most scholars, it is not permissible for a man or a woman to hold the Qur'an, or read it in the book or from memory when they are in the state of ceremonial impurity, which includes women in their period. This is based on the Hadith which quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "The Qur'an is not lawful for a man or a woman who is in the state of ceremonial impurity." Scholars agree, however, that it is permissible to hold a book which includes one or more verses of the Qur'an, or to read in it, including reading the verses it contains. This applies, for example, to high school and university students who may be asked to read in class something that contains one or more verses of the Qur'an. They may do so, without hesitation.

Having said that, I would like to point out that this is by no means a unanimous view. Some scholars of Hadith, most notably Imam Al-Bukhari, explain that this prohibition is not mentioned in any Hadith that enjoys a good degree of authenticity. But then scholars of Hadith are not necessarily the best to rule on Fiqh questions. If this becomes confusing, the right approach is for a woman who is in the period, or indeed anyone who is in the state of ceremonial impurity, not to hold the Qur'an or read it even from memory until he or she has removed that state.

### ***Qur'an: Intercession — Confusion On Some Verses***

Ever since my arrival in Saudi Arabia three years ago, I have been learning more about Islam. However, I find it difficult sometimes to reconcile statements in the Qur'an, which may appear to my beginner's eye to be in conflict with each other. Could you please clarify the following examples?

Verse 2: 123 states that no intercession is accepted from anyone on the Day of Judgment. Another Verse 2: 255 makes it clear that no one can intercede except by God's permission. Yet another Verse 21: 28 says that God's servants do not intercede on behalf of anyone "except those with whom He is pleased." How is it that intercession is negated and then confirmed in certain cases? Verse 6: 103 states that eyesight cannot grasp God and this to me means that He is invisible, and that we do not know how He looks. Yet many verses speak about God's hand, His face, eyes and movements.

Islam does not accept the principle of original sin, and holds that every child is born pure of sin. But I read a Hadith in Al-Bukhari stating that for every murder committed on Earth a share of punishment is added to Cain, Adam's son who killed his brother. How is it that he is punished for a crime he did not commit?

It is clear to me that what the reader needs is to refer to a good interpretation of the Qur'an. If English is the reader's preference then she may consult ***Toward Understanding the Qur'an***, by A. Maudoodi, which is published by the Islamic Foundation, Rathy Lane, Marksfield, Leicester LE67 9SY U.K. She may also consult ***In***

*the Shade of the Qur'an*, by Sayyid Qutb, also published by the same publishers. If she prefers in other languages of the Muslim community, then they are available in other languages as well. For example, above referred two are also available in Urdu language in Pakistan.

There is no conflict between the verses she cites. In the first example, the first verse is an address to the Children of Israel saying:

***“Fear a day when no soul shall avail another in any way, when no ransom shall be accepted from it, when intercession shall not be allowed on its behalf. ...”*** [the Cow “Al-Baqarah” 2: 123]

This is a clear statement that on the Day of Judgement no one can manage to do anything on his or her own behalf. There can be no ransom or intercession offered. The only sure way to save oneself is to believe in God and to have a record of good deeds. He or she can offer nothing else.

However, verse 255 of the same Surah 2 makes it clear that any intercession must be sanctioned by God. Unless He permits such intercession, it cannot be done. We know that Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is granted such a privilege on behalf of his community. Also children who die in childhood are said, in one Hadith to appeal to God to save their parents.

When they are told to enter heaven, they cry out to God that they would not go in alone, unless they have their parents with them. God in His mercy will accept their plea and allow their parents to join them in heaven.

The other verse from Surah 21 tells us that the believers would not intercede except on behalf of people with whom God is pleased. This means that they would intercede with His permission on behalf of people He wishes to forgive.

Thus it is all connected with God's will. No one can, on his or her own behalf, seek or offer intercession. It is done only by God's leave, by people whom He allows on behalf of ones to whom He wishes to extend His mercy.

That there is no original sin is correct. If Cain, the first murderer is punished further for every additional murder, it is on the lines of the Hadith: “Whoever starts a good practice will have its reward and a similar reward to that of everyone who follows that practice until the Day of Judgement. And whoever starts an evil practice bears responsibility for it and a similar burden to that of everyone who follows his evil practice until the Day of Judgement. As Cain was the first to resort to murder for personal gains, he bears the burden of his own crime and shares in that of everyone who follows his example.

This is part of the burden for having started an evil practice.

It is true that we cannot see God. We are not equipped with the faculties to enable us to see His light. When Moses appealed to God to allow him to see Him, God told him to look at Mount Sinai. If the mountain stays in its position, then Moses would be able to see Him. When God revealed Himself to the mountain, it fell down and Moses was unconscious “[See Verse 7: 143] But He is not invisible. That is something different. Why should the fact that we cannot see Him be in conflict with Him having a hand, face, and eyes? Etc.? He certainly has these and He has so stated in the Qur'an. However, we do not know what His face, hand or eyes are like. May be these are only names and the reality is so different for God. May be they are exactly like that, but we cannot tell. The important point to remember is the Prophet's advice not to think about God's nature because such thinking is not likely to get us any satisfying result.

### ***Qur'an: Kalimah In the Qur'an***

What does Islam say about the Kalimah? Why is it not mentioned in full in the Qur'an?

The Kalimah is an Arabic word, which has found its way to other languages of Muslim people. It refers to the declaration, which brings a person into the fold of Islam. Anyone, who wishes to be a Muslim must declare that he believes in the Oneness of Allah and in the Prophet, peace be upon him, as Allah's messenger.

The two parts of the declaration are mentioned in the Qur'an in separate verses. In Verse 19 of Surah 47, entitled Muhammad, Allah says:

***"Learn that there is no deity save Allah and seek forgiveness of your sin, etc."*** [Muhammad — 47: 19]

This part of the declaration is mentioned in numerous other verses. The last verse of Surah 48 begins with the second half of the declaration; "Muhammad is Allah's messenger."

### ***Qur'an: Learning the Qur'an Or Acting On It***

I have decided not to learn the Qur'an until I have practiced as many obligatory and recommended practices as possible. I feel that God has revealed the Qur'an, to be implemented, not to be learnt by heart. Please comment.

It is true that the Qur'an is meant for implementation in the first place. However, implementation can only come as a result of learning and understanding. How is it possible that someone who has not read the Qur'an, or learnt any part of it can implement it?

While the reader's desire to act on the teachings of the Qur'an and implementing them in real life is highly commendable, he cannot do that without reading the Qur'an regularly and learning the meaning of its verses. The two go hand in hand.

Moreover, to read the Qur'an is an act of worship. God rewards us for reading the Qur'an, crediting us with 10 good points for each letter of every word. God says in the Qur'an:

***"Keep up prayers when the sun is on its decline, in the darkness of the night, and recite the Qur'an at dawn, for the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn is indeed witnessed. At night, rise from your sleep to recite in prayer, as an additional bonus for you."*** [Children of Israel — "Bani Israel" 17: 78-79]

In this verse, reading the Qur'an is ranked with prayers at the same level. Just as God commands us to offer prayers at the beginning of the night and the early hours of the day, He tells us to recite the Qur'an at dawn, because such a recitation is witnessed by the angels.

At night, we are meant to recite it, just like we are recommended to offer prayers in the depth of the night as voluntary worship.

Needless to say, the Qur'an is not meant for absent-minded reading, without understanding or implementation. But even then, if a person does not know Arabic, and reads the Qur'an as an act of worship, he is rewarded for his reading.

### ***Qur'an: Memorizing Without Understanding It***

In many non-Arabic speaking parts of the Muslim world, you find people who memorize the Qur'an in full, but without understanding it. I know that one is rewarded for reciting the Qur'an, but the purpose of reading and memorizing is not served in this way. Please comment.

There is no doubt that to memorize one of the parts of the Qur'an and to study it at the same time in order to understand the meaning of its verses and what they signify in actual life is infinitely better than memorizing the whole of the Qur'an without understanding its meaning. Scholars have always emphasized this and quoted the example of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who used to study a few verses at a time. Many of them would not move on to study another passage until they have implemented the first one in their lives. This means that their approach was not merely one, which relied on understanding, but they took it a step further to practical implementation.

Having said that, I should add that those who memorize the Qur'an, even though they may not understand it, serve an important purpose. Allah has guaranteed the preservation of the Qur'an without distortion for all time. When you remember that printing is, relatively speaking, a recent development and that the Qur'an was revealed in a nation in which people who were able to read and write were very few, then you realize that it was passed on from one person to another on the basis of memorization. There were attempts by colonial powers and other hostile forces to promote special prints of the Qur'an in which they might have introduced a small distortion here and there. But these were soon discovered and all copies were burned out. The Qur'an memorizers have played an important role in foiling such evil attempts.

[It will not be correct thus to compare one with the other when both have vital contribution in the life of Muslims. Of course those who are able to memorize the Qur'an and understand it are by far the blessed.]

### ***Qur'an: Not A Book Of Science***

Would you kindly explain Verse 45 of Surah 24 and Verse 30 of Surah 21 and Verse 54 of Surah 25. In the translation of all these verses the translator, Mr. Yousuf Ali, suggests that Allah is telling us that He has created all living things from water. The phrase "from water" has left me confused. Why does not the Qur'an uses a phrase such as "made of water" or "contains mostly water," which are more scientifically accurate.

This is simply a linguistic question, Mr. Yousuf Ali's translation has many virtues, though at times he can be too literal, as in this case. He uses the preposition "from" simply because it is the one used in the Arabic text. I admit that I have never found the Arabic text confusing because the preposition used in all these verses simply implies a reference to the original substance used in the creation of the animal kingdom. In English, perhaps, the preposition "from" is not particularly useful in this context.

I have looked these verses up in other translations I use. Before I explain how they render these verses, I would like to say that although there are about 20 different English translations of the Qur'an, none of them is free of defects. Each has its own merit, but there is hardly one, which can be recommended without reservations. In Mr. Pickthall's translation, we find the first of these verses [21:30] rendered as "We made every living thing of water." The same phrase, "of water", is used in the verse in Surah 24, while the verse in Surah 25 is rendered as: "He it is who hath created man from water". In Mr. N. J. Dawood's translation, published by Penguin, the phrase "of

water" is used in the first of the three verses while, "from water" is used in the other two. This is a little surprising because Mr. Dawood's translation is far from literal. In Mr. Muhammad Asad's translation, the second of these verses [24:25] is rendered as follows: ***"It is God who has created all animals out of water."*** The phrase, "out of water", is retained in the other two verses. The same phrase "out of water" is used in the rendering of all three verses by Dr. Thomas Irving, whose translation is the first by an American. Mr. Asad's and Dr. Irving's are two of the most recent translations. Mr. Asad's was published in 1980, while Dr. Irving's in 1985.

I hope that what I have mentioned about the different translations is sufficient to clear the confusion which you have felt to arise from the rendering of these verses in English. As you see, it is the translator's preference in each case, which influences his rendering. Perhaps a few additional words are needed here to explain the meaning of these verses.

From the first of these verses, we understand that ***"Allah has made every living thing out of water"***. This is a very important truism, which tells us that water is the origin of all life. The Qur'an has revealed 14 centuries ago, when no human being even remotely linked the origin of life with water. Today, we accept this fact easily because we know that water is the predominant element in all-living creatures. Moreover, it is the environment in which life originated. Scientists did not discover that until recently. But the fact that this is now admitted by science is no reason to make us more convinced of the truth of the Qur'an. Because even if science did not have anything to say on the subject, we would still accept Allah's statement as absolutely true and irrefutable.

When the Qur'an refers to something on which scientists hold specific views, we do not look for an endorsement of the Qur'anic statement by human science. The truthfulness of the Qur'an is not subject to proof by science or scientists. If we hear today of a scientific discovery which confirm what is mentioned in the Qur'an, we are not overjoyed. The point is that we must not look for a scientific proof for the validity of the Qur'anic statements. Everything mentioned in the Qur'an is true, although it may contradict the findings of human knowledge. This is due to the fact that scientific findings are never final. Scientists disprove today what they held to be true for a long period of time. Moreover, the Qur'anic statement may have to be interpreted in a particular way to bring it in line with the scientific discovery. If scientists disprove tomorrow what they have discovered today, we would need to change our interpretation of that Qur'anic verse in order to bring it in line with the new discovery. Such an approach to the Qur'an is demeaning. The Qur'an is not a book of science, but it has some references to certain scientific aspects in order to endorse the thrust of its argument in support of the Oneness of Allah and of His being the Supreme Lord in the universe. The Qur'an is a book of faith and it is in support of the principles of faith that it refers to some aspects of Allah's creation. That should be our approach to the Qur'an.

### ***Qur'an: Playing Qur'anic Cassettes All the Time***

In our home Qur'anic cassettes are being played all the time. Sometimes the house is empty and the cassettes are being played. When I ask why is this done, I am told that people may listen to bits and pieces. Moreover, it helps to keep Satan away. Please comment.

The Qur'an has a very important place in the lives of Muslims. It is God's own word, revealed to His last messenger, Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. It contains God's guidance, which must be implemented in human life. Therefore, it must be read carefully and understood fully and followed with diligence. No Muslim would take a casual attitude toward the Qur'an. Moreover, God has made it an aspect of His grace that we earn generous reward when we read the Qur'an or listen to it and

reflect on its meaning. Indeed credit is given to us for every single letter of the Qur'an we read.

All this makes every Muslim give the Qur'an a special place in his life. He realizes that it is God's own word addressed to him personally so that he has the guidance he needs to ensure that God is well pleased with him when he implements His instructions. He treats the Qur'an with great respect. When he listens to a verse, he reflects on its meaning, realizing that he may always discover a connotation of which he has been unaware.

A Muslim always attaches great importance to the Qur'an. It is sufficient to emphasize that importance to remember the fact that when we offer our prayers, we read the Qur'an and glorify God. The closest anyone of us can get to God is when we stand in prayer, reciting the Qur'an. Hence, God gives us the general command that we have to listen attentively to the Qur'an whenever it is read. It is simply an offense that the Qur'an is being read and we do not pay any attention. Such an attitude is unacceptable. If someone is talking to you and you make it clear by word or gesture that you are not listening to him, he will consider your attitude affront. A speaker in public gathering will be put off if he finds some of his audience engaged in a side discussion. How can we be guilty of such an attitude, when God's words are being recited?

I have known a God-fearing scholar who commanded great respect in his hometown. If he entered, say, a barber's shop and found the radio switched on with a Qur'anic recitation being heard and a few customers talking to each other, he would insist that the radio is switched off. People may protest that they would like to listen to the recitation. He would say that they all should stop talking and listen attentively to what is being recited. If they cannot do that then they should not have the Qur'an on. This is the correct attitude, if we want really to comply with God's order. To switch the Qur'an and go about doing things and talking to other people while the recitation is in progress, saying that we capture bits and pieces is to treat the Qur'an like anything that the radio may transmit, a song, a piece of music, a news bulletin, etc. This is totally wrong.

To think that by having the Qur'an on we keep Satan away is also wrong. We keep Satan away if we reflect on the meaning of what is being read and understand what God wants us to bear in mind. But just by having a cassette playing with some melodious voice reading the Qur'an while we pay little attention to it, we can achieve no good purpose. Indeed the Muslims have been in a stage of weakness ever since they started treating the Qur'an as something of a blessing, not a message to be implemented in real life. Until they go back to that attitude and hold the Qur'an close to their hearts and try seriously to implement it in life they will not regain their proper place of leadership in the world.

### ***Qur'an: Presenting Copies To Non-Muslims***

Is it permissible to present a copy of the Qur'an to a non-Muslim? In this connection, what do the Verses 77-79 of Surah - 56 mean? Why did Omar's sister insist that he performed ablution before she gave him the scroll of the Surah entitled Taha, when he was still a non-Muslim?

Some scholars argue that it is not permissible to give the Qur'an to non-Muslims. They fear that non-Muslims may not respect the Qur'an or may ill-use it. If we suspect that a particular person may ill-use the Qur'an, it is certainly not permissible to give that person a copy of it. On the other hand, if we feel that the person concerned will treat the Qur'an with due respect and wants to read it in order to understand it, then we can give it to him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, sent messages to rulers of neighboring states and included in his letters verses from the



Qur'an, knowing that those rules were not Muslims. We should not forget in this connection that Qur'an is applicable to all mankind and we have to make it known to them. It is our duty to convey the message to them and to call on them to adopt Islam. Therefore, if we find that some of them want to learn more about Islam, the best source from which to acquire that knowledge is the Qur'an.

The verses to which you refer may be rendered in translation as follows :

***"This is indeed a noble Qur'an, contained in a well-guarded Book which none but the purified may touch."*** [the Event — "Al-Waqiah" 56: 76-79]

Many scholars say that 'the purified' refers to the angels whom Allah has made pure. They alone can touch the well-guarded Book in which the Qur'an is written in heaven. Some people take these verses to mean that only after one performs ablution, one may hold the Qur'an in his hand. But the Qur'anic verse does not seem to support this view since having an ablution is an act of purification which a man chooses to perform. He does not become "purified" as a result of it. The purification to which the Qur'anic verse refers is something done by Allah. Hence, it is a reference to angels.

The incident to which you have referred occurred when Omar, receiving the news that his sister and brother-in-law have become Muslims, went to see his sister, threatening to kill her. At that time, Omar was still a non-believer. His brother-in-law went into hiding in his own home, while Omar's sister, Fatimah, opened the door. She admitted that she was a Muslim and Omar struck her on her face. The blow was hard and there was blood on Fatimah's face. Despite his strong norms, Omar was kind-hearted. He felt sorry for his sister as he saw her bleeding. He demanded that she give him the scroll from which she was reading. She told him that because he was a non-believer, he could not touch it until he had ablution. He went and washed. She gave him the scroll to read. He was surprised by its powerful logic and accepted Islam.

We cannot take this incident as a basis to formulate any rules about the conditions in which non-believers can handle the Qur'an. Fatimah acted in the spur of the moment. Most probably, she wanted her brother to cool down before he read the Qur'an. She felt that if he washed his face and hands that would have wonderful effect on him. She was right. She did not mean that he will be purified by the ablution, because nonbelievers cannot be purified that way. Ablution does not mean a thing if a non-believer performs it. The fact that the Qur'an describes non-believers as impure means only mental impurity which is not removed by ablution. It is removed by acceptance of Islam. On the other hand, ablution is a mental purification for Muslims which puts them in the right frame of mind to address Allah in their prayers.

### ***Qur'an: Problem With Qur'anic Translations***

As a newcomer to Islam, I have been trying to understand the Qur'an, using one translation in my mother tongue (Norwegian) and several English translations. I am surprised that different translations give different meanings to verses and statements. Could you help me?

This is a problem with translation generally and translating a text of superior literary merit in particular. The Qur'anic style is unique. One feature of its uniqueness is that a short statement may allow a very broad area of meaning.

When a translator tries to deal with such a text, he has no option but to highlight the meaning that is most readily apparent. Some people may understand the same text differently, and this could lead to different translations. On the other hand, a

translator may refer to a particular commentary in order to grasp the meaning of a particular verse. Commentators may give different emphasis to a word or a sentence. If two translators use two commentaries, which highlight different aspects of the same verse, the translators may give different renderings of the meaning.

Nothing of this is unusual, and translators should not be blamed for it. What is needed is a permanent academic institution to take charge of the translation of the Qur'an into other languages in order to produce works of the highest reliability. How and when will this happen, God only knows.

### ***Qur'an: Prostration Related To Reading Qur'an***

It is well known that prayer is discouraged after one has offered the obligatory prayer of Asr, until the sun has set, and after one has prayed Fajr until the sun has gained some height in the sky. If a person is reciting a passage of the Qur'an at either time or happens to read a verse which requires a prostration, can he offer that prostration?

Since a prostration, i.e. sujood, is part of prayer, it is treated in the same way as ordinary prayer. Therefore, if you are reciting the Qur'an and reach a verse of the ones when a prostration is recommended, you should not do that prostration, according to a large number of scholars.

However, I should explain that to offer such a prostration is recommended, not obligatory. It can be replaced by the glorification and praising of Allah. According to some schools of thought, if you are unable to do the prostration when you reach such a verse, you can say instead: "*Subhan Allah, Alhamdulillah, Allahu Akbar*" three or four times. Even if you do not do that, you are only omitting something that is recommended.

### ***Qur'an: Prostration Related To Reading Some Verses***

I have two lists of verses, which require a reciter to perform a prostration when reading them. One of the lists was given to me by a scholar who is well versed in the Qur'an, and the other I downloaded from the Internet. The discrepancy between the two lists left me confused. Please clarify.

There is not much discrepancy between the two lists. Let me say first of all that prostration when reading these verses is recommended, not obligatory. When the second list specifies four of them as obligatory, this is not a very reliable view. Otherwise, there are 13 verses where prostration is agreed to be recommended by most scholars. More are added by one school of Fiqh or another, to make the number 14. The verses are as follows, with the first number indicating the Surah and the second indicating the verse:

7: 206; 13: 15; 16: 49; 17: 107; 19: 58; 22: 18; 22: 77; 25: 60; 27: 25; 32: 15; 41: 37; 53: 62; 84: 21; 96: 19.

Yet others add two more, which are 22: 77; and 38: 24.

On your lists the number of verses vary in certain Surahs. This is because the first list gives the verse where the mention of prostration occurs, while the second gives the number of the verse at the end of which the prostration takes place. Thus, the first list gives verse 49 in Surah 16, 107 in 17 and 25 in 27, while the second list gives the numbers as 50, 109 and 26 in these respective Surahs. These are the same positions, but you prostrate at the end of the verses mentioned in the second list.

### ***Qur'an: Reading the Qur'anic Translation***

1. I find it difficult to read the Qur'an in Arabic, as I am not sure of its pronunciation. I use two translations, which I feel give the meaning properly and with clarity. My friends and relatives object to this and find it strange. I realize that any translation of a beautifully written text will lose much of its beauty, originality and perfection. However, my difficulty of dealing with the Arabic text is not a small matter, and when I read it in Arabic, I do not feel I am able to lift up my spirit and soul as one would expect when reading God's revelation. Please comment.

2. As I do not read or write Arabic, can I read the Qur'an in English? Many people say that it can only be read in Arabic. Please comment.

3. If a man does not know how to read the Qur'an in Arabic, can it be read in English or Urdu or any other language?

1. Our reader explains clearly the difficulty which many non-Arabic Muslims find in reading the Qur'an in its original text. Obviously the right answer to this problem is better teaching of Arabic in schools in Muslim countries and communities.

But this is a long-term matter, which is unlikely to start in the near future due to various factors. In the meantime every individual should deal with this problem as best as he or she can. The important matter is that the Qur'an must be read in Arabic in prayer and as a separate act of worship. The point here is that these acts of worship rely on reading God's own words, which is in Arabic.

The translated text is the word of the translator, which may not be free of error, and certainly cannot reflect all the shades of meaning, which the splendid literary style of the Arabic text reflects.

What is important here is to differentiate between two matters. The first is that of reciting the Qur'an in prayer and at other times with the aim of earning God's reward. In this case it must be read in its original text. One may learn the meaning of certain passages or Surahs, which one reads frequently, thus keeping that meaning in mind when reading them. The other is to try to understand the Qur'an in order to act on its teachings in daily life. For this, one should certainly rely on translation and at least one reliable commentary.

Even Arabs need to refer to such commentaries or Tafseer. The translated text on its own is inadequate, excellent as the translation may be. The reader should resort to both methods for a better understanding of the Qur'an, and for her worship. Let me add that when she studies the Qur'an in translation and commentary in order to understand and implement it, she stands to earn reward from God for her effort. [Some copies of the Qur'an are available with English transliteration and that could make the reading easier.]

But reading the Qur'an in its original text is an act of worship which earns special reward. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says that for every letter of the Qur'an one earns the reward of 10 good deeds. He adds: "I am not saying that Alif, lam, Meem, constitute one letter, but each is a letter on its own.

2. The Qur'an is God's book, containing His message to mankind. It was revealed from on high to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, over a period of 23 years. It has been preserved in its original form, and God has guaranteed that it will remain intact for the rest of time. Its text is the only revelation whose reading constitutes an act of worship. This is the case not only when we read parts of it in our prayer, but also whenever we read it. All this applies to the text of the Qur'an in its original form, i.e. in Arabic.

Thus, if you are speaking about reading the Qur'an as an act of worship, then you have to read it in Arabic. Scholars agree that in prayer, a new Muslim who does not speak Arabic should learn the Fatihah in Arabic in order to be able to offer his prayers. If he cannot do so before his first prayer, then he repeats the part of it he learns several times to make up for its length. This means that if he has learned only one verse of it, he repeats that verse 7 times, and if he has learned 2 verses, he repeats them 4 times. After that, he should learn it by heart without delay. This shows that for worship, the Qur'an can only be read in Arabic.

For non-Arabic speaking people, it is perfectly appropriate to use a translation in order to understand the Qur'an. They should remember, however, that any translation is inadequate, because it is the language of the translator, expressing what he understands to be the closest form to the original text.

3. To read a translation of the meaning or the Qur'an is perfectly permissible. A Muslim who does not know Arabic should try to understand the message of the Qur'an by consulting a translation in a language he knows.

It is not permissible, however, to read a translation of the Qur'an in prayer. That is because God wants us to offer our prayers reading His words as He revealed them to His last messenger, the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. He certainly revealed the Qur'an in Arabic, not in the language of any translator. A Muslim should learn the Fatihah by heart as well as any number of Surahs or verses or passages from which to read in his prayers.

### ***Qur'an: Reading When Facing the Back Of Someone***

Some people suggest that it is wrong to read the Qur'an facing the back of someone else. Is this true?

If someone is sitting in front of you, that does not require you to change your position in order to recite the Qur'an. Indeed, you may recite the Qur'an at any time or place, apart from the toilet. Facing somebody's back does not restrict that permissibility.

### ***Qur'an: Reading Without Ablution***

1. Is it allowed to hold one's copy of the Qur'an and read it without ablution? Is it permissible to put it close to where one sleeps?

2. Is it permissible to recite the Qur'an or glorify Allah while lying in bed and without ablution?

1. Whenever you wish to read the Qur'an or to glorify Allah, you are strongly recommended to have ablution. Indeed a Muslims is recommended to have ablution at all times. However, if you are in a place where it is inconvenient to have ablution, but have time to read the Qur'an, you may go ahead and read it, even if you hold a copy of the Qur'an in your hand. Some people suggest that this is not permissible, but the weightier opinion is that it is. As I say, it is infinitely better to have ablution, but if you cannot, then you commit no offense, if you read the Qur'an or hold it in your hand when you do not have ablution.

As long as you put the Qur'an in a place where it is not ill-used, you can keep it anywhere. Many people would like to have a copy of the Qur'an, near to where they sleep. That is appropriate, provided they do not have it for their protection or blessing. Protection is granted by Allah and blessing is derived from reading the Qur'an and implementing it.

2. God describes His good servants who believe in Him as

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***"Those who remember God when they are standing, seated, or in a reclined position and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord You have not created all this in vain. Limitless are You in Your glory. Guard us, then, against the torment of the fire."*** [the Family of Imran - "Aale Imran" 3: 191].

The phrase "remember Allah" has a very wide meaning in Islamic terminology which includes the recitation of the Qur'an and the praising and glorification of Allah, making supplication, etc. Moreover, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us some supplication to say when we go to bed. Therefore, the answer to your question is that it is perfectly permissible.

It is recommended to have ablution before one goes to bed and before one recites the Qur'an or glorifies Allah or does any act of His remembrance. When we say this is recommended, we actually say that it is not obligatory. Therefore, it is permissible to do all that without having an ablution. It is not permissible, however, to recite the Qur'an from memory or to hold the Qur'an when one is in a state of ceremonial impurity i.e. Janabah.

### ***Qur'an: Recitation On Behalf Of Dead Persons***

A few months ago, you published an answer claiming that it is permissible to recite the Qur'an on behalf of a dead person and that the reward for such a recitation is granted to the dead person. Almost all-renowned Salafi scholars have vehemently opposed this opinion. They consider such a recitation as an innovation and they support that by the fact that neither the Prophet, peace be upon him, nor his companions used to read the Qur'an on behalf of those who died in battle or a natural death. They also suggest that it is not possible to compare such a recitation with offering substitute pilgrimage on behalf of a dead person, which is certainly permissible. Moreover, Allah defines the purpose of the Qur'an as "an admonition to any one who is alive". This means that the Qur'an is for those who are alive. Please comment.

I am confused by your contradictory replies. You said sometime in the past "no one may offer prayers or other religious duties which have been left undone by a deceased person." You have also quoted the Hadith, which states that the actions of every person come to an end when he dies except in one of three well-known ways. Now you are saying that it is possible to transfer the reward of a good action to a deceased person. Will you please explain these contradictions?

These are the view of only two of my readers who have written to me on this subject. Others have written, making the same objections. To all such readers I say that this is a question, which relates to an aspect of Islamic worship. The answer, therefore, must be based on what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us. We cannot argue a case supporting any viewpoint on purely logical basis. Our starting point may just be the Qur'an and the Hadith. Before starting to answer the objections of my readers, I wish to say that I hold on to my position on both points and I do not see any reason to change either. Nor do I see any contradiction between what I have said on different occasions on this subject. The difficulty experienced by some people in reconciling these points can be easily overcome. Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim, a highly renowned scholar, has spoken extensively on this question, devoting to it more than thirty pages in his invaluable book, Ar-Rooh, or The Spirit. My reply is based largely on what he says, since he discusses all points in detail and replies to all objections.

I have often quoted the Hadith which may be rendered in translation as follows: "When a human being dies, all his actions come to an end, except in one of three ways: A continuing act of charity, a useful contribution to knowledge or a God-fearing, dutiful child who prays for him." This Hadith cannot be quoted in support of the argument that our actions cannot benefit those who are dead. It is important to know that when we attempt to understand the meaning of a Qur'anic statement or Hadith, our approach should be one of careful consideration of the statement in front of us. It must be clear to us that every Qur'anic verse and every Hadith is meant to convey only the sense of the words used in it. We cannot, and must not, carry any such statement beyond its apparent meaning. It cannot be imagined or envisaged that Allah would mean something and express it in words, which convey a different meaning. Nor is it possible that the Prophet, who has been endowed by Allah with the gift of the most precise expressions, should mean anything other than what he states. Anyone who would entertain such a thought actually suggests that Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, could fail to convey precisely an idea which constitutes a part of his message. That is not acceptable from a Muslim. No one would remain a Muslim for a second if he attaches such an inadequacy to the Qur'an.

Bearing that in mind, we have to understand every Qur'anic statement or Hadith as it is. The above mentioned Hadith states that "When a human being dies, his actions come to an end, except in one of three ways, etc. " What comes to an end, then, is the deceased person's own actions. This does not mean that a dead person does not benefit by anything else. He simply cannot do more for himself. He is powerless and incapable of accomplishing anything. Scholars, however, are unanimous that those who are dead can benefit by what living people may do in one of two ways: What the deceased person himself initiated during his lifetime and the supplication of Muslims on his behalf, their prayers to Allah to forgive him and whatever charity or pilgrimage other Muslims may do on his behalf. Scholars have different views on whether physical worship such as fasting, prayer, reciting of the Qur'an, etc. may be done by a living person and rewarded to a dead relative at his request. Imam Ahmad and many scholars say that the reward of such actions can be credited to the dead person, while the Shaf'ie and Maliki schools of thought take the other view, saying that it does not.

As for things that the dead person himself had initiated in his lifetime, the above quoted Hadith is sufficient evidence to endorse that. Another Hadith related by Ibn Majah quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "What is credited to a believer of his action and good deed after his death is any useful knowledge he might have taught or spread, a God-fearing child he might have left behind, a copy of the Qur'an he might have left to an heir, a mosque he might have built, a house he might have dedicated for use by travelers, a stream or river he might have caused to run, a donation to charity [i.e. Sadaqah] he might have set aside when he was enjoying good health. All that catches up with him after his death." Another authentic Hadith related by Muslim quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "Any Muslim who initiates a good practice receives its reward and the reward of anyone who follows his example without reducing their reward by the smallest of fractions, and any Muslim who initiates a bad practice will bear its burden as well as the burden of everyone who follows his example without reducing their burdens in anyway."

In support of our statement that a dead person will benefit by the supplication and prayer of living Muslims, I refer to the praise Allah bestows on succeeding generations of believers for praying Him to forgive those believers who lived before them. Allah says in the Qur'an:

***"Those who come after them pray: our Lord, forgive us our sins, as well as those of our brethren who preceded us in faith."*** [Exile — "Al-Hashr" 59: 10].

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When a Muslim dies, it is a duty on the community of Muslims to offer a special prayer for him during which they pray Allah to forgive him and admit him into heaven. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "When you pray for a dead person, make your supplication sincere." In his own supplication for a dead person, just before the latter's funeral, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "My Lord, forgive him; bestow Your mercy on him; purge him of sin, assign to him a good abode and a wide entrance [to heaven]; wash him with water, snow and hail and purge him of sin as a white dress is purged of impurity; replace his home, family and wife with better ones; admit him to heaven and protect him against torment in the grave and the suffering in hell."

There are numerous Hadiths which tell us that a number of his companions came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, individually to ask him whether they can give Sadaqah or fast or do the pilgrimage on behalf of their deceased relatives, and he always said that they may do that and the dead person would benefit by it. Al-Bukhari relates that Sa'ad ibn Ubada, the chief of the Ansari tribe of Al-Khazraj, said to the Prophet: "Messenger of Allah, my mother died when I was away. Would she benefit if I give charitable donations [i.e. Sadaqah] on her behalf? The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered in the affirmative. Sa'ad said: "I would like you to be my witness that I am giving as Sadaqah on her behalf my orchard at Al-Meraf." Ibn Abbas reports that a woman traveled in a boat and pledged that should Allah save her life; she would fast for a month. She was saved but she did not fast before she died. Her daughter or her sister asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, about that and he ordered her to fast on behalf of the deceased woman. [Related by Abu-Dawood, An-Nasa'ie, Ahmad and others]. Hadiths in support of offering the pilgrimage on behalf of a deceased person or one who is unanimously unable to undertake the journey are numerous. Moreover, scholars have agreed unanimously that if a person dies without settling an outstanding debt, leaving no money to settle it, anyone could pay it on his behalf. Whether the person paying it is a relative or not, the deceased is deemed to have repaid his debt. If the case is such and the deceased person may benefit by a financial payment, why should he not benefit by a gift made of the reward for a good action? It should be mentioned here that it is not possible to do the obligatory duties of fasting and prayer on behalf of a deceased person. This means that you cannot pray Dhuhr or Asr, or fast a few days of Ramadhan on his behalf. You may; however, fast if he took a pledge to fast but did not honor it, as in the Hadith quoted above. You may also do a voluntary act of worship and request Allah to credit its reward to the deceased person. That applies to reciting a passage of the Qur'an. It is important to have a clear intention when you begin such an action that you are gifting its reward to a dead person.

My readers suggest that it is not known that the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to recite the Qur'an and gift the reward of their recitation to dead people. The reason is that they would view such an action as a private matter between themselves and their Lord. Why would anyone mention to other people that he recited a Surah and gifted its reward to his mother or to his friend or relative? They were to gain the maximum reward for their actions in the privacy of their own home. Your motive for such publicity may not be free of self-esteem. That is bound to reduce your reward. I do not know of any Hadith or Qur'anic verse which suggests that a recitation of the Qur'an has a special status which suggests that a recitation, pilgrimage or charitable donations may not be so credited. I know of nothing to prevent that. Indeed, Allah's generosity will ensure that the reward is credited to the person to whom it is gifted, while the reciter will be rewarded for his kindness. [This is different from the act of gathering people to recite Qur'an on behalf of the deceased. Such recitations are private matters.]

The best thing that can be done on behalf of a dead person is Sadaqah or charitable donation. The best of that is something, which continues over a long period of time. A

pilgrimage on his behalf will be highly rewarded. Prayer to Allah to forgive him and bestow His mercy on him is also sure to be answered.

### ***Qur'an: Reference Substantially To Arabs & Jews Only***

May I ask why Allah has sent down four different religious books and did not choose to send down only one book right at the beginning. That might have avoided all present conflict. May I also ask why there is much discussion about the Arabs and the Jews in the Qur'an, to the exclusion of other nations?

Let me first of all point out that it is improper for any person to ask why Allah has chosen a particular method or line of action when another could have achieved better results. To put a question in this way gives the impression that we, human beings, could have given better advice to Allah on how to conduct His business. Far be it from us to do so. We believe in His wisdom and His ability to accomplish His purpose any time, in whatever method He chooses.

You speak of avoiding conflict, but conflict in human life is not of Allah's making. It is the result of what human beings do. Besides, conflict will remain a characteristic of human life as long as human beings continue to be greedy and to covet what belongs to others. Today, there are numerous conflicts in the world and very few of these have a religious basis or are influenced by religious considerations. Some of them are between members of the same religion and the same nation. Even among Muslims, conflicts erupt every now and then. Therefore, to suggest that had Allah sent down the Qur'an right at the beginning all conflicts would have been spared is a statement that cannot be supported by history.

Allah has sent Prophets and messengers to all communities. He has chosen to tell us about some of them, while He has chosen not to tell us about others. Of those He has mentioned, some received messages and scriptures, most notably Moses and Jesus. Allah has told us well that He gave scriptures to Prophet Ibrahim and He gave the Psalms to Prophet Dawood. But He has sent many other prophets who had confirmed messages and scriptures revealed earlier. Each one of these prophets was sent to his own community, speaking to them in their own language. However, they all preached the message of the Oneness of Allah. You will not find any difference in the original concept preached by those prophets. When Allah tells us about them in the Qur'an, He uses the same words to describe how each one of them approached his task and explained to his people that there is no deity save Allah. The differences between these messages were in matters of detail, and they related mainly to the field of practices. In essence, all these messages were the same.

The Qur'an, on the other hand, is Allah's message to mankind. It is not limited to any particular community or group. It embodies a complete way of life for people to implement. It supersedes all previous messages. Therefore, its later revelation does not make for conflict, but for peace and brotherhood. It serves as an ultimate verdict to decide what is acceptable to Allah and what is not. We can say that Allah chose to send these messages to people at different stages of their development. When humanity had reached its maturity, Allah sent down the Qur'an as His final word. He has guaranteed to preserve the Qur'an as a permanent source of guidance for all mankind. Yet that does not prevent conflict from erupting. Had the Qur'an been sent down 20 centuries earlier, how could conflict be prevented? Its later revelation is not a cause of conflict. Indeed, much of the conflict is stirred up in order to suppress the Qur'an and to prevent people from listening to its message and implementing it. What this means in actual fact is that the conflict in the human world does not arise from the number of messages Allah revealed to His prophets, but from the fact that human beings want to turn away from the divine message in order to follow their own desires. The conflict is between the forces of the truth, represented by the divine



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messages, and the forces of evil which want human beings to pay no heed to what Allah has revealed.

You ask about the frequent reference to Arabs and the Jews in the Qur'an. The references to the Arabs are not on any racial or community basis. They happened to be the first community to be addressed by the message of the Qur'an and the Prophet, peace be upon him, was one of them. Therefore, they received the immediate address. However, it is a well-known fact that what is addressed to the Arabs is indeed addressed to all mankind. The message of the Qur'an is addressed to every human being in all ages.

Since the message of the Qur'an is meant to be translated into practical life so that a community of believers is established, references are made to a previous community which was established on the basis of a divine message, namely the Jewish community. Thus, the Children of Israel serve as a model for subsequent communities who wish to establish the divine message and implement it. Since the Children of Israel had a long history of being addressed by prophets, their attitude at different times and stages are quoted so that people can guard against committing the same mistakes as the Children of Israel. Every incident quoted serves either as an example to follow or a lesson to learn or a mistake to avoid. In this way, any community of believers has much to learn.

### ***Qur'an: Respect For It — Lacking In Demonstrating***

Some people place the Qur'an on the floor in the mosque where they would not place their money or mobiles. I once noticed one person wrapping the Qur'an in his prayer mat and making it a pillow to place his head on as he wanted to have a nap in the mosque. Please comment.

Treating the Qur'an with respect is fundamentally necessary. To use a copy of the Qur'an as a pillow does not demonstrate respect. If only people would learn to have a sense of proper perspective, they would not do any such act. Their education is the duty of scholars, as well as the concerned authorities.

### ***Qur'an: Respect For It — the Aspects Of***

People have very strong views about the aspects of respect to the Qur'an. They would not stand with their backs to the place where a copy of the Qur'an is kept. They would not hold it unless they have ablution, and they keep it always in a high place. If it falls down accidentally, then the person concerned should pay some compensation, etc.

We have to understand that respect to the Qur'an is not shown by putting its copies in an elevated place, but by reading it properly, understanding its meaning and acting on its teachings and instructions. There is a verse in the Qur'an which warns those who "**Turn their backs to God's revelations,**" but this is not meant physically. It is a warning to those who pay no heed to what God has revealed of laws and regulations, and insist on disbelief and follow their own caprice. It is such an attitude which constitutes the worst disrespect to the Qur'an. Of course, physical respect is also important, in the sense that one must not treat God's Book in a way which shows disrespect, but even this is far less offensive than doing what the Qur'an states to be forbidden by God.

There is no penalty, financial or otherwise, for dropping the Qur'an accidentally. A person who throws the Qur'an away deliberately, to demonstrate his opposition to it, may suffer a grievous punishment from God as He alone deems fit.

### ***Qur'an: Showy Reciters & Judging By Appearances***

I am a regular reader of your column, although I am not a Muslim. I recently came across a Hadith, mentioned by Al-Ghazali, which quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying in his supplications: "We seek refuge in God from the Chasm of Grief." When asked about this Chasm of Grief, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "It is a part of hell which God has prepared for the ostentatious reciters of the Qur'an." It appears that the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself recognized that overzealous piety is also a sin. Please comment.

I am very grateful to you for the kind words you have said about this column. I only try to present Islam as I learned it: a religion revealed by God, Whose wisdom and knowledge are limitless, and Who wants this religion to shape human life in a reasonable manner to bring happiness to mankind. Extremism is alien to the nature of this religion, as it is indeed to all divine messages.

What you have pointed out is certainly correct. Ostentation [display or bragging] is shunned in all matters, but most of all in religious practices. Moreover, we are instructed not to judge people by the appearances they put out. A man spoke highly of a person he knew in front of the Caliph Omar ibn Al-Khattab. Omar questioned him about how well he knew the other person, asking if he was his next door neighbor, or if he had any financial transactions, or gone on a trip with that man.

When he answered in the negative to all three situations, Omar said, "Then you might have seen him in the mosque moving his head up and down as he recited the Qur'an?" This time the man answered in the affirmative. Omar told him: "You do not really know him."

In this case we have a testimonial rejected by Omar, who was endowed with an exceptional insight into the Islamic faith, simply because it was based on an acquaintance in the mosque where the person concerned was in the habit of reciting the Qur'an.

It had no basis in actions and practices that relate to dealings with fellow human beings. The Prophet, peace be upon him, defines true faith as how a believer deals with other people. That is the true test of whether a person is truly religious or not. It is always easy to pray and fast, but to observe a strict code of values in day-to-day affairs, overcoming the natural tendency to put one's own interest first, is not so easy.

Worship is meant to enhance one's consciousness of God so that one always remembers that he will inevitably face the reckoning on the Day of Judgement when God will ask him about his actions. Only those actions, which are undertaken purely to please God, earn the highest reward.

Hence the Prophet, peace be upon him, encourages us to keep voluntary worship private. In Islam, the obligatory part of worship may be done in public. Congregational prayers are held in mosques for the obligatory prayer, but voluntary prayer is better done at home. If you are fasting voluntarily, as all of us are encouraged to do, it is reprehensible to talk about your fasting to others.

The most rewarding voluntary prayer is the one done at night, in the privacy of your own home, when other people are asleep. In such a situation, you appeal to God feeling that you are so close to him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "The best type of remembering God is that done in secret." As you may be aware, we are all encouraged to remember God all the time, glorifying and praising Him, but such remembrance produces the best effect on us when no one sees or feels we are doing it. If it is left between a person and his Lord, it is bound to improve his behavior. It

also earns the richest reward. The Prophet, peace be upon him, also mentions seven types of shelter on the Day of Judgement, when there is no shelter other than the one He provides for those with whom He is pleased.

Among these are "a person whose eyes are tearful when he remembers God in private." His tears are a mark of his firm belief in God and the Day of Judgement. If his tears flow when he remembers God in the company of people, he may be pretending, or he may be trying to demonstrate that he is a firm believer.

But when he is tearful at a time when no one sees him other than his Lord, he is a genuine believer who worries that his sins may be too grave and numerous to merit forgiveness by God.

All this confirm the view you have expressed that ostentation is shunned. A moderate and sensible approach to religion is the one God wants of all of us.

### ***Qur'an: Single Letters In the Qur'an***

Some Surahs of the Qur'an start with words composed of single letters. Could you please explain the meaning of these words? Such as Aleph, Lam, Meem.

Commentators on the Qur'an express several views about these single letters with which a number of Surahs open. Early commentators preferred not to make any judgements or confined themselves to saying that God knows best why He has included these letters in this particular fashion in the Qur'an. Other commentators suggest different view. However, the view which seems to be much more acceptable and pays due attention to what comes after these single letters is the one that suggests that the Qur'an has thrown a challenge to the Arabs who lived at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him. They valued very highly beautiful style and literary achievement. Poets enjoyed great distinction in that society. Anyone who could make a literary use of the Arabic language was considered an asset to his tribe. The Qur'an is a book of surpassing excellence in many aspects, not least its literary style. The Qur'an challenges repeatedly the Arabs to produce anything like its style using any talent among them. That challenge was offered repeatedly and was never taken up by the Arabs at that time, which used their language most beautifully or by subsequent Arab generations. That at the same time the polytheists, who opposed the call of Islam, acknowledged readily the excellence of the Qur'an.

Those scholars say that part of the challenge thrown by the Qur'an is the fact that it is composed of the letters, which make up the Arabic language. Hence, God reminds the Arabs that His book is put in words using the letters of their language.

In support of this view, we find that the Surahs, which begin with such single letters always follow them with the mention of the Qur'an and the phenomenon of revelation and mention the sending of a message from God to mankind. This is a fact common to all these Surahs, [Added: With the exception of Surahs Marium [19], Al-Ankbut [29], Ar-Rum [30] and Qalam [68] where single letters are not followed by the mention of Qur'an.] Hence, these letters may be linked to what comes immediately after them in any discussion of the Qur'an, and its revelation. What we have in these Surahs is a sort of implicit challenger to the Arabs who were first addressed by the Qur'an, and to all subsequent generations of unbelievers, who deny the fact that God sends messengers to convey to mankind messages outlining the way God wants them to conduct their lives. He is saying to them: This Qur'an is composed of words using the same letters, which you use in your daily speech. The words they make are the same words in your language. Nevertheless, you cannot make out of these words a single Surah in a fashion similar to that of the Qur'an.

It should be stressed here that the challenge was not merely concerned with the beauty of style which is characteristic of the Qur'an, but also with the subject matter. The Arabs and indeed all mankind could not have produced a system of legislation, which is perfect; complete and well balanced to establish a happy human life. It should be stressed that the challenge was never taken up and can never be taken up. God's work is perfect and His book is a symbol of absolute perfection. How can man who is definitely imperfect, challenge the perfection of the Qur'an? This seems to be the view, which accounts logically the beginning a number of Surahs in the Qur'an with single letters.

I should perhaps add here that it is not correct to say that any combinations of these letters form any particular word or a name. It is for this reason that they are pronounced separately, not as a word. It is an error to suggest that the two letters Ta Ha or Ya Seen, which cover the beginning of two different Surahs combine to make up two names of the Prophet, peace be upon him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has several names but neither Taha nor the Ya Si'n is among them.

### ***Qur'an: Skies In the Qur'anic Context***

The Qur'an speaks of the existence of seven skies or seven heavens, but where are they? Does the Qur'an refer to the billions of galaxies that exist in the universe? What do you say to what astronomers have mentioned about an asteroid which will hit the earth on August 14, 2116, and will destroy it in seconds? It is also said that American scientists are planning to destroy the moon in order to save the earth. Please comment.

The Arabic term "sama" which is used for sky or heaven has a much wider linguistic sense. In defining it, Arabic linguists say, "whatever is raised above you is your sama". The word certainly does not refer to the blue color that we see because that color is not an object. The Qur'anic reference to "seven heavens created, one on top of another" should be understood in general sense. Moreover, the term seven is often used in Arabic to denote, "plenty". It is often used not to suggest a specific number, but to imply a large number. The same applies to the figure seventy. The Prophet, for example, is told in the Qur'an not to seek forgiveness for the hypocrites. God tells him, "***if you were to ask seventy times for their forgiveness, God will not forgive them.***" The Prophet, peace be upon him, comments: "Had I known that if I would go beyond seventy they could be forgiven, I would have done so." This shows clearly that the Prophet, peace be upon him, understood the Qur'anic statement that uses the figure seventy as implying an indefinite number.

Now that we know that there are hundreds of galaxies, each with billions of stars and planets, we take the Qur'anic reference to seven skies as denoting the vast universe. That is because the term "sky" or "sama", is readily understood to refer to what we see in the sky of the planets and stars.

Therefore, we cannot see any contradiction between the Qur'anic statements in this connection and what astronomers tell us about the universe.

As for the asteroid destroying the earth on a particular date, we certainly have no definite knowledge. Scientists have been wrong in the past and there is no reason to suppose that they could not be wrong this time. What we know for certain is that God has not allowed and will not allow people to know beforehand the definite moment when life on earth will be over.

### ***Qur'an: Some Orders Are Not Obligatory But Only Recommended***

Are all words of the Qur'an obligatory? Are we committing a sin if we fail to act upon any single word in the Qur'an?

We cannot speak of words as being obligatory or otherwise. [I suppose] what you mean is whether every order included in the Qur'an signifies an obligation. There is a general rule which says that every order stated in the Qur'an to the believers is obligatory, unless it is scaled down from that status by certain factors. There could be an explanation by the Prophet, peace be upon him, whether in words or action, or another statement in the Qur'an that explains its significance.

This applies positively and negatively which means that an order to do something constitutes an obligation, while an order not to do something signifies a prohibition. For example, we read in the Qur'an:

***"Believers, avoid most kinds of suspicion, for in some cases suspicion is a sin. Do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another."*** [Private Apartments — "Al-Hujurat" 49: 12]

The last two orders concerning spying on others and backbiting are of general import. Therefore, they signify a total prohibition. A Muslim may not spy on his neighbor or try to find secrets of others just to be curious or to learn their secrets and weak points. Nor is it permissible for a Muslim to backbite another person in any circumstances.

The first order in this same verse is limited by its own phraseology. We are ordered to avoid suspicion in most cases. This signifies that at times suspicion may be in order. We read in the same Surah the following order:

***"Believers, if an evil-doer brings you a piece of news, inquire first into its truth, lest you should wrong others unwittingly and then regret your action."*** [Private Apartments — "Al-Hujurat" 49: 6]

Hence, when we hear information about other people, we must not jump to conclusions. We must first make sure of the truth of what we have heard. The information is kept in the balance until it is proven to be true.

Some orders in the Qur'an signify a recommendation rather than an obligation, but to be treated as such, there must be some supporting evidence. For example, God says in the Qur'an: ***"Children of Adam, dress well when you attend your mosques."*** We know that the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to come to the mosque wearing whatever was available to them, or their working gear.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, did not tell them not to come to the mosque in such an attire. This tells us that we are strongly advised to dress well when we go to a mosque for prayer. If that proves difficult in certain situations, then wearing clean clothes, although they may be old or not good-looking, does not render our prayer invalid.

If there is a general order, which signifies obligation, then failing to act on it constitutes a sin. We should be clear in our minds on what is meant by a sin. It is something that is punishable by God. So, if we fail to act on a Qur'anic order, we place ourselves in a position where we are liable to be punished, unless God is pleased to forgive us.

### ***Qur'an: Sons Of God — Distortion By Jews & Christians***

***"The Jews say: Ezra is the son of God, while the Christians say: The Christ is the son of God. Such are the assertions they utter with their mouths, echoing assertions made by the non-believers of old. May God destroy them! How perverse they are! They make of their rabbis and their monks, and of the Christ, son of Mary, lords besides God. Yet they have been ordered to***

***worship none but the One God, other than whom there is no deity. Exalted be He above those to whom they ascribe divinity."***

[Repentance, At-Tauba: 9: 30-31] Commentary by Sayyid Qutb — Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi. [Also See "Religion"]

Here is an authentic report transmitted by Imam Ahmad, At-Tirmithi and At-Tabari on the authority of Addi ibn Hatim:

When Addi, who had been a Christian in pre-Islamic days, heard of the Islamic message, he fled to Syria. His sister was taken prisoner together with a group of his tribesmen. The Prophet, peace be upon him, treated his sister kindly, granted her freedom and gave her some gifts. She went to her brother and urged him to adopt Islam and to meet the Prophet, peace be upon him. Addi took his sister's advice and arrived in Madinah. He used to be the chief of his tribe, Tayyi', and his father was widely known for his unparalleled generosity. People were speaking about his arrival in Madinah. When he went to see the Prophet, peace be upon him, he was wearing a silver crucifix which he hanged in his neck. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was reading this verse: "they make of their monks and rabbis ..... lords besides God." Addi said: "They have not worshipped them." The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Yes, indeed they did. They followed them when they forbade them what was lawful and permitted them what was forbidden. That is how they worshipped them."

As-Saddi, a learned commentator on the Qur'an, Al-Aloussi, a scholar of the modern period says: "That they made them lords does not mean that they have treated them as if they were gods in control of the universe. What is meant is that they have obeyed them in what they have bidden and forbidden."

From the very clear Qur'anic statement and its interpretation by the Prophet, peace be upon him, which is final, and also from the observations of modern and ancient scholars we may deduce a number of very important conclusions concerning religion and beliefs which we will state here very briefly:

According to the Qur'an and the Prophet's interpretation, worship means the following of the law. The Jews and the Christians have not made their rabbis and monks lords in the sense that they treated them as gods or that they offered their worship rituals to them. Yet god describes them in this verse as 'associating partners with Him' and as 'non-believers' in a later verse in the Surah, only because they have followed the laws they devised for them. This alone, regardless of beliefs and rituals, is sufficient to make anyone who does it a person who associates partners with God, which takes him out of faith altogether and puts him in the category of non-believers.

The Qur'anic statement attaches the description of 'associating partners with God' and 'un-belief' to both the Jews who accepted the laws made for them by their rabbis and put those laws into practice and the Christians who believe that Christ is their Lord and offer worship rituals to him. Both actions are the same in the sense that both make their perpetrators polytheists ascribing lordship to beings other than God.

Polytheism comes into being merely by assigning the authority to legislate to anyone other than God, even though this is not accompanied by a belief that such a legislator is a deity or by offering worship rituals to it. The primary aim of pointing out these facts is to deal with the circumstances of Muslim society at the time, particularly reluctance to confront the Byzantine and the feeling that they were believers on account of their having received revelations. Yet these facts are of general application and serve to emphasize the nature of the true religion.

The religion of truth, which is the only one that is acceptable to God from any human being, is 'self surrender.' Such surrender is manifested by implementing God's law,

after having believed in His Oneness and offering worship to Him alone. If people are to implement a law other than that of God, then what God has said about the Jews and the Christians will apply to them as well. In other words, they would be polytheists and non-believers, no matter how emphatically they assert that they do believe. Those descriptions will apply to them once they willingly implement a law devised by human beings in total disregard to God's law, unless they protest that they only follow such laws against their will and they have no power to repel that compulsion.

The term 'religion' has nowadays lost much of its significance in the minds of most people, so much so that they confine it to beliefs to which they may hold and rituals they may offer. This was exactly the situation of the Jews who are described by this categorical verdict, as interpreted by the Prophet, peace be upon him, as non-believers, associating partners with God and disobeying His clear command not to worship anyone besides Him. This same Qur'anic statement tells us that they have taken their rabbis as lords besides God.

The most essential meaning of 'religion' is 'to submit and to follow.' This is most clearly evident by following the law as it is proven by offering worship. The matter is very serious and admits of no ambiguity of the sort of considering people who follow laws other than God's law, without being compelled to do so by forces which they cannot resist, as believers and as Muslims, only because they believe in God and offer their worship to Him.

This ambiguity is perhaps the most serious threat to this religion of Islam at the present time. It is the worst weapon leveled at this religion by its enemies who try hard to depict as Muslims and as Islamic people and situations similar to those described by God as of non-believers who take as lords some beings other than God and who do not follow the religion of truth. If the enemies of their religion try to associate those people and situations with Islam, then it is the duty of the advocates of Islam to deny them that description and to uncover their reality. They would thus show them for what they are: People who do not believe in the Oneness of God and who take for themselves lords, other than God when "they have been ordered to worship none but the One God, other than whom there is no deity. Exalted be He above those to whom they ascribe divinity."

### ***Qur'an: Special Importance Of Some Surahs***

1. The Qur'an is the complete code of living and the book of guidance. In order to implement its commandments, we need to read it carefully and understand the meaning of its verses and Surahs. Many people, however, do not bother to try to understand it, but read it like parrots, particularly people who do not read or understand Arabic. Many are in the habit of reading Surahs or verses at particular times or on particular days. For example, they read the 18th Surah "Al Kahf" before Friday prayer, and the 67th Surah, "Al-Mulk", at the death of someone. The Surah entitled, "Al-Waqiah", is read after Maghrib prayer with the feeling that this would ensure an increase of provisions. People say that every Surah of the Qur'an has its own significance. My question is whether such a practice is Islamic or an innovation?
2. I am in the habit of reciting Surah 112 (Al-Ikhlās) often, but a scholar told me that approach was not the right one. He suggested that if I read this Surah 1000 times at the same spot, I have actually sold my soul to Allah, which did not seem too attractive to me. Please comment.

3. Is there a Hadith that stresses the importance of reading Surah 36 — Yaseen, in the morning, and Surahs 55 — Al-Rahman, 56 — Al-Waqiah and 67, Al-Mulk in the evening, on a daily basis?

4. I normally read Surahs 36, 56 and 67 in the morning, before going to work. Someone has told me that I am not doing the right thing, since there are different times for reciting different Surahs. Thus, Surah 18 should be read on Friday, and Surah 56 after Isha prayer, etc. Could you please enlighten me as to whether a certain Hadith specifies such timings?

1. Your description of the Qur'an as a code of living and a book of guidance for mankind is certainly correct. This is how Allah Himself describes it. As such, it should be implemented in practical life. This is the purpose for which it is revealed. It is unthinkable to suggest that Allah has included in His book all the guidance human beings need in order to conduct their lives and achieve happiness, only for them to neglect it, or approach it in a very casual manner, or read it without understanding, or merely reduce it to some sort of singing material which is used by the media or in social functions and occasions.

The proper approach to the Qur'an is that of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who used to read only a short passage of the Qur'an and learn it properly, understand its meaning, and implement its instructions, before moving on to study another passage. There need be no argument about that. When you consider how people who join political parties or intellectual and social clubs or groups deal with the constitution of their organization, you are bound to be amazed at the attitude of Muslims toward the Book Allah has made their constitution in this life. In each of these cases, people study the constitution of their organizations or party or club and familiarize themselves with its objectives, methods of action and the ways and means to achieve their goals. But in dealing with the Qur'an, it is often the case that Muslims treat it in a very casual way.

Allah wants his Book to be the guide, which shows human beings what to do in every aspect of their lives so that they achieve the right balance and lead a happy life, and fulfill their task of building a human civilization in a very happy and relaxed manner. That calls for a clear and proper understanding of the meaning of the Qur'an. You cannot be guided by something you do not understand.

Careful reading of the Qur'an which aims at understanding its meaning and implementing its instructions is very richly rewarded by Allah. However, not all people can read Arabic properly or understand it. Although the meaning of Qur'anic verses is translated into other languages, and most Muslims can have a translation in their national language of the Surahs and verses of the Qur'an, yet people seldom bother to relate what they read in the Qur'an to the meaning given in such translations. As such, their reading is casual and has only the purpose of reading the words Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, His last messenger to humanity. Is such a purpose encouraged? Is such a reading rewarded?

Scholars agree that reading the Qur'an by a person who does not understand it and is only able to read it with difficulty earns a reward from Allah. This is because when a person takes the trouble to read the Qur'an although he does not understand it, he actually expresses his love and reverence of the Qur'an and his acknowledgment that it is Allah's word. Moreover, he is motivated by the Prophet's encouragement to all Muslims to read the Qur'an, promising them that for every letter they read they are credited 10 hasana or 10 good deeds. This applies in all cases. Therefore, we should not try to stop anyone from reading the Qur'an, even though he may not understand it.



The Prophet, peace be upon him, has mentioned that certain Surahs have special importance, but the general notion that every Surah has a purpose for which it is read is certainly mistaken. It is recommended, for example, to read the 18th Surah Al-Kahf, on Friday. But we are not told that the Prophet, peace be upon him, continued to read particular Surahs at particular times in the way described by my reader. What we know is that the Qur'an is a complete book and every part of it is equally important. It is true that the Prophet, peace be upon him, mentions that the Surah entitled, "Al-Ikhlās", or "Purity of Faith" is equal to one third of the Qur'an, but this refers to the fact that it states in a very short and precise manner the principle of the Oneness of Allah which is the cornerstone of the Islamic faith. This Hadith does not mean that when you read this Surah which is written in a single line, you are given the reward of reading one third of the Qur'an. For reading it you earn the same reward as you read any Surah or passage of the Qur'an which is of equal length.

We are encouraged to recite the Qur'an everyday, at all times. Therefore, if one decides to do this reading at a particular time and reads, say, one or two chapters every day, he is well advised to continue with this system than concentrate on reading special Surahs at special times. The Qur'an remains a book of guidance and blessing. Whenever we read it we are bound to benefit by its blessings.

2. There is a report which suggests that a group of Muslims complained to the Prophet, peace be upon him, about their local imam who often recited the Surah you have mentioned which is entitled "Purity of faith" or "Al-Ikhlās." The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked him the reason for reciting the Surah so often and the man answered that he loved it so much. The Prophet, peace be upon him, told him that Allah loves him because of his love of this Surah.

The Surah is a very short one, perhaps the second shortest in the whole of the Qur'an. It is appropriate to quote it in order to understand what we are talking about. Its text may be rendered in translation as follows :

"In the name of Allah, the Merciful the Beneficent. "Say : He is Allah the One and the Only God, the Eternal, the Absolute. He begot none, nor was He begotten, and there is none comparable to Him." [Purity of Faith — "Al-Ikhlās" 112]

It is clear that the Surah summarizes the concept of the Oneness of Allah in a most clear and precise statement, which allows no trace of polytheistic beliefs to creep into Islamic faith. Since Oneness of Allah is the basic concept of all divine messages, this Surah is very important for anyone who wants to understand what the religion of Islam is all about. To a Muslim it serves as a constant reminder that he must always preserve his faith pure of any trace of polytheism. For this reason, we are recommended to recite this Surah often, particularly in Sunnah prayer. The Prophet, peace be upon him, is known to have read this Surah in voluntary prayers in particular and if we do the same we stand to earn more reward for our prayer because of following the Prophet's methods.

Having said that, I have to add that at no time did the Prophet, peace be upon him, recommend us to recite this Surah, or any particular one, so many times on the same occasion. The reverse is true. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has always recommended us to read the Qur'an and ponder over its meanings, so that we understand fully well what Allah's message is. We do not find any scholar of repute of any school of thought recommending the reading of passages of the Qur'an or phrases of glorification of Allah a large number of times, as some people these days suggest. When you consider the position of such people, you find that they do not have any proper knowledge of Islam. They are not scholars, although some people may give them credit for being so. This reflects on the ignorance of such people because they do not distinguish a real scholar from someone who may try to appear so.

I am not clear exactly what this man has told about the value of reading this Surah 1,000 times on the same spot. I imagine that what he meant is that by so doing, you bring yourself into the kingdom of Allah and as such you free yourself from the shackles of human beings who need reward in order to offset the punishment they may incur for sins they may commit. He may have used the term "selling your soul to Allah". I can tell you that this is totally alien to Islamic thinking. Islam does not promise us great reward for doing so. If you read this Surah once or twice, with contemplation, and you understand the importance of the concept of the Oneness of Allah, you earn much greater reward than reading it a thousand times like a parrot without understanding it. What this man has suggested is total nonsense to which you need not pay any attention whatsoever.

3. I am not aware of a Hadith or a group of Hadiths that makes such a recommendation, which specifically mentions these four Surahs. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has recommended reading certain Surahs frequently, and these four Surahs are among them.

For example, he is quoted to have said that reading Surah Yaseen ensures the fulfillment of the purpose for which it is read. Such reports, however, are often rather suspect on authenticity. Having said that, I stress that reading the Qur'an, is a highly rewarding act of worship which is also generously rewarded by God Almighty.

4. Any part of the Qur'an may be read at any time as an act of worship which earns rich reward from God. This means that there is nothing wrong with your reading of these Surahs in the morning. However, there are a number of Hadiths that recommend reading certain Surahs at particular times, such as the Hadith recommending reading Surah 18, Al-Kahf, on Friday, and reading Surah 36, Yaseen for any purpose. Other Hadiths of this nature, recommending reading certain Surahs at particular times are, generally speaking, either lacking in authenticity or, at best, of the Hasan grade, which is lower than authentic.

Having said that, I want to add that suggesting that it is wrong to read any part of the Qur'an at any time is not correct. The Qur'an may be read at all times and its reading gives us rich blessings.

#### ***Qur'an: Status Of Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Raheem***

Could you please let me know how the Prophet, peace be upon him, read the last two Surahs, known as Al-Mu'awadhatayn? Did he say Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Raheem once at the beginning, or twice, with the second separating the two Surahs?

There is a historical difference among scholars on the status of Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Raheem with regard to its position at the beginning of every Surah in the Qur'an, except Surah 9, At-Taubah [Repentance]. The phrase means "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent." Many scholars consider it as one verse of the first Surah, Al-Fatihah, and other Surahs as well, while others do not consider it a verse of any Surah.

But all agree that it constitutes part of a verse in Surah 27 Al-Naml. This difference expresses itself in how it is read in prayer, with the first group supporting the view that it should be read aloud when the Imam is reading aloud, while others prefer that it should be read quietly, with no audible voice.

There are Hadiths supporting both views, all relying on good authority and authentic reporting. When we take them all together, we may conclude that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did both versions, sometimes reading this phrase aloud and

sometimes reading it in private while reading the text of the Surah aloud. As to which he did more often, this is difficult to say. Hence both methods are acceptable.

How the Prophet, peace be upon him, recited the last two Surahs on a particular occasion is very difficult to say unless we have a Hadith which gives us the necessary information. To the best of my knowledge, we do not have such a Hadith.

But the lack of information does not prevent us from reading the two Surahs as the Prophet, peace be upon him, has guided us to do. Whether we read the phrase in question aloud or in private does not make much difference. It should be read. The two Surahs should be separated with reading it because they are two distinct Surahs and not one Surah in two parts.

### ***Qur'an: Style Of the Qur'an & Its Inimitability***

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent

***“Ta Seen Meem. These are verses of the Book that makes things clear. Would you, perhaps, torment yourself to death (with grief) because they would not believe? If We will, We can send down to them from the skies a sign before which their necks will remain bent in submission. Yet whenever any fresh reminder comes to them from the Most Merciful, they always turn their backs on it. They have indeed denied (the truth of revelation); and they will in time come to understand what it was they were wont to deride. Do they not see the earth, how much of every noble kind We have caused to grow on it? Indeed, there is in this a sure sign; yet most of them will not believe. And indeed it is your Lord who is the Mighty One, the Merciful.”***

[the Poets “Al-Shu’ara” 26: 1-9] Commentary by Sayyid Qutb, Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi

God Almighty has not chosen to associate a compelling sign with His last message. He has made its overpowering sign the Qur'an, a complete and perfect code of living that is miraculous in every aspect.

The Qur'an, is miraculous in its construction and artistic presentation, maintaining the same features and level of excellence throughout. Thus, it is totally unlike human works where we note variation of excellence, strength, and level even by the same author and within the same work. By contrast the Qur'an maintains its artistic characteristics at the same level throughout, which indicates that it is the work of the One who is not influenced by changing situations and temporary circumstances.

The Qur'an, is also unique in its intellectual structure and the mutual complementarity of its parts. Nothing in it occurs by mere coincidence; nothing occurs out of place. All its directives and legislative orders are in full harmony, they address human life and regulate all its aspects. There is absolutely no contradiction even at the level of minute details. Not a single detail or provision in its full volume of legislation is incompatible with human nature. They all turn around the same pivot, serving the same aim, and maintain full harmony, which could have never been achieved by human experience. It must be the product of limitless knowledge that is free of the constraints of time and place. It is only such absolute knowledge that could produce such complete and flawless code, set in perfect order.

The Qur'an, is exceptionally unique in the way it penetrates into the hearts and souls, opening every lock and touching every point of effect. The way it provides simple and easy solutions to intractable problems is remarkable. On the other hand, its method of educating and molding people in accordance with its own system, using only the

lightest of touches, free of complexity, irregularity or deception, is also exceptionally impressive.

The Islamic message is designed by God to remain open to all communities and all generations. It is not meant for any particular group or location. Hence, its miracle should also remain available to all in every community and generation. Hence God made the Qur'an its miracle, rather than providing a physical miracle that leaves the onlookers speechless, having no counter argument. Physical miracles silence only those who see them, but they subsequently become no more than a piece of history. While the Qur'an, remains today, more than 13 centuries after its revelation, an open book outlining a code for life. People today find in it all that they need to put their lives on the right course, should they but determine to implement it. It leads them to a better world, higher horizon, and an infinitely superior destiny. Future generations will find in the Qur'an, much that we have not been able to discover, because the Qur'an gives every seeker what that seeker needs, while its treasures remain self-renewing, never exhausted. The unbelievers remained unaware of this central issue. Therefore, they continued to turn a deaf ear whenever Qur'anic revelations were read out to them. ***"Yet whenever any fresh reminder comes to them from the Most Merciful, they always turn their backs on it."***

We note that God's attribute mentioned here is 'the Most Merciful' which indicates His great act of mercy, in the revelation of the Qur'an. Thus, their turning away from it appears in its reality: An abhorrent act that rejects God's care and grace. They deprive themselves of such mercy when they are the ones who need it most.

Their attitude of rejecting God's mercy merits a threat of incurring God's punishment: ***"They have indeed denied [the truth of revelation]; and they will in time come to understand what it was they were wont to deride."*** The threat is expressed in general, unspecified terms, with a touch of sarcasm that suits their derision of God's warnings. A more literal translation of this verse is: 'they will in time receive the news of what it was they were wont to deride.' Needless to say, they will not receive any piece of news; rather, they will be enduring the punishment they have been deriding, and they will themselves provide the news, as people will be relating what happens to them.

They demand a miracle while ignoring the numerous miraculous signs God has placed all around them. These are sufficient for anyone with open heart and mind. Indeed in every aspect of this marvelous universe there is a great sign to give people all they need of reassurance: ***"Do they not see the earth, how much of every noble kind We have caused to grow on it. Indeed, there is in this a sure sign; yet most of them will not believe."***

The growth of plants as they come out of the earth is there to watch at every moment. Moreover, plants are made in male and female, with the two growing separately in some plant species or mostly growing together in the same shoot. Yet it only need people to look in order to appreciate.

The Qur'an, establishes a direct relation between the human heart and universal scenes so as to awaken people's minds and faculties of perception. It demonstrates the great aspects of God's creation all around us so that we look at the living universe with an alert mind and a beating heart.

This will enable us to recognize God through His marvelous creation, and make us appeal to Him whenever we see His creation. Thus we feel His presence at every moment of day and night. We will also realize that we are only one type of God's creatures, subject to the same natural laws that shape existence. We also recognize that we have a special role in the universe that must be fulfilled on earth, the planet in charge of which we have been placed.

***"Do they not see the earth, how much of every noble kind We have caused to grow on it."***

The nobility is imparted through life that is given by God, who is most noble and most generous. The phraseology of this verse suggests that we should look at God's creation with honor and respect, and not ignore or belittle it: ***"Indeed, there is in this a sure sign."*** They have been demanding a sign while in all this there is a great sign, but few are those who take heed of it: ***"Yet most of them will not believe."***

The introduction to the Surah ends with a comment that is repeated every time a point is concluded:

***"And indeed it is your Lord who is the Mighty One, the Merciful."***

He is able to provide all signs and to inflict punishment on those who deny the truth. He is also 'the Merciful' who shows His signs to those who are willing to believe.

### ***Qur'an: Surah 'At-Tauba' Starts Without 'Bismillah'***

Why does Surah 9 not start with the normal beginning, which translates as "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent".

Surah 9 entitled 'At-Tauba' or 'repentance', exposes the true qualities of the hypocrites and threatens them with a woeful doom. It can be likened to a stern warning made in the strongest terms. Hence, an opening, which stresses divine mercy and compassion, does not seem particularly fitting to the subject matter of the Surah. Therefore, Allah has not started with the phrase you have mentioned which begins every other Surah in the Qur'an. To recite this phrase at its beginning is forbidden because it constitutes an addition to the Qur'an which is not part of it.

### ***Qur'an: Translation — Standardized***

For fourteen centuries we have not been able to translate the Qur'an well enough. Differences of opinion still exist among scholars. There must be some standardized translation and standard interpretation of the Qur'an. Do you agree?

In its original form in Arabic, the Qur'an is expressed in a fine, inimitable style of surpassing excellence. No one has ever been able to write anything similar to the Qur'an in its literary beauty. The most that Arabic speaking men of letters can aspire to is the use of some Arabic expressions in their writings to add to the beauty of their style.

To translate the Qur'an into any other language retaining its beauty is a task beyond human endeavor. The Qur'an is Allah's word He Himself has expressed it in His own style. To express it in similar power in another language requires that Allah Himself reveals the Qur'an in that other language. That task is up to Him to fulfill if He so chooses. He tells us that He wants His message in Arabic and that is His choice.

It is very difficult for the best of translators to translate a text of human writing into another language, retaining all its power and beauty. That is why you may have several translations of the same text. Each will have its own merit. To have a standardized translation of the Qur'an may be useful but it is something very difficult. That is due to the fact that it is almost impossible to capture all the nuances and shades of meaning that a particular Qur'anic expression may have. Translation is meant to help us understand the message of the Qur'an. Each translation goes some length into achieving that. Therefore, they are all valuable.

### ***Qur'an: Translations & Interpretations Differ A Great Deal***

1. The message of Islam contained in the Qur'an is addressed to all mankind in all ages. The only way for a non-Arabic person like myself to understand it is to read it in translation. There are several translations of the Qur'an in my language but they differ a great deal. How would I know which meaning is the correct one?

2. Which translation of the Qur'an do you recommend?

This is not a problem of translation alone, and your problem is not merely one of accuracy of translation either. To start with, it is part of the unique nature of the Qur'an that many of its statements allow more than one interpretation. I think it was Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, who described the Qur'an as "allowing different versions."

When we read the Qur'an in Arabic, we are aware of at least some of these differences, and accept them all as being intended in the overall meaning of the Qur'an. Since we acknowledge that Qur'an is God's own word, we cannot say that a correct meaning of what He has revealed is not intended. However, study of the Qur'an itself and the Hadith will settle a great deal of what is meant by each Qur'anic statement.

Some people may suggest that they do not have time for such a study. The answer is that they need to ask those who devote much of their time and energy to the studying of the Qur'an, the Hadith, and Islamic studies generally. This is nothing new. Even in the very early days after the Prophet, peace be upon him, had passed away, some of the companions were known for their scholarly knowledge, and they were asked for rulings on different matters.

When it comes to translation, a translator has the not-so-easy task of producing in his language what someone else has expressed in a different language. There are methods of expression, shades of meaning, word and phrase connotations, and other subtleties, which cannot be reproduced, in another language. These have much to do with the culture of the two languages used. This applies to translation of any text written by human beings. The more literary the style, the more difficult it is to reproduce it in another language. The difficulty is even much greater with the Qur'an, the word of God. The Qur'anic style is so excellent that it surpasses any human style in any language. The challenge to the non-believers to produce anything similar to it has been stated at the time of its revelation, and it still stands today.

What do we expect, then, from the poor translator, competent as he may be? Muhammad Asad, who produced one of the best translations of the Qur'an in English, says these very words at the end of his work: "In all humility and true submission ends the attempt of a powerless servant of God in interpreting the immortal word of his Lord."

So we do not blame the translators as long as they make an honest attempt to produce a good translation. We take all meanings that are within a reasonable interpretation of the text. We study the Qur'an and Hadith to acquire a good insight into what God's message is.

If we cannot undertake such a study, we ask scholars to explain what we need to know. Then we turn to God in true submission and worship Him as best as we can. We cherish the hope that He will accept our humble endeavors, and reward us as He is the most generous, and will overlook our mistakes as He is the most merciful.

May God reward you for your honest desire to understand the Qur'an.

2. This is a very difficult question to answer. There are numerous translations of the Qur'an into English. None of them can be recommended without reservations. The one, which has been widely used, is that of Mr. Yousuf Ali. Its numerous footnotes are of help in understanding the meaning of the text. Dar El-Ifta has undertaken a project to publish it with some amendments and corrections. I am not sure whether this new version has been published yet. Its main drawback is that it is a little apologetic. The translation done by Mr. Pickthall is much too literal which makes it a little difficult to read. On the other extreme, we find Mr. Dawood's very readable, but tends to give himself too much license and, at times, he changes the order of the text rather arbitrarily. He has also rearranged the Surahs in a highly arbitrary manner. Mr. Asad's translation is rendered in a very good style, but he follows a strictly rational explanation of the text of the Qur'an which leads him, at times, to make gross errors.

These are but a few examples, which I have given to explain the difficulty I face in giving an answer to this question. If one has to use a single translation, perhaps Yousuf Ali's remains the safest. But the use of such translation should be only to have an initial idea of the meaning, which should be supplemented by wider study.

### ***Qur'an: Transporting the Qur'an***

I am leaving on vacation and I want to take a copy of the Qur'an with me. Is it appropriate to put it in my suitcase?

What we are required to do when we carry copies of the Qur'an with us, whether for a short distance or traveling by air, is to make sure that the Qur'an is not mishandled when it is carried. There is nothing wrong with putting a copy in your suitcase, in between your clothes, but away from your shoes.

Maybe it is preferable to put it in your brief case, if you are carrying one. If you are not carrying anything heavy on the plane, you may put in your carrier bag, if your handbag is too small for it. What is important is to keep it always in a position where it cannot be mishandled.

### ***Qur'an: Trust That the Man Chose To Carry***

Could you please explain Verse 71 of Surah 33, Al-Ahzab, which refers to amanah or trust that was offered to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but which they all declined to bear. Yet man took it up and he is described in the same verse as unjust and ignorant. What is this trust?

The verse in question may be translated as follows:

***"We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains; but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up. For truly, he has always been prone to be unjust, ignorant."*** [Clans — "Al-Ahzab" 33: 72]

In order to understand this verse properly, we quote what the late scholar Sayyid Qutb wrote in his priceless work, ***In the Shade of the Qur'an***.

The Qur'an has chosen to speak about these great types of creation, the heavens, earth and mountains. When man lives on them or near them, he appears to be very small and insignificant. Yet these creatures know their Creator without any effort on their part. By their very nature and constitution, they comply with the laws that He has set in operation. They obey the overall law He has set for the universe without reflection, contemplation or intervention. They run in their respective courses in a

perfect cycle that never fails even by the smallest fraction of a second. They fulfill their respective roles having no choice in the matter.

The sun moves in its orbit in a perfect cycle, sends its rays to fulfill the task assigned to it by God, and maintains, through the law of gravity, its distances with its planets and moons, fulfilling its role in the universe. The earth also runs its own cycle, producing its plants to feed all types of its population, bury its dead, and sends its springs gushing forth. But all this it does without having any say in it. The same may be said about the moon, stars and planets, wind, clouds, air, water, mountains and valleys. They all perform their respective functions, submitting to their Lord and His will. They do so without having to make any effort. They all have dreaded to bear the trust of having a will of their own, which would entail making their own efforts to acquire their own knowledge.

Man, on the other hand, knows God through his senses and feelings. He recognizes His laws through study and reflection. He brings his work in line with God's law through his own efforts. To obey God, man needs to make a choice undertaking to act in a certain way, resist his desires and temptations. At every step he takes, man makes a choice on the basis of awareness of the end to which that choice leads.

It is indeed a huge trust that is shouldered by man, a creature of small size, little power, limited life-span who is influenced by desire, whims, inclinations and aspirations. It is a great risk man takes as he accepts to carry this huge trust. Hence, he is "unjust" to himself, "ignorant" of his own ability.

When considered from the angle of the size of the responsibility he had taken upon himself, man is seen as both unjust and ignorant. But when he fulfills his responsibility, acquires the knowledge that takes him directly to his Lord, shows him His law and places him in complete obedience to God's will, the situation is totally different. Such knowledge, guidance and obedience produce the same perfection that the heavens, earth and mountains demonstrate with ease because they know their Lord and obey Him naturally, unhindered by any obstacles. Therefore, when man attains the same standard of knowledge and obedience to God, in full awareness and enlightened choice, he achieves a much higher standard that makes him unique among God's creation.

His will, knowledge, effort and fulfillment of his trust are the qualities that distinguish man placing him above countless types of God's creation. These are the qualities that are at the heart of the honor God bestowed on man when He ordered the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam. He further stated in the Qur'an man occupies an honorable position: "***We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam.***" [Children of Israel — "Bani Israel" 17: 70] It is imperative, therefore, that man should know what gives him dignity and honor with God, fulfill his trust which caused such dread to heavens, earth and mountains all together. This is what Sayyid Qutb wrote, and it needs no further comment.

### ***Qur'an: Use Of the Expression 'Heart' In the Qur'an***

In the Qur'an, God attaches much importance to the heart, often referring to it as the place of faith and good action. Medical science considers a person's heart as no more than a muscle that carries out a mechanical function. It has nothing to do with people's idea, beliefs or sensations. These are related to the brain. Please comment.

It is true that the heart, as a body organ, is no more than a muscle, which is central to the blood circulation system within the human body. Its function is similar to a pump, and it receives blood and pumps it to either the lungs or the body. As such, the heart has nothing to do with beliefs, ideas or sensations. However, human



languages have always spoken about the heart as the center of feelings, passion and thought. When people express their deep love, they say that it is “love from the bottom of their hearts”. People also express their conviction by saying that it goes deep into their heart. This does not apply to Arabic only, but to human languages generally.

The Qur'an is God's book, which addresses human beings in one of their languages, Arabic. It does not merely use the vocabulary of that language, but also its grammar, style and modes of expression. Hence, when God describes hypocrites as having “sickness in their hearts” every Arabic speaking person understands it fully, without ever thinking that hypocrisy is a physical sickness that affects the heart, or influences its function of pumping blood into the circulation system.

[Added: There is a very well-known report that at the age of five, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was met by two men in white robes who placed him on the ground and caused an incision in his chest. They removed his heart and washed it in iced water, which they had in a gold pot. They removed a small black piece and said that it was Satan's element. There is another report, which suggests that the same thing was done to the Prophet, peace be upon him, when he was 50. However, this latter report is much less known than the earlier one. I have not heard that there were any more occasions in the life of the Prophet, peace be upon him, when he was operated on. We cannot say for certain that this report is absolutely authentic although it is invariably reported in the books, which relate the events of the Prophet's life. What we do know, however, is that evil is not concentrated in any particular spot within the human body so that the removal of that spot would mean that the person concerned would not entertain any evil. The thoughts of evil are initiated in man's minds just like good thoughts. To make a man pure of evil requires a total change of his character, so that he becomes one of the angels. This is not possible since Allah has not willed it to happen.

### ***Qur'an: Used To Earn Money***

1. For generations, my clan has held the position of mullah in our community. This title signifies "religious leaders." Our function is to lead prayers in mosques, and religious functions and advise people on religious matters, etc. We do not receive any payment in cash or kind for these services. Sometime, however, we are invited by others to read the Qur'an for them, and when it is finished, the host gives his guests a grand feast. He also offers them whatever [some remuneration in cash or kind]. Please explain whether it is permissible to receive remuneration for the recitation of Qur'an?

2. Some scholars in our region say that any person who uses the Qur'an or the Hadith to earn money will face severe punishment on the Day of Judgement. How far is this true?

1. To read the Qur'an is an act of worship, for which one is rewarded. We have learned that we are credited with good deed for every letter of every word of the Qur'an we utter. On the other hand, to invite people to a meal and to be hospitable to them is an act of kindness, which strengthens social ties. Therefore, Islam encourages it and the host receives a reward for his hospitality. So, both actions are proper and acceptable. However, when you combine them and make the latter i.e. the feast, attendant on the former which is the recitation of the Qur'an, you are making a ritual which needs to be considered according to the teachings of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the practice of his companions.

What happens on such an occasion is for every one of the guests to read a part of the Qur'an, probably one thirtieth. Combined together, their recitation is considered to complete the Qur'an. Since no person can read the Qur'an complete in an hour or two, his guests are considering to be doing him the privilege of completing over a very short time. Hence, he is exceptionally hospitable to them. What should be said about this practice is that the reading of the Qur'an in this fashion has little to do with the purpose for which the Qur'an has been revealed. Allah has sent down the Qur'an as a guide for mankind to take them out of darkness into light. To achieve that purpose, they have to study and understand it and to implement it in their lives. When we recite the Qur'an, our purpose is to understand and implement it. When you hold a function like that which you have described, you set in motion a mechanical operation of a quick reading with little understanding and even less implementation. Had the Prophet, peace be upon him, wanted us to do this sort of activity, he would have told his companions and they would have practiced it. As it is, nothing of this sort is recorded in the authentic books of Sunnah. Therefore, we can dismiss it as an innovation.

Moreover, it is far from right to receive remuneration for reading the Qur'an. You do not charge money for worship. Whether you take money from your host or accept his hospitality only, the fact that he is giving this grand reception for the benefit of having the Qur'an read in his home makes the whole thing rather unacceptable. The host would have received much more reward if he invited a number of poor people to his home and gave them a good meal. Similarly, he would receive much greater reward if he recites a part of the Qur'an each day and finishes it within a month or a week. [Added: or whatever period].

2. It depends on what sort of use the person concerned makes of the Qur'an and how he receives his money. If a person receives wages for merely reciting the Qur'an, as is done by some people who are hired to recite the Qur'an at the grave of a deceased person, or to recite it and request to grant its reward to the deceased, then it is prohibited and the prohibition applies to both the hirer and the hired. The latter would not receive any reward for his recitation, and the money that changes hands between them is forbidden for him to take.

On the other hand if a person receives wages for teaching the Qur'an, either to children or to adults, then it is appropriate. You should note here that his wages are given for teaching, not for reciting. He obviously needs to devote time to the task required of him and should be compensated for that. It is perfectly permissible for one who has learned the Qur'an properly and who is able to teach it well to others to make such teaching his full-time job. There is a clear need for Qur'anic teachers and unless those who are able to teach it come forward to undertake this task, then many people will not be able to learn the Divine Book. It should be clear, however, to the giver and taker that the money is simply his wages for teaching and not for reciting.

### ***Qur'an: Waseelah In the Qur'anic Context***

Some of my friends address their supplication through some dead saints, asking them to intercede with Allah on their behalf. They also appeal to Allah by the good deeds of the dead saints. When I tried to explain to them that this was wrong, they quoted verse 36 of Surah 5, emphasizing the word Waseelah that occurs in this verse. Please comment.

In this letter there is a point about Al-Wasila which is an Arabic word denoting, "means, method, etc." The Qur'anic verse says: "**Believers, fear Allah and seek the proper means [i.e. Al-Wasila] to gain His pleasure.**" All scholars and commentators on the Qur'an agree that this verse is an injunction to believers to try hard to earn Allah's pleasure by doing what pleases Him. People who try to maintain the false concept of having a Pir or a guide or a saint, etc. make of those people a "Wasila" or

means to win Allah's pleasure. This is a gross misunderstanding of the verse. The plain truth is that the proper means to please Allah is to follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This is indeed the only Wasila, which achieves that purpose. None will be questioned on the Day of Judgement about anything else. If you follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah, Allah will not ask you why you have had no Pir. Indeed, He will ask you why have you followed one because such following is contrary to what the Qur'an and the Sunnah requires of us.

As for the rituals that take place at the graves of these Pirs, these are nothing less than worshipping those graves or the people buried in them. That is idolatry or paganism in strictest form. No one who indulges in such practices could hope for a happy outcome on the Day of Judgement unless he repents on this, declares himself a Muslim by doing his utmost to follow only the Prophet, peace be upon him, and resolves not to indulge in such idolatry again.

### ***Qur'an: Worn In Pendants Or As Charms For Protection***

1. In our country, some people have Qur'anic verses written on a clean, white paper which is then wrapped with the use of incense and bound by a black cloth. This is worn as a necklace, which is supposed to protect the person wearing it and give him some social prestige. Is this practice acceptable?

2. Wearing charms or talismans is considered a form of shirk, or associating partners with God. Does this also apply to hanging verses of the Qur'an on walls, or placing a very small copy of the Qur'an in one's car?

1. This sort of thing is known as a charm. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has told us that wearing such a charm is very strictly forbidden, and he has made his statement in the most emphatic way. He prayed to Allah never to grant the person who wears such a charm the wishes for which he wears it. As you realize, every prayer or supplication made by the Prophet, peace be upon him, is answered by Allah. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was once impressed by a poet who wrote a beautiful poem praising Islam and glorifying Allah. When the poet finished reciting the poem, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said to him "May your mouth be protected," which was the type of thing Arabs used to say to anyone who speaks well. That poet lived until the age of 130 without losing a single tooth. Numerous are the examples of how Allah answered every single prayer the Prophet, peace be upon him, said. Therefore, when he prays Allah not to grant the wishes of someone who does a particular action, then we are sure that those wishes will never be granted.

Let us reflect on the action of wearing a charm. It suggests that a particular object has certain powers. It may be said that the power is that of Allah, since it is Qur'anic verses that are written in such a charm. This is absolute rubbish because Allah's will does not work through the writing of Qur'anic verses or hanging a pendant with a few words from the Qur'an. [Added: or hanging a plaque with Qur'anic verses with that thinking. However, if the idea is that others may read the plaque and thereby be blessed by Allah for reading that part of Qur'an, then that is acceptable.] If one wants to rid himself of the effects of evil schemes worked by evil persons, then all he has to do is to supplicate to Allah to protect him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us so many prayers to say at different parts of the day and night. If we do, then we have that protection. When you make such a prayer, you are conscious of what you are saying. You are addressing Allah, showing your submission to Him. When you do so, He responds to your prayer. But when you wear a charm or you put in your pocket or under your clothes a piece of paper with Qur'anic verses written on it, you are assuming that the writing itself has a power of its own. There is no action in which you are really and truly involved. You are not addressing Allah at all. This is an action similar to that of a person who keeps a copy of the Qur'an in his car,

hoping that it will help him avoid accidents. Accidents are avoided by careful driving, not by putting a copy of the Qur'an in the car. But if you want Allah's help in avoiding accidents, you pray Allah when you are about to start your car to help you drive carefully and avoid any misjudgment on your part and on the part of other drivers. By so doing, you are asking Allah's help. He answers the prayer of anyone who turns to Him for help, acknowledging His Lordship.

2. You are right when you say that the wearing of a charm or a talisman is a form of associating partners with God. Hence, it is a very grave sin. This is due to the fact that the person who wears such an article believes that it has a power of its own and that it can benefit him. When people hang some beautifully written verses of the Qur'an on their walls, they do not entertain such a belief. They normally feel that the verse carries highly significant meaning which, they want themselves and other people to remember.

Having said that, I should add that if a person places a copy of the Qur'an in his car, believing that it will protect him against accidents, he is treating the Qur'an as a charm, which is strictly forbidden in Islam.

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## ***Religion: Birth, Upbringing & the Choice Of Religion***

Birth and upbringing greatly influences one's way of life and beliefs. Most people stay with what they have been familiar with since their childhood. When on the Day of Judgment people face the reckoning, could those who follow other faiths protest that their birth and upbringing prevented them from following the right faith?

It is true that people are greatly influenced by their upbringing and what is familiar to them. But this is not an argument to be advanced in justifying the rejection of faith.

To start with, God has placed in our nature, at the time He created us, a tendency to seek Him and to believe in His oneness. Moreover, when a person believes, even vaguely, in God as the one creator, he or she experiences a feeling of happiness with the world they live in. This feeling is denied to those who deny God altogether and profess atheism. So, the desire to believe is inborn in human beings. Moreover, God has given us minds to think. It is perfectly natural that He expects us to use them, particularly in the most important issue of our existence, which is the knowledge of how we are created and for what purpose. If we do not use our minds, we drift with the society we live in. It is true that most people do so, but this is not the proper way for the creature God has honored and favored with the blessing of free choice. Every human being should use his or her mind in order to determine what to believe in and what religion to follow. This applies to Muslims as well. If you are a Muslim because you are born in a Muslim community, and your parents are Muslims, then you have not done your duty of believing in God as a matter of choice, rather than upbringing.

On the other hand, there are people who turn out to be unbelievers despite being born Muslim and living in a Muslim environment. They may have very religious parents, and they may receive sound religious education and upbringing. Nevertheless, they choose to be unbelievers. You only have to look at the people around you to find such cases. Here the choice they make is in the opposite direction. It proves that birth and upbringing are not sufficient on their own to make a person a believer. Personal effort and choice also have their very important effect.

The other point which I would like to make in this connection is that on the Day of Judgment we are all gathered to God and He rewards us according to what we have done in this life. He is the most just of judges. He does not deal unjustly with anyone. Every one will receive their fair reward. Therefore, there is no need to worry about what happens to this person or that person. None will suffer injustice.

## ***Religion: Change Came About — But How?***

I was a person who cared very little about religion. I almost ridiculed religion and those who were religious. I have even rejected the existence of God and demonstrated that rejection in an outrageous manner. Yet, one day in November last year, it all changed. Waking up one morning, I started

crying and kept saying, "please forgive me, my Lord." Since that day, I have stopped smoking, drinking and all other sinful habits. How could all this have happened?

Everything, which is made or manufactured, provides a testimony to its maker and its manufacturer. If it is of high quality, and then we conclude that the one who is responsible for making it is an excellent professional or a master craftsman, etc. The universe which is all Allah's creation, gives a most eloquent testimony to the great power of its Maker, Allah, glorified be He. There are so many signs, indicators and pointers throughout the universe, in the world around us, in our lives and within ourselves which emphasize the basic truth of Allah's existence and His supremacy in the universe. Allah has given all these indicators and asked us to contemplate on them and to draw out conclusions. He knows that when we think logically about creation and about the universe, the basic truth will inescapably set us in the face. It is up to us to accept it and act upon it or pretend that we do not see it. When someone aggressively tries to emphasize his rejection of faith, he is subconsciously trying to justify his attitude of willfully turning a deaf ear to the call of faith. He wants to smother the voice within him, which tells him that he is following the wrong way. He continues to do this until such an attitude of arrogant disbelief becomes a second nature to him.

As human beings, we are all amenable to accepting faith in the same degree. As you undoubtedly realize, Allah requires every one of us to believe in the same set of truths, which form the true faith of submission to Him, alone. This applies in the same degree to simple, uneducated people as well as to the most educated and sophisticated minds. When we remember that Allah's justice is absolute, we conclude that we must have the same amenability or susceptibility to accepting the faith and conducting our lives on its principles. Hence, there is no human being that can be described as a natural disbeliever. Indeed, if people remain true to their nature, they will want to know their creator and they will continue to pursue a proper satisfaction of their inherent desire to be believers. The best proof of this susceptibility is the fact that Allah addressed us all with his message in the same language and in the same manner. The Qur'an, Allah's revealed book which contains the final and complete version of His message to mankind, speaks to all people alike. It does not distinguish between those who are highly educated and those who have never been to school. There is no doubt that people who are endowed with knowledge can have a profound understanding of Allah's message. It is equally true, however, that Allah's message touches certain cores within man which make us all willing to submit ourselves to Him.

When we reflect on this fact, we recognize that Allah's grace has been bestowed on us in abundance. It is He who sent us messages to point to us the way, which will lead us to happiness in this life, as well as in the life to come. It is He who has brought this process of sending messages to its final stage when he sent Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, with the complete and final form of the divine message. It is He who has guaranteed to preserve this message intact for the rest of time so that all generations will have access to it whenever they want. It is He who has made us responsive to His call and facilitated for us acceptance of it by making that acceptance the door which leads us to a life of happiness in this world and one of greater happiness in the hereafter.

Had Allah left things at that and imposed on us the duty to believe in Him and live up to our faith, His grace would have been most abounding and we should have no excuse for not responding to His message and following His messenger, Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who conveyed to us Allah's last message. But Allah has bestowed on us much more of His grace. In the life of every single one of us, there are moments when we find ourselves literally at the crossroads between faith

and unbelief. These moments represent chances offered to every single one of us to follow the right direction. We either take the chance so offered or we allow it to pass as though meant for someone else. What is special about these moments or these chances is that at these particular points in time, we see the issues involved most clearly. We are actually beckoned in a most appealing way to follow the path of Islam. Yet, many of us deride that chance and choose to go in the opposite direction.

I know someone whose determination to diligently follow the path of Islam is exemplary. Yet nothing in his upbringing could have helped him make such a choice. Neither of his parents cared about giving their child any sort of religious education. They sent him to a school, which regarded religious education, a luxury that could not be afforded. He told me about one moment in his life when he could feel that the choice was put to him in front of his eyes. The issues were so clear that what he saw could have very well been in the material world.

How do these moments or chances come about is something that Allah alone knows. What we know is that they do not come to all of us in the same way, nor does the chance repeat itself in the same manner twice. These are moments when our spiritual vision, as it were, of the facts of existence is at its clearest. These moments are part of the guidance with which Allah has provided us. None of us is forgotten. Each one of us is responsible and is given his chance.

Perhaps what has happened to you was that you have experienced such a moment. It may be something at which you could not point finger, but it is nevertheless real. Allah has enabled you to see things as they truly are and to make the right choice. For that you must thank Allah for the rest of your life, since you undoubtedly are enjoying the blessings of being at peace with yourself and with the universe around you. It is that peace which brings to the faithful a happiness that is inexhaustible.

### ***Religion: Deemed As A Cause Of Conflict & War***

A new thinking is gradually developing which suggests that hatred and fighting between different types of believers are due to religion and sects. Without religion, people will have less to fight for on religious grounds. It is suggested that if people throughout the world implement a system of education, which is geared to strengthen the best human values, they will be in a better position to control all sorts of evil. Please comment.

This is not a new concept at all. People have advanced this idea time after time throughout history, but a careful study of human history and the causes of conflict between people, nations, races and religious groups is sufficient to reveal that human beings fight under any banner and for whatever cause, and in pursuit of self-centered goals. Such a study is bound to conclude that greed and selfishness, as well as laying one's hands on what belongs to others, are the main reasons for starting armed conflicts. Ideals and human values are always forgotten whenever it comes to the pursuit of personal and national interests.

Western civilization has tried hard to shed its Christian values and replace them with secular human values that give prominence to human brotherhood, freedom and equality. Ever since the French Revolution, these values have been paramount in European thinking, while religious values were gradually weakening. Has this helped Europe, or the West in general, to reduce the frequency of wars and armed conflicts? Whether we look at the relations between European states and nations or between Western nations and the rest of the world, the answer is unquestionably in the negative.

In the 19th century, Europe witnessed so many wars between European nations, despite the fact that all Europe is presumably Christian. Moreover, European nations

went out to colonize vast areas throughout the world. When they did so, they only paid lip service to their Christian values and conveniently preferred to forget all about freedom, equality and fraternity. They were happy to treat the nations of those areas which they occupied as second class people, deprive them of the wealth of their land, keep them ignorant, uneducated. They also adopted a policy of "divide and rule" to create hatred and enmity between the people of those nations. In the 20th century Western nations pulled the world into two great wars in which religion had no role whatsoever. Moreover, the West helped create Israel on Palestinian land, totally ignoring the rights of the Palestinian people. What human values could stop future wars if human beings can easily develop a system that gives legitimacy to driving a whole population out of their rightful land to bring in their place another nation that has no claim to that land whatsoever apart from the fact that their ancestors lived there 2000 years ago? It is true that religion could be used as a justification for war. The Crusaders were a good example. But religion provides the best hope for humanity to avoid war. If people take their faith seriously and abide by its teachings, they are certainly less likely to fight than if they were driven only by selfishness, greed and a feeling that they have the power to impose their will on others. Religion implants in human beings the feeling that they are answerable for their actions, while human values, no matter how refined, will have man as the ultimate arbiter. We know that man is greedy by nature. Therefore, man cannot be trusted to implement justice when he feels that he will never have to account for his actions.

### ***Religion: Sons Of God — Claims Concerning Uzair Or For Christ***

According to the Qur'an, Christ was misunderstood by his followers because of his unique and unusual birth, so they said he was the son of God. But it is not clear how the Jews were mistaken in their belief that Ezra or Uzair was the son of God. Do they have any reason in support of their belief such as Christians have? [Also See "*Qur'an: Sons Of God — Distortion By Jews & Christians*"]

Let me first correct your statement about what the Qur'an mentions about the followers of Jesus Christ, peace be upon him. In the early Christian era, there was no question among Christians as to the humanity of Jesus Christ. He ensured that none of his followers was in doubt about his birth and his nature as a human being and a Prophet, peace be upon him. To believers, the birth of Jesus without a father is a sign of Allah's greatness and grace. Moreover, it is very easy to accept. Allah created Adam without parents. It was just as easy for Him to create anyone of us with or without a meeting of the two sexes.

It was late in Christian history, round the third century, when the erroneous beliefs, which claimed a divine nature for Christ, were imposed. Moreover, they could not be imposed on the majority of Christians without determined opposition by many a noble and faithful Christian priests and laymen. Thousands of them were executed by Emperor Constantine whose conversion to Christianity spelled fundamental distortion of its beliefs.

As for Ezra or Uzair, the claim that he was the son of God is not widely known among the Jews of today. The fact that it is mentioned in the Qur'an is irrefutable evidence that some of them at least, especially the Jews of Madinah at the time of the Prophet, made this false claim. At the time of its revelation, the Qur'an was in direct confrontation with the Jews and Christians. Had the Qur'an claimed that they said something which was not widely known among them, they would have found such a claim easy justification for refusing to accept the message of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and they would have made use of it on the widest possible scale. The position of Uzair among the Jews is not inferior to the position of Moses or Elias.



They claim that it was he who compiled the books of the Old Testament, introduced the use of Chaldean in place of the old Hebrew script, because most of the Jews were able to read Chaldean rather than Hebrew after they were released from bondage.

It is also well known among historian that the Torah which was revealed to Moses and which he wrote down and put in the ark of the covenant was lost long before Sulaiman's time. When the ark was opened at the time of Sulaiman, only two tablets were found there which contained the ten commandments. It was left to Uzair to write down the Torah in the Chaldean alphabet and language, mixed with traces of Hebrew. Some Jews suggest that Uzair wrote the Torah down as it was in its original version, by special inspiration from Allah.

There are other reports about Uzair, but the fact is that many Jews revere him highly to the extent that some of them used to call him son of god. It may be that they used this title as one of honor, rather than in its literal meaning. Whatever the fact, some Jews, especially those who were living in Madinah at the time of the Prophet, certainly made this claim.

### ***Religion: Three Faiths & One God***

May I ask why there continues to be in our world three religions that profess to believe in the One Divine Being, i.e. God? With our new means of communications, it makes sense that all three should be one and single faith. Had earlier centuries had our means of communications; perhaps there would not have been a development of three different religions. Please comment.

We may agree with our reader if we consider that religion is a human development that results from the overall conditions of human society. But religion is not so. It is a message given by God to a person whom He selects and honors with the task of conveying it intact to his community in the first place, or to mankind generally, as in the case of Islam. God certainly knows best to which community He should address His message, and through which person in that community. Over the centuries He has sent warners, prophets and messengers to all communities. All these have advocated that worship should be addressed to no one other than God. Some of His messengers faced greater tasks and more determined opposition than others did. These were endowed with greater capabilities and more determined resolve. He has described in such terms 5 of His messengers, namely, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad [peace be on them all]. The messages of the last three initiated the three great religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

God has undertaken upon Himself the task of maintaining the Islamic message intact for all time. He says in the Qur'an

***"It is We who have bestowed this Reminder [i.e. the Qur'an,] from on high, and it is We who shall truly guard it [from all corruption]"*** [Al-Hijr 15: 9]

He has not done so with any of the earlier messages He had given to earlier prophets. Hence, these were subject to modification or distortion. For example, the concept of trinity in Christianity was introduced long after the end of Christian revelations vouchsafed to Jesus Christ.

### ***Religion: Which Religion Is Acceptable?***

1. May I refer to verse 85 of the third Surah, which states that anyone who wishes to follow any religion other than Islam will not have it accepted and that he will be a loser in the Hereafter. Nevertheless, it is stated in several Surahs that those who believe and do good deeds will be highly rewarded

by God whether they are believers, Jews, Christians, Sabians, etc. It appears that the first verse limits salvation to Muslims only while the others ensure salvation for anyone who fulfils certain criteria. Please comment.

2. Some non-Muslims appear to appreciate Islamic values and principles. In practical life, they maintain good behavior and they are kind to others. They refrain from sinful and evil actions. Yet, they are not Muslims. The idea of converting to Islam does not appeal to them because of what it may entail within their social circle. Will such good people earn reward in the Hereafter? Or, will their good deeds be of no avail?

The term “Islam” is used in the Qur’an most of the time to indicate the religion preached by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, as he conveyed the message entrusted to him. In this sense, Islam means the declaration by a person that he believes that there is no deity save God and that Muhammad was His last messenger to mankind. He commits himself to the fulfillment of his duties as outlined by this message and taught by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. The other sense is the more general one which indicates “submission or self-surrender to God.” This is indeed the essence of all divine messages preached by all prophets and messengers, ever since Adam and continuing with the line of Prophethood until Muhammad, the last Prophet and messenger. In reference to Prophet Ibrahim, the Qur’an says: **“His Lord said to him: Submit. He said: I submit myself to God, the Lord of all worlds.”** The Arabic equivalent to the word “submit” in this Qur’anic verse is the verb “aslama” from which the terms Islam is derived. We are also told in the Qur’an that it was Prophet Ibrahim who named the believers “Muslims”, meaning “those who submit to God.”

The two senses of the word are closely related since this religion of Islam has the principle of total submission to God as its cornerstone. When a person betrays any doubt about submitting totally to God, he is considered not to be a Muslim, because he does not fulfil the most basic criterion of Islam.

There is more than one reference in the Qur’an, to the type of religion which is acceptable to God. In all these references, the term Islam occurs. One clear example is found in verse 19 of Surah 3, entitled “The House of Imran [or Aale Imran]”. God says: **“Indeed, the only true religion in the sight of God is Islam.”** Many scholars are of the opinion that this verse and similar verses refer to Islam in its final form taught by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, as he conveyed his message. Equally numerous are the scholars who take such verses as referring to Islam in its general sense, namely, self-surrender or total submission to God. To them, the aforementioned verse should be translated in English as: **“Indeed the only true religion in the sight of God is [man’s] self-surrender to Him.”** The two views are not contradictory since the final version of the divine religion, i.e. Islam, emphasizes the principle verses in their general sense of the term Islam. We give them a broader scope so as to include the followers of earlier prophets who responded to divine messages and submitted themselves to God. As it is well known, all prophets preached essentially the same message, calling on their nations to surrender themselves to God. The foregoing applies to verse 85 of Surah 3, to which you have referred. If we translate it in the stricter sense, we may say that it means:

**“If anyone seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him and, in the life to come, he will be among the losers.”** [the Family Of Imran — “Aale Imran” 3: 85]

If we take the broader sense of the term Islam, we say that the verse means:

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***“If anyone seeks a religion other than self-surrender to God, it will never be accepted from him..”***

I personally tend to prefer this latter rendering. It must be clear to us, however, that since Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, has conveyed to mankind the religion of Islam as the last and complete version of the divine faith, this is the only acceptable form of self-surrender to God.

The other verses to which you have referred speak of different communities who shall have nothing to fear in the life to come. Let us take one example from verse 62 of Surah 2, which may be translated as follows:

***“The believers, as well as those who follow the Jewish faith and Christians and Sabians — all who believe in and the last day and do righteous deeds shall have their reward with their Lord. And no fear need they have and neither shall they grieve.”*** [the Cow “Al-Baqarah” — 2: 62]

These verses should be taken in a historical sense. We know for certain that the message of Islam as preached by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, abrogates previous messages.

Thus, it is the only form of religion acceptable to God. However, those people of old who followed Judaism, Christianity or other faiths preached by earlier prophets and have submitted themselves to God alone will certainly have their reward with God and they will have nothing to fear on the Day of Judgement. After Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, mankind does not have any choice other than to believe in his message or to deny it. If he denies it, he is among the losers, no matter what creed he follows. However, it is the responsibility of Muslims to convey the message of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, to mankind. We cannot condemn those who do not come to know of it, or who learn about it in a distorted way. God will judge them, as He knows of their situation.

Of course there are good people among the followers of other religions. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has recognized this. When he was asked about the best people, he answered: “The best among them in pre-Islamic days are the best in Islam, provided they understand it properly.” In the first major battle, the Muslims fought against the unbelievers, the Prophet, peace be upon him, named a number of people in the enemy camp and ordered that their lives be spared. Muslim soldiers were under strict orders not to kill them even if they could, but rather they should take them prisoner. These were people who did not take part in active hostility against Islam. When we know good people among the followers of other religions, we should maintain good relations with them. You speak of some of them accepting the principles of Islam but are unable to become Muslims due to social pressures. This may be so, but we cannot condone such an attitude.

Ultimately, accepting Islam is setting one’s relationship with God on the right footing. That takes priority over all other considerations. You ask what will happen to such people on the Day of Judgement. You have to remember that on that day God is the absolute sovereign.

He determines what happens to every single one of His creations. It is not our job to decide what will happen to any person, whether he is the best or the worst of people. It is God alone who determines that. However, since we know Islam, the word of truth and the message God has given to mankind, through his last messenger, we do not deviate from it. We cannot condone the practice of these people in giving too much weight to their social considerations. We say that the relationship with God is paramount. How will God treat them on the Day of Judgement is His own business, not ours.

### ***Repentance: After A Serious Sin***

Going through a difficult period, a person finds weak in the face of temptation and commits a serious sin. When he comes to realize, he is very sorry and feels ashamed of himself, having disobeyed God in such a way. He weeps repeatedly and seeks God's forgiveness, but he is not sure whether God will forgive him. How could he be reassured?

The door of repentance after committing a sin, even the most serious one, is open all the time. God does not close the door in the face of anyone who turns to Him with sincerity and true repentance. Therefore, sinners need not lose hope. God may forgive all sins, as He has promised. The only important requirement for the acceptance of repentance is that it should be made seriously and sincerely, coupled with a resolve that one will not repeat his sin.

Perhaps the worst situation is that of a person who today commits a sin, and repents tomorrow. One week later, he finds himself facing strong temptation and repeats the same sin. Yet even then, repentance is acceptable, provided that at the time it is meant seriously and with all sincerity. The resolve not to repeat the sin should be real. Still, if this happens repeatedly, every time God may forgive His servant his errors, provided that he is always sincere when he makes his repentance and pledges to stop finally and completely. [God indeed knows what is in our hearts.]

This man has been tormented by his uncertainty that his repentance might not be accepted. Well, he should ask himself whether his repentance is made with sincerity and the seriousness required in pledge made to God. If so, then his repentance is accepted, because God has told us so, and He does not fail to honor His promise.

Even if he finds himself repeating his sin, he should resolve anew not to go back to it, declaring a new repentance. He should be sure that it is accepted and forgiveness is forthcoming, God willing, when he is firm in his resolve not to go back to sinning ways.

### ***Repentance: Atoning For Sins***

A person who committed sinful act feels very ashamed, thinking always about the way he would have to face God on the Day of Judgment. He wonders what he should do in order to atone for what he did.

The fact that this person thinks in this way proves that he has good consciousness of what he did and what he should do. It tells us that he has regretted what he did and he does not wish to do it again. This tells in his favor. Sinful actions are of two types: the first carry mandatory punishment, which is specified either in the Qur'an, or in the Sunnah; and the second has no specified punishment. The first type include four certain offences, but many scholars include two or three more, so as to make the total seven offences at most.

The four are adultery, theft, accusing chaste women of adultery and highway robbery. The other three are theft, waging war against the Muslim states and apostasy. No other offence carries a specified punishment, except for murder which carries the capital punishment, but the immediate relatives of the victim may, if they choose, pardon the offender.

Even in the case of offences that carry mandatory punishment, Islam prefers that the offender follows the alternative course, which is to repent and make amends. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "If you do any of these offences and are duly punished for it in this life, the punishment atones for it. If you keep it between you and God, then it is up to God to either forgive or punish you on the Day of

Resurrection.” This means that repentance is the key to what one should do after committing any sin. Repentance means acknowledgement of one’s error, genuine regret for having committed it and a firm resolve not to do it again. If one truly repents of one’s sins and prays to God for forgiveness, then God accepts one’s repentance He has promised that and God’s promises always come true.

We have to add here that if the sinful action a person commits involves something due to other people, he should restore to them what is rightfully theirs. Thus a person who commits theft should combine his repentance with returning what he has stolen. A person who slanders another in front of a group of people should contact those people and put the record straight to them, speaking well of the person whom he had slandered.

The reader has told me of the offense the person concerned committed. The advice to that person is to genuinely repent and seek God’s forgiveness. There is no need for the action the reader suggests, because it does not prove anything. He only needs to be certain of not committing the same action again, and to do as much of good works as he can.

### ***Repentance: Erasing Sin Through Repentance***

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent

***The true servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk gently on earth...***

***And who never invoke any deity side by side with God, and do not take any human being's life - (the life) which God has willed to be sacred - except for a just cause, and do not commit adultery. Whoever does any of this will face punishment, and on the Day of Resurrection his suffering will be doubled, and he will abide therein in ignominy.***

***Excepted, however, shall be they who repent, attain to faith and do righteous deeds, for God will transform their bad deeds into good ones. God is indeed Much Forgiving, Merciful.***

***Whoever repents and does what is right has truly turned to God by (his act of) repentance.***

***(And the true servants of God are) those who never bear witness to what is false, and whenever they pass by (people engaged in) frivolity, pass on with dignity;***

***And who, whenever they are reminded of their Lord's signs, do not throw themselves upon them as if they were deaf and blind.***

[the Standard, Al-Furqan: 25: 63 68-73] Commentary by Sayyid Qutb — Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi

Believing in God’s oneness and refraining from killing others and adultery are the three qualities that distinguish sound and clean life that is worthy of man from a life of cheap pleasures that sinks man to the rank of animals. Hence, God mentions these three qualities as belonging to His true servants who are the most honorable in His sight. When they have been mentioned, they are followed with a stern warning: ***"Whoever does any of this will face punishment.*** This punishment is outlined in the next verse: ***"On the Day of Resurrection his suffering will be doubled, and he will abide therein in ignominy."***

Thus, it is not merely a double measure of punishment, but he will also suffer ignominy, which is even worse.

But the door remains open for anyone who wishes to save himself from such a fate. This requires repentance, firm belief and good action: ***"Excepted, however, shall be they who repent, attain to faith and do righteous deeds."***

Those who fulfill these three conditions are promised that whatever sin they had done prior to their repentance will be changed into good deeds which will be added to their newly earned good actions: ***"for God will transform their bad deeds into good ones."*** This is an aspect of God's bounty that is granted without the person concerned having done anything to deserve it other than his turning away from error and seeking refuge of God after having gone astray. ***"God is indeed Much-Forgiving, Merciful."***

The door of repentance is always open to admit anyone whose conscience is reawakened and wants to return to the fold. No one is ever turned away from it, no matter who he might be or what sins he might have done in the past. A Hadith related by Al-Tabarani mentions that Abu Farwah asked the Prophet, peace be upon him: "If a man has done all kinds of sin, leaving out nothing, will his repentance be accepted?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked him: "Are you a Muslim?" When he answered in the affirmative, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Then do what is good and abandon what is evil, and God will change all your past misdeeds into good ones." The man asked: "And even my worst, treacherous ones?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Yes." The man glorified God and continued to do so as he went away.

There is a rule for repentance and a condition for its acceptance, which are clearly spelled out: ***"Whoever repents and does what is right has truly turned to God by [his act of] repentance."*** Repentance begins with a genuine regret and desisting from bad deeds and is made complete through doing good deeds that prove that it is serious and genuine. At the same time, good deeds produce a positive sense that favorably compensates for abandoning sin. A sin is an action which, when withdrawn, leaves a vacuum that must be filled with an action in the opposite direction. Otherwise, the feeling of emptiness makes one miss one's old sinful ways. Hence we see here a remarkable feature of the Qur'anic method of cultivating goodness within the believers. It is based on profound knowledge of human nature. Who can know this better than the Creator?

Having completed this interposition of the conditions of repentance, the Surah resumes its outline of the qualities of the true servants of God, the Most Merciful: ***"Those who never bear witness to what is false, and whenever they pass by [people engaged] in frivolity, pass on with dignity."*** This may be taken literally which means that they never give a false testimony, since such an action leads to usurping people's rights and helps injustice. It may also be taken to mean that they do not attend any place or stay with any group where falsehood is said or done. They steer away from such places or company so as not to be party to anything that happens there. This is more powerful meaning. They also steer away from all frivolity and idle talk: ***"Whenever they pass by people engaged in frivolity, pass on with dignity."*** They remove themselves from participation in any such practice. A believer has more serious preoccupations that leave no time for frivolous and idle pursuits. His mind is full with what his faith requires of him so as to ensure that God's message is delivered to mankind. This is sufficient preoccupation for anyone.

Another of their qualities is that they are quick to remember when a reminder is given to them. Their hearts are open to the understanding of God's signs and revelations: ***"And who, whenever they are reminded of their Lord's signs, do not throw themselves upon them as if they were deaf and blind."*** The picture drawn here is critical of the idolaters who approach their deities and false beliefs like deaf and blind people, deprived of guidance and light. It shows them in a state of blind fanaticism, while God's true servants are fully aware of the truth in their faith, and in

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God's signs and revelations. Hence, they accept the faith with open eyes, hearts and minds. They are free of fanaticism. When they show enthusiasm for their faith, it is an enthusiasm based on true knowledge and profound insight.

### ***Repentance: Genuine Repentance After Grave Sins***

A man started a premarital relationship with a woman and she became pregnant. In their difficulty, the woman arranged for an abortion. Both sincerely regretted their action and are about to be married. Although they have sought God's forgiveness, they wonder whether their repentance can be accepted.

What the couple did is certainly grave. They have compounded the very serious sin of adultery with another, very serious one of abortion. But the good thing is that they have realized that this is far from acceptable and they are willing to mend their ways. God is always compassionate and He looks at the errors of His servants with sympathy when they genuinely repent their sins. Genuine repentance means that one is truly and deeply sorry for violating God's laws, and that one is fully resolved not to repeat the same sin again. If this is the case and we pray to God to forgive us, He will do so if He pleases.

We should remember that God forgives all sins except that of associating partners with Him. But forgiveness is always dependent on genuine repentance and firm resolve not to repeat the violation.

### ***Repentance: How Can One Be Forgiven?***

I came to work in Saudi Arabia a few years ago when I was over forty. In addition to having a worthwhile job I have had the benefit of having a new approach to life. I am a much better Muslim now. Previously, I did not attend regularly to my prayers and I did not keep up fasting in Ramadhan and I committed other errors. Here, I have learned more about the importance of preparing for the life to come. I offered the pilgrimage and several Umrahs. I attend more regularly to my religious duties now. What worries me is what is to be done about my missed prayers and fasting. How do I offer them? How can I be forgiven for what I have missed?

The first thing I would like to say is to congratulate you on your new attitude. May Allah accept your repentance for your past negligence and strengthen your determination to fulfill your religious duties as a good Muslim.

It is a great achievement for a Muslim to show consciousness of his religious duties at an early age and to offer prayers and attend to his other duties and lead a well-disciplined life. The Prophet, peace be upon him, mentions seven types of persons who will be sure to have the shelter which Allah extends only to the most virtuous and dutiful of His servants. These seven types include "a young man or woman who grows up in a life of obedience to Allah." The fact that the Prophet, peace be upon him, singles this type of person for such a great honor suggests that it is not practically easy for young people to observe their religious duties without fail. Many do miss some prayers and some find it too difficult to resist the temptation of joining friends to some sort of activity which involves disobedience to Allah. A young man may not experience any inclination to drinking alcohol, for example, and then he finds himself with a group of friends spending an evening in entertainment. As he sees many of them drinking, he may easily be tempted. This in itself may lead to other violations of Islamic injunctions. When such a person thinks about what he has done, he is torn between enjoying his pleasures and the need to repent. If he allows the latter course, he will be able to make amends for his mistake without difficulty. A

person who allows himself a repetition of such practices will find himself moving away from what Islam requires of him. He will soon slacken in offering his prayers and may stop praying altogether. Once he does so, fasting becomes too difficult for him and he finds it much easier not to fast. Eventually, his behavior will run contrary to what Islam rules.

If a person had trodden this path and went far away from what Islam requires of its followers, he can always turn back. Obviously turning back does not come by itself. There must be some development, which causes a person to wake up after having been negligent of his duty for a long while. How people may waken to the fact that they must obey Allah and do what He has bid them is immaterial. The important thing is that when the awakening does take place, the person concerned seizes this opportunity and thanks Allah for giving him the chance to repent.

According to Islam, the door to repentance and mending one's behavior remains open all the time. The only thing needed is for the person concerned to be genuine in his repentance and to resolve not to go back to his sinful ways. When repentance is genuine and sincere Allah accepts it and forgives the person's past errors. Our past sins do not stay with us, if we sincerely regret having done them. Every human being is liable to err in future. What is more is that we, the Muslim community, are commanded by Allah to overlook the past deeds of any person who declares that he has genuinely repented what he had done. Therefore, if someone used to drink alcoholic beverages and then he repents doing this, we treat him as one who does not drink. We never taunt him about his past drinking nor do we refer to him in our private conversations as a former drunkard. To us, he is as good as a person who never drank.

The case of this reader is typical to people who come to realize that their past was nothing to be proud of. They turn to Allah, seeking his forgiveness and resolving to exert a double effort in the future to earn good reward in the hereafter. The question is always asked: What about my missed duties?

As for prayers, it is time-relative duty. This means that when a prayer is missed and its time has lapsed, it cannot be offered again, except in one of these situations, namely, that it was missed as a result of forgetfulness or unconsciousness as in the case of sleep. Therefore a genuine repentance of having missed all these prayers is sufficient. Allah will certainly accept your repentance and He will forgive you the prayers you have missed. But I would like to add a word of advice: It is preferable in this case to offer what you can of voluntary prayers.

As for fasting, the case is a little different. Because fasting can be done on days other than those of Ramadhan, if it is missed for a legitimate reason, then it is better to compensate for missed days of fasting by fasting now, one day for each day missed. This may be very difficult for any person who has missed fasting for 25 years or more, however, he should try fasting as often as he can. It is not required that he fasts one month at a time for each month missed. He can fast one day at a time, as long as he has every intention of compensating for missed fasting. If one dies before he has completed what he should compensate for, then Allah will forgive him as he is aware of his intention to do the compensatory fasting. If one makes a habit of fasting one or two days a week, then he will soon find out that he is progressing well toward compensating for the missed duty. If the person in your situation cannot fast, then it is hoped that Allah will accept his repentance and forgive him what he has omitted of his religious duties.

### ***Repentance: Recurrence Of the Same Sin After Repenting Repeatedly***

When a person commits a sin and repents, declaring that he would not go back to it again, he expects to be forgiven by God. What would be his



position if despite his repentance, he commits the same sin again? If this should happen several times, does it mean that God does not accept his repentance? What if the sin in question is one of the gravest types, such as adultery?

Several are the Qur'anic verses that speak of God's forgiveness being so very generous that it could include all sins, no matter how grave they may be, provided that the person concerned believes in God's oneness and does not associate partners with Him. This is summed up in the Qur'anic verse that says:

***“For a certainty, God does not forgive that partners should be associated with Him, but He forgives any lesser sin to whomever He wills. He who associates partners with God has indeed gone far astray.”*** [Women — “An-Nis’a” 4: 116]

What is needed to earn forgiveness is a genuine repentance, which means that one really and genuinely regrets having committed the sin in question, and a strong resolve not to repeat it in future. If a person fulfils these two conditions and earnestly prays to God for forgiveness, then God will forgive him, if He so wills, provided that He knows him to be honest in both his regret and his resolve. Should he, nevertheless, yield to temptation and commit the same sin again, he is back in the same position and needs to repent. God will forgive him again when his repentance is sincere and genuine.

This applies as many times as the same person yields to temptation, and subsequently repents, provided that each time, his repentance is sincere. God certainly knows our intentions and our inmost thoughts. We cannot hide anything from him. If He knows that a person who is saying to him, ‘I repent’, is not sincere, but harbors at the same time thoughts that he would still commit the same sin again if a chance arises, then God will not accept his verbal repentance. This is because it is neither sincere nor genuine. We cannot deceive God. When we repent, we must make sure that our resolve to refrain from sin is strong and genuine. If a person fails in his resistance to temptation, despite his earlier genuine resolve, the earlier sin remains forgiven, and the new one may be forgiven when a new, sincere attempt at repentance is made.

All this applies to all types of sin, minor or major, provided always that we do not try to deceive God or deceive ourselves [and provided that the person concerned believes in God's oneness and does not associate partners with Him.]

### ***Repentance: When Death Is Imminent***

1. What does Sakarat mean? Will a person who has reached this stage still have a chance to repent of his sins? If so, will his repentance be accepted? What about a person sentenced to death for a crime he has committed? Will his repentance be accepted if he does repent between the passing of the sentence and execution?

2. It is said that repentance is unacceptable if offered only when one is on one's deathbed. There are diseases in our modern world, which are ultimate killers, such as AIDS and cancer. Can we say that a person suffering from these diseases is on his deathbed? If so, will his repentance be rejected by God?

1. Sakarat refers to a state when a person is not in control of his mental power. It mostly refers to a state of drunkenness. However, it is also used in reference to extreme states of fury, passion, agony, and sleepiness as well as loss of consciousness that results from pain. It is this last condition which is meant when

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the term refers to what may be experienced by a person who is just about to die. The term in Arabic is "Sakarāt al Mawt," which means "the throes of death." The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to include in his supplication this Salat: "My Lord, help me endure the throes of death."

Suffering extreme anguish at the time of death is not indicative of any judgment on the person concerned. It must never be assumed that a person who dies a very clam and peaceful death is in a position of favor, or that a person who suffers much anguish is in a position of disfavor. The Prophet, peace be upon him, himself endured much pain at the time of his death. This has made Lady Ayesha say: "I do not envy anyone a peaceful death after having seen what God's Messenger has endured." [Related by Al Bukhari].

It is confirmed that at the time of death, a person sees the truth about God, faith and human life so that he is absolutely certain of it. When he has seen that which happens when he can no longer recover, repentance of past sins will not be accepted. This is due to the fact that this repentance is simply regret for not having followed the guidance provided by God, and it comes as a result of something outside the control of the dying person. The proof is shown to him because he can no longer do anything about it. His repentance has not come out of any effort on his part to recognize the truth, or any desire to mend his ways. It comes when his life is over.

This does not apply to a person who is sentenced to death for a crime he has committed or even wrongfully convicted. A genuine repentance by such a person stands as much chance of being accepted as the repentance of anyone else. True, this person has been condemned to death, but then man never relinquishes his hope to live longer. He may still feel that he can escape death, either by appealing against the sentence, or winning a pardon, or some other event, or even escaping from prison. He may require his lawyer to try to manipulate every loophole in the law in order to win him a reprieve, or stay of execution. During this period, if he reflects on his past life and turns to God in sincere repentance, his repentance may very well be accepted.

As I have explained in the past, repentance ensures forgiveness of what is due to God. Any right owing to other human beings will not be forgiven until they themselves forgo their rights. On the Day of Judgement, God will bring the two parties together and ask the aggrieved whether he wants to forgive his opponent. If he declines, then God will take some of the good deeds of the offender and credit them to the aggrieved party until he is fully satisfied. If the offender does not have enough good deeds, then God will take away some of the bad deeds of the aggrieved party and add them to the records of the offender.

If the offender has done enough good deeds to win God's pleasure and God wants him to be forgiven his offenses against other persons, then God will undertake to satisfy those other parties Himself. He will give them extra reward for their good actions until they are happy to forgo their rights.

2. Repentance is acceptable until a person is in the final throes of death. This means the time when he is actually dying. A person with AIDS or some other illness that is likely to be terminal is not in the throes of death. He knows that he will die in a short period, extending to a few months or a few years. But are we not all in the same position? Who can tell whether he will live another five minutes or five years? Besides, every patient of any serious or fatal disease does not lose hope of a cure being found and his life being saved. A cure for AIDS may be found in the next few days or next few years, or may not be found for a longer time to come, but an AIDS patient will continue to hope that the discovery of a cure will come about sooner rather than later, tomorrow rather than next week. His hope for a long life does not

fade until the final stage of his illness. Therefore, repentance by such patients is acceptable when it is genuine and sincere.

***Reward: Buying Good Deeds Done By Others***

If a person is able to transfer the reward of his good deeds to others, would it be also possible for the recipient to buy such good deeds? If so, then rich people would have every chance of buying any amount of reward they need. On the other hand, is it possible to transfer the punishment of a bad deed to another person?

I could not tell from the tone and style of the writer whether he is asking a genuine question with the need to know the answer, or whether he wants only to express his objection to the view that reward may be transferred and the recipient stands to benefit by the work of other people. If it is the latter, then he has certainly aroused my interest by his original method of argument.

If the question is genuine, then the answer is very simple. It is not in the power of anyone to transfer the sin of an action he does to another person. Otherwise, the whole idea of reckoning and being answerable for one's deeds becomes a mere game. People who have a grudge against others would try to get their revenge by doing something and transferring it to those whom they do not like. God then becomes a mere bookkeeper recording what people want to do to their fellow-human beings in order to settle their accounts with them. Far be it from God's justice to do any such thing.

Yet people may have a grievance against others, and sometimes the grievances are genuine. There is much injustice in the world and all injustice is an assault by one person on the rights of another.

It is often the case that the person who is at the receiving end of injustice has no way of repelling such injustice or protecting his rights, or retrieving what is rightfully his. The answer to that is not by allowing such a victim of injustice to transfer the sin of a bad deed to his oppressor, but to seek God's help in the establishment of justice. God will certainly retrieve the right of every one of His servants, and He will punish the perpetrator of injustice, no matter what great power they may enjoy in this life.

As for buying the reward for good actions, this is again absurd. Money is not the way to earn reward, except when it is spent for a good purpose.

A person with money will earn more reward when he spends more on charitable purposes. If a rich person opens a school for the children of those who are poor and provides them with free education, or if he gives financial support to an orphanage, then he will certainly earn reward from God. But he cannot employ someone to do some good deeds and transfer them to him. Imagine someone offering an amount of money to a person who fasts or prays on his behalf! That is certainly absurd.

Yet it is possible to do something good and request Allah to credit its reward to someone else. That is a gift we may give to others. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has clearly stated that a woman may do the pilgrimage on behalf of her father who has become too old to withstand the difficulty of the journey. He himself included in his supplication prayers for some people and he named these people on certain occasions.

If you give something to charity and pray God to credit it to your deceased mother, then your action shows your belief in God and the Day of Judgement, and your dutifulness to your mother as well as your wise choice of a good deed to enhance your own and your mother's positions on the day of reckoning.

### ***Reward: Continuous Act Of Charity***

If a son or daughter arranges for some continuing act of charity on behalf of his deceased parents, will the reward be credited to the parents or to their son or daughter?

The son or daughter who makes such an arrangement, establishing a continuing act of charity and requesting God to credit it to his parents will receive a good reward from God for being a dutiful son or daughter. The parents receive the reward of the charity in full. This is a very good way of earning reward for oneself and for one's parents.

### ***Reward: Could Our Good Deeds Come To Naught?***

I heard a religious scholar in my country speak on the radio and comment on the Qur'anic verse which states: "Those who earn bad deeds and become besieged by their error are the people of the fire who will abide there forever." He said that if a person does something bad persistently, then all his other good deeds may come to nothing and he will be thrown in fire to dwell there forever like unbelievers. The scholar suggested that acts of worship such as prayers, fasting, pilgrimage and Zakah may become useless and may not be acceptable by Allah if a person continues to do a bad deed regularly and persistently. The only way out for him is to desist and repent. Please comment.

You have quoted the Qur'anic verse correctly, although I would have suggested a slightly different way of rendering its meaning in English:

"Indeed, he who earns a bad deed and becomes engulfed by his error ... it is such people that belong to the fire where they will dwell forever," [the Cow — Al-Baqarah 2: 280].

In its context, this verse is stated as a reply to the claims of the Jews who asserted that they would be made to endure the punishment of hell only for a few days, despite their persistent disbelief in Allah and His revelations. There is no doubt that what this Qur'anic verse tells us applies not only to those Jews who made that assertion but also to everyone. The Qur'anic verse is general in its import. However, in order to arrive at a proper understanding of its meaning we have to take it within its context. The Jews made all sorts of false claims against Allah and the Prophet, taking themselves, by so doing, out of the realm of belief altogether. They tried to kill the Prophet, peace be upon him, and went to war against him, knowing that he was Allah's messenger and recognizing that it was their duty according to their own religion to believe in him and support him against all non-believers. We have only to remember the example of Huyai ibn Akhtab who was one of the best-known Jewish scholars at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, arrived in Madinah, he went out with his brother to meet him in order to establish for themselves whether he was truly the messenger mentioned in their sacred book, the Torah. After spending a whole day on their mission, they went back home. Huyai confirmed to his brother that Muhammad, peace be upon him, was truly Allah's final messenger. When his brother asked him about his intentions Huyai answered blatantly: "I will fight him for the rest of my life." It is for such Jews who claimed to be Allah's beloved sons and that He would not punish them for their errors that Allah answers them that those who are engulfed by their errors will certainly suffer in hell forever.

The Qur'anic verse then speaks of errors of a certain type. They are gross, grave and can engulf the perpetrator. What type of errors do Muslim scholars mention in their

interpretation of this verse? This, as you realize, is the worst type of disbelief that can be perpetrated by anyone. Many famous scholars and commentators on the Qur'an agree that the term "bad deed" refers in the context of this verse to the most serious of sins. It is true that for a sin to engulf a sinner, it has to be done persistently, without any feeling of repentance, until the person dies. It is only in such a case that a sin can have such a serious effect.

Your scholar should have explained this in order not to leave his listeners with the mistaken notion that any bad deed can lead them to hell-fire. If the case was such, what room do we leave to Allah's forgiveness which He mentions as available to everyone who seeks it? Moreover, He can wipe all sins. He says:

***"Allah will certainly not forgive that partners be associated with Him. He may forgive any lesser sin to whomever He pleases."*** [Woman — "An-Nis'a" 4: 116].

This verse means that even grave sins can be forgiven once a person repents and turns to Allah, seeking his forgiveness and pledging not to return to these sins.

I am not happy with people who over-stress punishment in connection with sins. There is no doubt that we should fear committing sins. Anything that we may commit is recorded against us. Unless Allah forgives us, we would have to account for it. On the Day of Judgement, our bad deeds are weighed against our good ones. If our good ones are preponderant, then we are forgiven for the bad ones. If it is the other way round, Allah forbid, then we may have to endure punishment, unless Allah bestows His grace on us and forgives us what we have committed. When we read the Qur'an and when we study the Sunnah, we cannot fail to notice that there is a perfect balance between warning us against Allah's punishment and raising the much happier prospect of gaining Allah's reward. This is due to the fact that keenness to achieve happiness and reward and the fear of punishment are two of the basic constituent elements of human nature. Therefore, overemphasizing one of the two will result in an imbalanced appeal that will be counter-productive. When people hear too much about what punishment may await for this or that sin, they may wrongly form the notion that they will have to suffer for their past deeds, no matter what their future ones are like. They may be helped in formulating such a notion by the Evil One and this may lead them to despair of ever being forgiven. Therefore, they continue in their sinful ways.

Let us remember in this context that Allah states in the Qur'an: ***"Good deeds wipe away bad ones."*** At no point in the Qur'an is the reverse mentioned as true, meaning that bad deeds may render good ones useless. This cannot be the case. Once there is basic faith in the person's heart, all his good deeds will be credited to him. Moreover, Allah rewards us for every good deed at least ten times its value. He may even multiply this reward to 700 times or even higher. Bad deeds are punished at their bare value only.

To sum up, only a person who does not believe in the Oneness of Allah will not benefit by his good deeds. Nothing can render good deeds futile except total disbelief.

### ***Reward: Deceased Parents & Child's Action***

In the light of the Hadith that mentions that a dead parent benefits by his child's prayer, will deceased parents know that their children pray for them after they have died?

Yes. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has told us that a deceased person finds his standing improved. He prays to God and asks: "My Lord! How come that I am given a

better position?" He will be answered: "This is given to you on account of your son's or daughter's prayer for you." The parent will praise God and thank Him, and will also ask Him to bestow His kindness on his offspring. Thus the benefit is mutual.

***Reward: Enduring Patiently & Happy Acceptance Wipes Off Sins***

1. It is stated that when somebody falls ill or suffers misfortune, it is a way of Allah to provide forgiveness of his sins. Is this statement true? If it is, then does this mean that one should keep off from getting medical help to earn blessings. Please comment.

2. A learned person told me that any mishap that befalls a human being serves as a "processing factor." Please comment.

1. In a reference to the unlimited grace which Allah bestows on those of His servants who are keen to earn His pleasure, it is stated that Allah credits any of His dutiful servants, who is prevented by illness from doing a good action which he normally does, with the same reward that he would have earned if he had done it. For instance, if a person is in the habit of fasting once every week and he is unable to fast owing to an illness, he still earns the same reward which he would have if he were healthy despite the fact that he could not fast. It is a grace by Allah.

When a Muslim falls ill, or indeed suffers any physical or mental hardship, he stands to earn reward for this suffering. Lady Ayesha, the Prophet's wife, quotes him as saying: "For any adversity a Muslim suffers, Allah erases some of his sins, even though the suffering may be no more than a thorn pricking him." [Related by Al-Bukhari]. Another version of this Hadith is related by Al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Saeed Al-Khudri and Abu Hurairah, who quote him as saying: "Whatever befalls a Muslim of exhaustion, illness, worry, grief, nuisance or trouble, even though it may be no more than a prick of a thorn, he earns forgiveness by Allah for some of his sins."

The first thing to note in these two Hadiths is that when a Muslim suffers some adversity, whether physical or mental, or has some suffering to contend with, he will have some reward and that reward is for enduring it with patience and contented acceptance. Let me point out that this reward is not a credit for the suffering; and it cannot be as he has not brought the adversity upon himself, but it is rewarded in the form of a relief by Allah by pardoning some of his past sins.

In an authentic Hadith related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and An-Nasa'ie Attaa ibn Abu Rabah reports that once Abdullah ibn Abbas, the Prophet's cousin who was one of the best scholars among the companions of the Prophet, said to him: "Would you like me to point out to you a woman who will be in heaven?" Attaa said: "Yes." Ibn Abbas said: "This black woman came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said: I suffer from severe epilepsy and parts of my body get exposed. Will you please pray to Allah for me? The Prophet, peace be upon him, said to her: The choice is yours. You may wish to endure with patience and have admission into heaven as your reward, or you may wish me to pray Allah to cure you. She said: I will endure it, but some parts of my body get exposed, so pray Allah for me not to be exposed. The Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed for her."

The woman in this story was called Suairah, an Abyssinian black woman, who was attached either through slavery or alliance to the tribe of Asad. She used to come to the Prophet, peace be upon him, after the death of his first wife, Khadeejah, and he used to treat her with kindness and befitting hospitality. He knew that she was a firm believer, so he put a choice to her.

When a believer understands all this, he would not feel too depressed when he suffers a serious illness. No one suggests that a Muslim should wish for illness or try to catch it or having suffered should not look for treatment. Indeed health is a blessing, which every one of us should work diligently to preserve. But if we are taken ill, we should accept this with patience.

Abu Saeed Al Khudri visited the Prophet, peace be upon him, when he was unwell. He noticed that the Prophet, peace be upon him, had very high temperature. Abu Saeed said: "Messenger of Allah, you have a very high fever." He said: "We are like this: our trials are very hard and our reward is multiplied." Abu Saeed asked: "Messenger of Allah which people have the greatest affliction?" He replied: "The Prophets, and then the most pious and righteous. Any one of them may be tested with poverty until he could find nothing more than a robe to cover himself with and he would wear that. Another could be tested with fleas until they almost killed him. They were more pleased with their affliction than any of you may be pleased with gifts." [Related by Al-Bukhari].

2. In an authentic Hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "I have wondered at the situation of a believer which can only be claimed by a true believer and no one else. Whatever befalls him is for his own good. If something good occurs in his life, he thanks God, and that is to his own good. If he, on the other hand, suffers a misfortune, he remains patient in adversity, and that is to his own good." In both cases of gratitude for a favorable development and perseverance in the case of misfortune, a believer receives reward. If that is what your learned scholar meant, then he is certainly right.

### ***Reward: Enduring Patiently Earns Purge Of Sins***

#### ***Commentary By Adil Salahi — Arab News***

The Prophet's companions were able to develop a keen insight into Islam, its constitution and method of dealing with human life. The best among them were even able to attain a highly refined understanding of the basic Islamic concepts, which made their judgement both accurate and mature. Let us consider the following Hadith, which has been related by Ahmad and Al-Bukhari: "A man came to visit Abu Ubaidah ibn Al-Jarrah when he was ill. He asked him: 'How is the reward of the Ameer getting on?' In reply Abu Ubaidah asked him: "Do you know what earns you a reward?" The man said: "What befalls us of things which we dislike." Abu Ubaidah said: "You earn a reward for what you spend or get to be spent on your behalf for God's cause. [He then enumerated all articles of a horse's equipment, even including the horse's rein.] What you complain of physically is credited to you by God in order to erase some of your past sins."

Perhaps it is important first to say a few words about Abu Ubaidah, who has made this distinction between what earns a reward and what, erases past mistakes and sins. Abu Ubaidah was one of the very early companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, sent him on several missions, some of which involved fighting or chasing the non-believers. His leadership qualities were manifest to the extent that Abu Bakr appointed him as one of the principal commanders of Muslim armies fighting in Syria and Palestine. At the time of Omar, he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of all Muslim armies in those two important provinces, which were at the time under the Byzantine Empire. The Prophet, peace be upon him, gave him the title of 'The Trusted Man of the Muslim Community.' Moreover, he was one of the ten companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who were given the happy news of assured admission into heaven.

It is not uncommon to confuse earning a reward with the forgiveness of sins. Abu Ubaidah's visitor made this common error, and asked him about his illness in an

indirect but highly comforting manner. He asked about his reward, meaning that if the illness were very severe, his reward would be greater. To a Muslim, this is most comforting. He is reminded that what he suffers does not go in vain.

However, Abu Ubaidah felt that he should correct his visitor. He pointed out to him that a handsome reward is earned by donating one's money to further the cause of God. He enumerated every article of equipment a horseman needs, no matter how cheap it might be. This example is only to be expected from an army commander. To him, the most important thing is to concentrate his soldiers' attention on their duty to sacrifice. On the other hand, physical complaints, pains and illness erase some of one's past sins.

Someone may suggest that it will eventually come to the same thing, since one's reward is weighed up against one's sins to determine his destiny in the Hereafter. The fewer his sins are, the higher his position in heaven is. Again, the greater his reward, the better his position. The two will be weighed against each other and the side, which is preponderant, determines the outcome.

Nevertheless, the distinction is real. When we examine the Prophet's Hadiths on this point, we find that they concur in stressing the erasing of sins as a result of illness or calamities and reversals, which one may have to endure in life. Abu Saeed Al-Khudri and Abu Hurairah, both companions of the Prophet, quote him as saying: "Whatever befalls a Muslim of physical weakness or complaint or worry or distress or harm or despondency, even a thorn in his finger, is used by God to erase some of his sins." [Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and others]. Here the Prophet, peace be upon him, enumerates all prospects of misfortune, going down to having a thorn in one's finger. All these would be used to forgive him some of his past sins. When he endures whatever happens to him with patience and perseverance, his reward is much greater. This is because he combines the misfortune with patience, which is in itself a virtue.

This is indeed an aspect of God's grace, which many people tend to overlook. The Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us that when illness and misfortune continue for some length of time, the person who endures them may come on the Day of Judgement without a sin to account for. He would have been already forgiven. This is illustrated by the Hadith in which Abu Hurairah quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "Misfortune may continue to befall a believer in his body, family or property until he meets God, the Almighty, with no sins whatsoever." [Related by Al-Bukhari, Ahmad and At-Tirmithi].

When we consider all these Hadiths, we are no longer surprised at the patience and fortitude shown by early Muslims in the face of calamities. They treated whatever befell them as part of life and were happy to earn forgiveness of past sins. This continues to be the attitude of those of us who know what we stand to gain in return for enduring misfortune with patience. Again the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, provide us with a good example to follow.

Huthaifah ibn Al-Yaman was a companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, from the Ansar. He was appointed as a commander of a Muslim army fighting against the Persian Empire. He was at Al-Mada'in when he was seriously ill. His people learnt that his illness might be terminal, so they came to visit him during the night or just before dawn. He asked them: What hour is it? They said: "Late night or nearly dawn [as the case might be]." He said: "I seek shelter with God against a morning of fire." He then asked them whether they brought a cloth for him to be wrapped in. When they answered in the affirmative, he said: "Do not spend over much of such cloth. If I am to meet a happy end, my wrappings will be replaced by something better. If mine is the other type of destiny, I will lose these wrappings very quickly." [Related by Al-Bukhari].



What we learn, from all these Hadiths and reports, is that we should face up to any misfortune with courage and patience. When we do so, we earn the forgiveness of much of our sins. Our position in the Hereafter is thus enhanced. We stand a better chance of being admitted into heaven.

***Reward: For Prayers In Haram & In the Prophet's Mosque***

I have read a Hadith, which states that prayer in the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah is equal to one thousand prayers elsewhere, with the exception of the Haram in Makkah. It is also stated that prayer in the Haram in Makkah is equal to one hundred prayers in the Prophet's Mosque. That makes it equivalent to a hundred thousand prayers anywhere else. Does this apply to the whole Haram area of Makkah? Are sins also punished at one hundred thousand times their punishment elsewhere?

The Hadith you have mentioned is authentic. It is true that the reward we receive for a single prayer in the Prophet's Mosque is equivalent to the reward of one thousand prayers elsewhere. Similarly, a prayer in the Haram in Makkah earns a reward equivalent to one hundred thousand prayers elsewhere. That is one aspect of Allah's grace and limitless bounty with which He favors His servants. Some scholars say that this high reward is applicable throughout the Haram area, but perhaps it is more correct to say that it applies to the Grand Mosque itself, i.e. the Haram. [This is] because the Hadith mentions "Al-Masjid al-Haram" which refers to the mosque itself.

Perhaps it is important to add that this generous reward does not exempt the worshipper from offering his obligatory prayers at their times every single day of his life. Suppose a person stays in Makkah for a month and offers all his five daily prayers throughout the month in the Haram Mosque before returning home. He has earned the reward of prayers in one hundred thousand months. It may occur to him that he will not live for 8,000 years, so he need not offer any more prayers. This is a totally mistaken notion. If he deliberately omits to offer one obligatory prayer, he commits a sin.

Punishment for sins committed in the Haram area are not multiplied by the same figure. Allah states in the Qur'an that whoever is guilty of a bad deed will not incur any punishment more than which is equal to his bad deed. It is indeed a manifestation of the grace of Allah that we are rewarded generously for the good we do, but we earn no more punishment except what is equal to our misdeeds. Moreover, even these are forgiven when we repent having committed them.

***Reward: Gifting Reward Of Good Deeds To the Deceased***

Could you please confirm whether it is permissible to gift the reward of worship actions to deceased relatives? Please cite evidence. Does it apply to a son or daughter reading the Qur'an and requesting God to credit the recitation to their parents? The Hadith mentions a child praying for deceased parents as one of the three ways by which the dead can benefit. Does this apply to other people as well?

I have answered this question several times in the past, but every time I published a short answer, some people took issue with me, citing certain evidence. Other readers have also raised the question. Therefore, I am giving it a fuller treatment this time, hoping to settle the issue.

All scholars universally agree that a deceased person continues to benefit by any good action, which he shared, initiated or caused during lifetime. This is based on the Hadith that states: "When a human being dies all his action comes to an end

except in one of three ways. A continuing act of charity, a useful contribution to knowledge and a dutiful child who prays for him.” [Related by Muslim, Abu Dawood, Al-Nasa’ie and others]. Needless to say that all Qur’anic and Hadith references in the masculine form include the feminine as well, unless there is evidence to exclude women from it. The Prophet, peace be upon him, is also quoted as saying: “In addition to his own action and good deeds, a believer is followed after his death by certain things including knowledge that he might have taught or made available. A good child he left behind, a copy of the Qur’an he left to someone, a mosque he built, a home he left to be used by travelers, running water he caused to be available, a charity he gave away when he was still in good health. All these follow a person after his death.” [Related by Ibn Majah].

As for good deeds by other people, a deceased person benefits by several types of these. One thing that is universally agreed to benefit the dead is to pray for them, appealing to God to forgive them and bestow His mercy on them. The evidence for this is the Qur’anic verse that says:

***“Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, as well as those of our brethren who preceded us in faith, and let not our hearts entertain any unworthy thoughts or feelings against any believers. Our Lord! You are truly compassionate merciful.”*** [Exile — “Al-Hashr” 59: 10]

The Prophet, peace be upon him, also says: “When you offer the Janazah prayer for a deceased person, make your prayer for him sincere.” [Related by Abu Dawood and Ibn Hibban]. One of the Prophet’s supplications that have been transmitted to us says: “Our Lord! Forgive those of us who are alive and those who have died.” All Muslim generations have prayed for the dead, with no objecting voice ever been heard.

Charity is another act that may be offered on behalf of a dead person and the reward for it goes to him or her. Al-Nawawi says that all scholars universally agree this. A man asked the Prophet, peace be upon him “My father died and left behind some money, but he has made no will. Would it benefit him if I give Sadaqah, or charity, on his behalf?” The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “Yes.” Sa’ad said: “Which type of charity is best?” The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered: “To provide drinking water.” Sa’ad carried out a project to provide drinking water in Madinah, which continued to be known by his family’s name for a long time.

Offering the pilgrimage and the Umrah on behalf of a deceased person is also one of the best things that may be done. A woman from the Juhaynah tribe said to the Prophet, peace be upon him: “My mother made a pledge to offer the pilgrimage, but she did not fulfill her pledge until she died. Should I do the pilgrimage on her behalf?” The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “Yes, Do the pilgrimage on her behalf. Had your mother left an unpaid debt, would you not have paid it on her behalf? A debt owed to God has a stronger claim to be paid.”

Reading the Qur’an and requesting God to credit the reward of the recitation to a deceased person is also acceptable. This is the view of the majority of scholars, although some eminent ones disagree. Those who say that it benefits the deceased make it clear that the reciter must not receive or expect any payment for his recitation. If payment is made, the whole thing is forbidden for both the one who pays and the one who receives, and the recitation earns no reward for anyone.

Some scholars are also of the opinion that fasting and prayer may be offered on behalf of a dead person. They cite a Hadith mentioning a man asking the Prophet, peace be upon him, whether her should fast on behalf of his mother and the Prophet, peace be upon him, told him to fast. However, this Hadith mentions that the fast in question was a pledge, which means a commitment voluntarily made to do

something. This becomes a duty that must be done [or a debt that must be paid, although the concept of making pledges like these is not particularly encouraged.

What should be clear in our minds is that the types of worship that allow fulfillment by proxy, such as the payment of charity, the pilgrimage, etc. can be done on behalf of a dead person, and its reward can be credited to him, if God so pleases. These are treated in the same light as the repayment of outstanding debt. If a person dies with some of his debts remaining unpaid, and his children or a friend repays the creditors, this is perfectly acceptable. Similarly if you pay his outstanding Zakah, or fulfill his pilgrimage duty, he receives its reward. Personal acts of worship, such as prayer and fasting in Ramadhan, cannot be similarly done, because you can pay Zakah on behalf of your father or your wife, but you cannot fast or pray on their behalf.

### ***Reward: Hereafter For Non-Muslims Adhering To Islamic Values***

1. Some non-Muslims appear to appreciate Islamic values and principles. In practical life, they maintain good behavior and they are kind to others. They refrain from sinful and evil actions. Yet, they are not Muslims. The idea of converting to Islam does not appeal to them because of what it may entail within their social circle. Will such good people earn reward in the hereafter? Or, will their good deeds be of no avail?

2. If a non-Muslim leads a pious life, would he be rewarded by admission into heaven in the Hereafter?

Of course there are good people among the followers of other religions. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has recognized this. When he was asked about the best people, he answered: "The best among them in pre-Islamic days are the best in Islam, provided they understand it properly." In the first major battle the Muslims fought against the unbelievers, the Prophet, peace be upon him, named a number of people in the enemy camp and ordered that their lives be spared. Muslim soldiers were under strict orders not to kill them even if they could, but rather they should take them prisoner. These were people who did not take part in active hostility against Islam. When we know good people among the followers of other religions, we should maintain good relations with them. You speak of some of them accepting the principles of Islam but are unable to become Muslims due to social pressures. This may be so, but we cannot condone such an attitude.

Ultimately, accepting Islam is setting one's relationship with Allah on the right footing. That takes priority over all other considerations. You ask what will happen to such people on the Day of Judgement. You have to remember that on that day Allah is the absolute sovereign.

He determines what happens to every single one of His creations. It is not our job to decide what will happen to any person, whether he is the best or the worst of people. It is Allah alone who determines that. However, since we know Islam, the word of truth and the message of Allah as given to mankind, through his last messenger, we do not deviate from it. We cannot condone the practice of these people giving too much weight to their social considerations. We say that the relationship with Allah is paramount. How Allah will treat them on the Day of Judgement is His own business, not ours.

2. Islam states clearly that good actions merit reward from Allah if they are result of believing in Him. Without faith, any good action is deprived of its value. You could say that faith, or indeed believing in Allah, is the soul of any good action. Without it, it remains lifeless. While there is no denying the fact that some non-believers may have good characters and may be keen to do good actions, they undermine their own

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standing in Allah's sight by their lack of faith. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked which people were best, he answered: "The best among them in pre-Islamic days are the best in Islam, if they get to know their faith well." The Hadith speaks of good people among non-believers. It adds, however, that such a good person will be distinguished by his goodness if he becomes a Muslim, and he could distinguish himself still further if he understands Islam well. This is due to the fact that these additional qualities had the proper motivation to his good actions and enhance his good character.

***Reward: Idea Of Effort & Reward Is Central To Islamic Thinking***  
***Commentary By Adil Salahi — Arab News***

It is often said that the prosperity of nations cannot come about without an attitude, which encourages hard work throughout the community. While this is true, especially in a period of construction, or even a period of re-construction after a natural calamity or a devastating war, it remains important in times of peace and prosperity, in order to ensure that the benefits are not short lived or limited to a particular generation. No doctrine, which has managed to raise a certain people to the state of nationhood, has ever failed to emphasize the need for hard work on the part of the individual and the community. Needless to say, the emphasis must be placed in the first instance on the individual, because the work of the community is the total sum of the contribution of its members.

We have always said that Islam is the system, which God has devised for human life. In other words, it is a complete system which regulates all aspects of life in the light of its basic principle of believing in the Oneness of God and the message of the last Prophet, Muhammad, peace be on him. It is only natural, therefore, to expect that Islam stresses the importance of hard work.

But it is more in the nature of Islam to place particular emphasis on hard work, since it is only through good actions that a person attains salvation in the Hereafter. A Muslim who is conscious of the requirements of his faith has the best motivation to do well in this life. When we remember that Islam links actions, which are purely concerned with man's life and needs in this world to what is purely religious and dedicated to the achievement of happiness in the life to come, we can appreciate the strength of his motivation.

Even when human beings go about earning their livelihood, they can hope to be rewarded for their efforts in the Hereafter. What they have to do is to steer away from what is forbidden and to link their immediate purpose to their wider one of earning God's pleasure. Once the Prophet's companions saw a man apparently going to do his daily job. They thought that his effort is much lower than that of a person who strives to serve God's cause. The Prophet, peace be upon him, pointed out to them that if the man had parents to support, or a family to look after, then that particular effort of his serves God's cause. Moreover, even if he has only himself to feed, his effort serves God's cause, should he seek by his work to keep himself away from sin.

The idea of effort and reward is central to Islamic thinking. Every action can earn reward from God if it is intended for the right purpose. Since it is the amount of reward a person earns in this life, which will ensure his destiny in the Hereafter, then every thing that may increase his reward is very appealing to a Muslim.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, was always keen to point out what action or attitude could earn reward in order to encourage his companions to do it. He often emphasized the importance of certain types of work by pointing out that they were bound to earn reward. Look, by way of example, at the following Hadith in which Anas ibn Malik quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him. "If the Hour [of Doom] is highly

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imminent and any one of you has a young date tree in his hand, and he can manage to plant it before the Hour strikes, then he should do so.” [Related by Al-Bukhari and Ahmad]. Another version of this Hadith makes its ending clause as follows: “Then he should do so, for he will be rewarded for that.”

What is particularly significant here is not merely the fact that a purely worldly action is given a heavenly reward, but the action itself is of no particular use either to the person who does it or to any one else. The young tree which the Prophet, peace be upon him, encourages us to plant, even at the point when the Hour of Doom is about to strike, is a date tree, which does not start to yield its fruit in the normal state of affairs for several years. However, this is very consistent with Islamic philosophy, which gives reward for every constructive action. When one has a choice between planting a small tree and leaving it to die, he should not hesitate for a single moment. Planting it is a constructive action, so it must be done. Moreover, that action signifies an attitude, which promotes life. Therefore, God rewards it.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, expresses his message in a particularly vivid manner. The Hadith shows a person who is trying hard to push back the hour of doom until he has finished planting the young tree. But why should he bother in the first place? After all, the end of human life on earth is only a few moments away. Who will benefit by that tree? The answer is that most probably no one will ever benefit by it. But the Prophet’s message serves to emphasize that one must do good work at every moment in one’s life and work stops when life has stopped, not a moment earlier. It is such an attitude, which builds civilizations. And it is this particular attitude which has made the Islamic civilization unique. It always looks at what is constructive and takes every measure to fulfil it. That is not to say that Islam does not allow its followers to enjoy their spare time. But the best enjoyment is the constructive one.

Although the Hadith speaks of the Hour of Doom, which signals the end of human life, and indeed all life on earth, it has a particular significance to every one. Human beings always tend to think that life will continue forever. After all, so many generations have passed and there is nothing peculiar to make our own generation unique. Therefore, it should not be expected that the Day of Judgement would come at the end of our lifetime.

Some of us may tend to think that this Hadith and similar ones have no particular significance to us. This is not true, because there is an individual Hour, as it were, for every single one of us. Let us remember the Hadith which states that “when a human being dies, all his actions come to an end except in one of three ways: a continuous act of charity, or a useful contribution to knowledge, or a dutiful child who prays for him.”

This is, then, the hour for every single one of us. At the point of death, if anyone of us has the time or the ability to do a good action, even though it may be of no benefit to himself or to his offspring, he should do it because he will then be earning a reward for it from God. That improves his lot in the Hereafter. For a Muslim, that is something worth working for, right to the last breath of one’s life.

### ***Reward: Idea Of Effort & Reward Via Enduring Unnecessary Trouble***

Having read a Hadith in Al-Bukhari that a pilgrim will be rewarded in proportion to the amount of money he spends and the physical effort he undertakes, my rich friend plans to spend very generously on his pilgrimage and to cover the distance between the different places walking. Please comment.

While God rewards us richly for doing what He has assigned to us as duties, He also takes into account the trouble we take in order to fulfill these duties. A person who is in difficult circumstances, trying to save a little every month in order to pay for his journey to offer the pilgrimage, is rewarded for his persistence and determination to fulfill this duty. An old man who is physically weak and finds the tawaf and Sa'ie very tiring, particularly when the area is overcrowded earns more reward for the extra physical effort he makes. But this does not mean that we should try to tire ourselves out in order to earn more reward. There are plenty of other ways, which ensure greater reward.

If we take the case of this rich man, he may decide to fly first class in order to increase his spending on his pilgrimage. But this is wrong. He may get more reward if he flies on a cheaper ticket and gives the difference as Sadaqah or charity. [It is acceptable, however, if he travels first class because he can afford it and it is his normal mode of travel as he finds it more comfortable.]

Similarly, he gains little by walking from Makkah to Arafat, particularly if he is not used to walking. He could travel in a more comfortable way and, if he wants more reward, he may offer night worship after the pilgrimage is over. What is important to realize is that there is no virtue in deliberately tiring ourselves out. If we have to make a greater effort because of our circumstances, God gives us reward for that, but we do not need to cause ourselves discomfort for that.

### ***Reward: Inequitable Reward For Simple Worship — Cannot Be***

I read in a religious book a story which says that the Prophet, peace be upon him, once asked Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, to do five things before going to sleep every day. These were: to pay to charity 4000 Dinars, to recite the whole of the Qur'an, to pay the price of heaven, to reconcile two quarreling people, and to offer a pilgrimage. When Ali protested that he could not do all these every night, the Prophet, peace be upon him, told him that to recite the Surah: "Al-Fatihah" four times will equal giving away 4000 Dinars to the poor, and to recite the Surah entitled "Al-Ikhlās", three times which equals the recitation of the Qur'an, and to recite three times a certain prayer equals the payment of the price of heaven, and to say ten times a certain supplication for forgiveness equals bringing about reconciliation between two quarreling people and the recitation of a certain part of a particular verse of the Qur'an equals the offering of pilgrimage. Ali promised to do that every night. My question is whether that is correct and supported by evidence from Hadith?

An important point in the overall Islamic concept of life, man, the Day of Judgement, and the life to come, is that this world represents a chance for every one of us to prove himself to be a good and obedient servant of Allah. If he proves that, he is entitled to being admitted into heaven, and if he fails, he is bound to be thrown into hell, unless Allah chooses to forgive him.

There are a variety of ways by which a human being can make sure of passing the test. Sheikh Ali Al-Tantawi, a renowned contemporary scholar, makes the analogy in which he describes heaven as a beautiful house with a superb garden and a fence all round. However, there are many doors in that fence and admission through any of them is allowed. He says that for everyone in the crowd outside, gaining admission into the garden or the house is the primary objective. It does not matter which door he is allowed to go through, as long as such permission to enter is granted to him. The doors to heaven are numerous. Every one is represented by one of the good actions or virtues Islam encourages its followers to maintain or observe. Pilgrimage, for example is a means to get one's past sins completely forgiven. Therefore, every

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Muslim has the urge to go to pilgrimage in fulfillment of his duty to Allah which is to do the pilgrimage at least once in a lifetime when he will have his sins forgiven. Some people go on pilgrimage every few years, in order to ensure that whatever they may have committed of sins after their previous pilgrimage are also forgiven. Other people may choose to fast voluntarily, because fasting is a great act of worship and Allah has promised great reward for fasting. You find that there are certain people who observe a habit of fasting one or two days a week, throughout their lives. They undoubtedly earn a great reward, which makes it easier for them to gain admittance to heaven. Other people may choose to be exceedingly generous to poor people. Sadaqah, or alms, also earn great reward. Others may choose to offer voluntary prayers. You find some people standing up in prayer at night, for long periods, worshipping Allah when no one hears or sees them.

There are other ways of earning Allah's pleasure, such as helping people with their problems, fighting for Allah's cause, bring about an atmosphere of love and mutual confidence within the Muslim community, etc. All these are matters, which can be described as marks of obedience to Allah. They help a person to pass the test of this life in order to ensure a better life in the hereafter.

What we should remember is that Allah punishes a bad action to the extent that it is worth. However, He rewards a good action with ten times its value. This applies to all deeds and actions we do during our lives, without compulsion. Moreover, Allah is so generous in His reward that when we think of doing some good action, He rewards us for it as if it is done. When actually do it, He increases that reward to ten times the value of that action. Furthermore, He may increase His reward many more times. Indeed, the reward may be as high as seven hundred times the value of the action itself, or even more. But He does not give extra increase haphazardly, or to people whom He wants to favor. Every reward must be earned. Two people may give SR 100 each to a poor person. One of them may receive the reward of having paid SR 1000, while the other may receive greater reward. There must be a reason for that which Allah values highly, such as the amount paid by the second man represents a large part of his savings, or indeed represents no savings at all. He needs it for his own family's needs, but he prefers to give it away in order to help someone who is in greater need for it, while the amount paid by the first man may represent only a fraction of what he has. Intention and other factors may increase the value of a good action done by a Muslim, and therefore, increase its reward. We know for certain that Allah is fair to all of us. He does not lose sight of what we may do at any time or any place. Indeed, every small action we may choose to do, whatever it is, will be recorded for or against us.

Now, if Allah is so fair to every one of us, how come that He would reward an apparently easy action in the same measure as one which requires a much greater effort or represents a much harder task? If you examine this story carefully, you will find that it is improbable on the one hand and illogical on the other. Its improbability arises from the fact that it requires Ali to do each night several actions, each one of which represents a great prize, which every Muslim yearns. People continue to save for years on end in order to afford pilgrimage, and here we have the reward of a pilgrimage being earned by repeating certain verses of the Qur'an in a matter of two or three minutes. Furthermore, one of these actions is described as the price of heaven. That price, to every one of us, is a continuous action throughout our lives which makes us always watchful for any pitfalls, so that we may remain obedient to Allah. Moreover, the whole story is illogical because it equates certain actions with rewards, which are totally unrelated to them. Thus, reciting the Fatihah is claimed to equal paying to charity one thousand Dinars. That is not dissimilar to a teacher of mathematics asking a child to add four apples and three pears. Why should repeating a form of supplication be equivalent to bring about reconciliation between quarreling people?

The fact is that this story and ones of similar nature are fabrications. It is true that one can get the reward of donating so much money and reciting the whole Qur'an and performing pilgrimage and paying the price of heaven in a matter of minutes, then no one of us needs to do any other thing. Allah wants us to be always conscious of Him, to remember Him and obey His commandments and to conduct our lives according to the constitution He has provided for us. It is only through such conscientious observance of Islamic teachings that we pass the test of this life and gain admittance into heaven. Such fabricated stories encourage idleness, and therefore, failure in this test.

May Allah grant us all the ability to do what He requires of us and to help us pass the test of life, earn His pleasure, and to be forgiven our sins by Him.

### ***Reward: Must Good Deeds Be Based On Faith***

You have emphasized time and again the great importance of good actions. You have also pointed out that good actions must be based on faith, otherwise they are worthless. As you are well aware, the majority of people in the world are non-Muslims. The overwhelming majority of people follow the religions of their parents. Even the Qur'an refers to this fact. At the same time, all religions teach good moral values and good manners. Should it not be that such teachings, irrespective of their source, are sufficient to ensure salvation in the hereafter?

It is true that Islam puts greater emphasis on the concept common to all divine religions, which states that in order to have any value at all in Allah's scales, good actions must be based on faith. If we examine this concept carefully, we find that it ensures two very important qualities. First, it assigns a very high value only to action, which are free from any ulterior motives, sincere, and undertaken with the aim of earning reward from Allah. Hypocrisy and personal prestige are thus given no value at all. Some people may be willing to do good actions if such actions ensure good returns for them either materially or morally. But if they feel that their actions will go unnoticed by their community, they will think twice before doing them. In this respect, we find that faith provides the right motive for the good actions any person undertakes. The second advantage is that it provides people with the motivation to do good all the time. When a person is faced with a choice between two actions, he or she will always choose the better one in order to gain a greater reward. Even when the other action may give the person himself a more immediate or personal benefit, he chooses the better one because it serves his ultimate purpose more fully.

A further advantage is that faith makes a man's actions more consistent and coherent. They all have the same ultimate aim and seek the same final purpose. Therefore, they tend to strengthen one another. That is bound to impart a particular color to the personality of man himself. His way of thinking will move in a certain direction. As a result, he is a better person because he always tries to determine what is better for him and for his community and do it.

There is another relationship between faith and action. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked to define faith, he said: "It is a belief that is deeply entrenched in one's heart and to which credence is given by action." From this definition we learn that it is not sufficient for a person to say that he believes in a particular religion or that he is totally committed to a particular religion or that he is totally committed to a particular faith, unless he follows that statement by actions which confirm his claims. Thus, faith does not come about merely by an intellectual acceptance of a certain creed. It must translate itself into a practical example. Once this relationship is established, actions require an additional value. They have one unifying motivation and have a superior aim.



It is true that the overwhelming majority of people tend to follow the religions of their parents. But Allah wants something extra from us. It is not sufficient for any one of us to say to Allah on the Day of Judgement that he has lived as a Muslim only because his parents brought him up as one. He is required to make a conscious choice, whether to follow Islam or not. At one point or another in the life of every single one of us, he finds himself facing a clear choice, brought about by his personal circumstances. He or she will not fail to realize that the choice in front of him or her is whether to be a believer or not. Once I was mentioning this to a friend of mine who was brought up by parents who did not care much for religion. He told me: I go further than that. It is not merely the choice that is presented to him, but the great advantage that he is about to have when he follows the proper faith is also made clear. When he makes this choice, he is conscious that if he turns his back on faith, he is making the wrong choice in the long run. He then told me about his life and how he was brought up. He also explained how he faced the choice when the issues presented themselves clearly to him. He said 'I cannot praise Allah enough for enabling me to make the right decision'.

When we remember that Allah holds us to account individually, we are bound to realize that divine justice requires that individual accountability should be based on individual choice. It is for this reason that Islam considers that a person who goes through his life following the teachings of Islam only because he was brought up as a Muslim fails in his duty to make the choice consciously. Everyone is required to make use of the great gift Allah has given every single one of us, namely, the ability to reason and examine. When we do, we alleviate ourselves to the exalted human standard Allah wants us to achieve. We believe in Him as a result of an intellectual choice.

Whether good actions done by unbelievers are of any great value or not is something with which we should not concern ourselves over much. As human beings, we are not in a position to judge others. We accept the criterion Allah has told us, through His last Messenger, that applies to us. Actions acquire their value through faith. What He does with His servants on the Day of Judgement is His own concern. What we know is that He does not deal unjustly with anyone. In the Qur'an we read:

***"And the record [of every one's deeds] will be laid open; and you will behold the guilty filled with dread at what is in it; and they will exclaim: Woe to us! What a record is this! It leaves out nothing, be it small or great, but takes everything into account. And they will find all that they ever did facing them now, and will know that your Lord does not wrong anyone."*** [The Cave — "Al-Kahf" 18: 49]

### ***Reward: When Illness Prevents A Good Action***

I suffer from insomnia and have been advised to take sleeping pills but that now keeps me off Tahajjud. Please comment.

If a person is in the habit of doing something good and finds his illness preventing him from continuing with it, Allah credits him with the reward for that habitual good action as if he had performed it.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Whoever falls ill will be credited with what he used to do when healthy".

### ***Reward: Will God Reward [Or Punish] Him? Inappropriate Questions***

A man in our company asks one of the employees doing pilgrimage every year to buy a copy of the Qur'an and give it to someone in Makkah. The man is a Hindu. Will God reward him for his action?

I do not answer a question of the type; “will God accept this?” “Will God reward this man or punish that man?” I do not think the question is fair, when it is addressed to anyone. How can a human being respond to such a question? What we have is a criterion, which tells us that God accepts the deeds of human being when they are based on faith in Him. This is the basis of any judgment we need to make, but how can we be sure whether a person has faith in God or not? We can only be guided by appearances, and appearances are not always true.

Then why should we concern ourselves with such questions? We know that God will not waste the deeds of those who do well. He will reward every single action when it is intended to please Him. He is the Most Fair and the Most Generous. Thus every doer of good deeds will receive his fair reward and more. What this Hindu gentleman does is an apparently good action, but it is God who determines whether it is worthy of reward or not.

### ***Rooh [Soul]: Souls Of Persons Who Commit Suicide Or Are Murdered***

A friend of mine asserts that the soul of a person who has committed suicide continues to ramble the earth until the original time of his death. Please comment.

No one dies before his appointed time, no matter how he meets his death. To suggest otherwise, is to say that some causes can overrule Allah's will or negate His knowledge. If a person dies as a result of a crime of murder, or dies in battle, or commits suicide, he dies at the time and place Allah has appointed for him long before his mother was born or the human race came into existence. It is totally unacceptable to imagine that Allah has determined that a person will die, say in the year 1415 but he kills himself tomorrow, when we are still in 1410. If he is to meet his death by suicide, then Allah would have had the fact recorded against his name long before he was born. Therefore, the whole question of his spirit doing one thing or another in between his actual and original times of death is absurd. There is only one time for his death and that is the actual time when he dies.

Moreover, Allah has chosen not to enlighten us about the spirit, its nature or destiny. The polytheists in Makkah asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, about the spirit, and he appealed to Allah to give him knowledge of it, but Allah instructed him to say :

*“They ask you about the spirit. Say: ‘[Knowledge of] the spirit belongs to my Lord.’ You have been given but scanty knowledge.”* [Children of Israel — “Bani Israel” 17: 85]

When we contemplate this Qur'anic verse, we realize that whatever people may say about the spirit, belongs to the realm of conjecture, unless it is supported by a Qur'anic statement or an authentic Hadith.

### ***Rooh [Soul]: Status Of the Soul After Death***

What happens to the soul after one's death? I heard that the souls of bad people also die, while the spirit goes up to heaven?

A verse in the Qur'an addresses the Prophet, peace be upon him, in this way:

*“They ask you about the spirit. Say: ‘[Knowledge of] the spirit belongs to my Lord.’ You have been given but scanty knowledge.”* [Children of Israel — “Bani Israel” 17: 85]

Commentators explain that the spirit and how it functions are part of the realm that is beyond the reach of human perception. Hence, it is wrong for people to spend

much time trying to obtain information when there is no reliable source to which they can resort.

Guided by this verse, I do not like to speak about the spirit, except within the limits of what we are told in the Qur'an, or in authentic Hadiths. What we know is that a human being's spirit splits from his body at the time of his death, and goes into a different stage of life. Where this takes place is unknown to us. However, the spirits of good believers are in a happy state, and those of unbelievers are in a miserable state.

***Rooh [Soul]: Where Does the Soul Of A Deceased Person Go?***

Does a deceased person's soul go to heaven or hell shortly after his death, or on the Day of Judgment?

People's fate in the hereafter, and whether they go to heaven or hell, is determined on the Day of Judgment, not before it. Therefore, no one goes to hell before that day. However, there are Hadiths that suggest that the spirits of martyrs are already in heaven.

What happens to the spirit after death is that it departs to a position known as barzakh, which means a provisional position pending judgment.



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## ***Sadaqah: How Is It Different From Zakah***

It is common knowledge that Sadaqah is financial help given for Allah's sake. Some people suggest that it is extended to include any friendly help. From the financial angle, how is Sadaqah different from Zakah. Please advise.

The Arabic term "Sadaqah" is one of a few to which Islam gives a very broad meaning. It is often used interchangeably with Zakah. Indeed, it is the term used to refer to Zakah in the Qur'anic verse which enumerates the classes of beneficiaries of Zakah. But it is more general than Zakah, because Zakah denotes only that part of charitable donations, which a Muslim must pay as a duty. If he refrains from paying it, he incurs a grave sin. Indeed, Abu Bakr, the first ruler of the Islamic state after the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the closest to the Prophet, peace be upon him, of all his companions, went to war against Arab Bedouin tribes who declared that they would no longer pay Zakah. He considered that a rebellion against Islam and the Muslim state. He stated unequivocally: "By Allah, I am going to fight those who differentiate between prayer and Zakah."

Sadaqah, on the other hand, refers to all charitable donations, whether obligatory or not. It is, however, more frequently used to refer to charitable donations, which are given voluntarily. The meaning which immediately springs to mind when the term "Sadaqah" is used is financial help given to a poor person, without any obligation on the part of the payer or any condition imposed on the receiver.

In an authentic Hadith, Abu Hurairah quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "A charity is due for every joint in each person on every day the sun comes up; to act justly between two people is a charity to help a man with his mount, lifting him onto it or hoisting up his belongings onto it is a charity; a good word is a charity; every step you take to prayers is a charity; and removing a harmful thing from the road is a charity." In another version, the Prophet, peace be upon him, is quoted to have mentioned another different example of actions which count as charity: "To smile to your brother is a charity."

Anyone who is familiar with the Islamic philosophy can easily appreciate the great value attached to Sadaqah. This is further emphasized by the fact that Islam does not confine it to financial help. Kindly actions and good turns done by one person to another are considered in the same light. The term is used in ordinary speech by all people, whether educated or not, to refer to any good and kindly work, including removal of harmful objects from the road.

## ***Sadaqah: Sacrificing Sheep When Laying Foundation Of A House***

Some people believe that a sacrifice of a sheep prior to laying the foundation of a house is necessary to protect the house and its inhabitants. Please comment.

I know that the practice of slaughtering a sheep when one starts to erect a building is common in many Muslim countries, and in other countries as well. This, however, has crept into Muslim societies from other traditions. In Islam, we entertain no superstitious beliefs of the type which require a sacrifice to drive away evil spirits. Such a practice is based on superstition.

Having said that, I feel that I should explain that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has said: "Sadaqah, i.e. a charitable donation, repels misfortune." What he means is that when a person is charitable and he helps the poor and the needy, Allah may reward him by protecting him from a misfortune, which might have befallen him. This is a reward by Allah, which is given in advance of the reward he gives on the Day of Judgement to people who do good deeds.

### ***Salat: A Time-Related Duty & Qazai Umri***

Could you please clarify if there is a prayer called "Qazai Umri"? In India, this is strongly recommended by people after obligatory prayers. It is a collection of the obligatory prayers of one whole day. People claim that this makes up for the prayers which one may have not offered in the past years.

Allah defines prayer in the Qur'an as "a time-related duty incumbent on believers." The phrase "time-related" is highly significant. As you are well aware, each obligatory prayer has a time range during which it must be offered. Dawn, or Fajr prayer, for example must be offered after the break of dawn but before sunrise. This means that we have approximately one and a half-hours when we must offer Fajr prayer. When the sun has risen, the time for this particular duty has lapsed and this prayer cannot be offered. There are two reasons which justify offering Fajr prayer after the sun has risen, namely, oversleeping [and this includes loss of consciousness], or forgetfulness. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Anyone who sleeps through a particular prayer or forgets it should offer it as soon as he is conscious of it. This is the time when it falls due [in his particular case]".

This applies to every obligatory prayer. Thus, for Dhuhr, we have the time range extending from noon until roughly half the time span between noon and sunset. Asr may be offered at any moment after the Dhuhr time has lapsed and before sunset. Maghrib has a time range of roughly one and a half-hours starting at sunset. Isha follows immediately after Maghrib time is over and its time range extends until two thirds of the night have gone [according to most scholars].

Once the time range for any particular prayer is gone it cannot be offered. There are certain cases, when two prayers i.e. Dhuhr and Asr or Maghrib and Isha, may be offered at the same time, such as during travel. Apart from that every prayer must be offered within its time range.

If one neglects offering a prayer on time, then he cannot compensate for it by offering it later. A person who had neglected praying for a period of his life need not start offering his missed prayers with the ones he offered now. What he should do, however, is to repent sincerely and pray for Allah's forgiveness. If he mends his ways and attends regularly to his prayers, Allah is certain to forgive him. Another action which may help him attain Allah's forgiveness is to offer as many voluntary prayers as possible.

This method of compensating for prayers missed during a whole year, which you call "Qazai Umri", is certainly not recommended. One cannot redress his past negligence in this way. The only way Allah accepts is sincere repentance and a resolve not to miss a single prayer in future.

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### ***Salat: A Time-Related Duty***

If a person does not offer Asr prayer until Maghrib has fallen due, should he offer Asr prayer after he has finished Maghrib as Qadha? Some people say it is not necessary, because its time is over. Please explain.

God describes prayer in the Qur'an as a "time-related obligation". In other words, each prayer has a range of time in which it must be offered. If it is not offered in that period of time, and there is no valid reason for such a lack of performance, then it cannot be offered after its time had lapsed. A sin has been committed and there is no way to mend it.

If we were to say that prayer could be offered after its time had gone, then how can we explain that prayer is a time-related duty? What would we mean by its being time-related? The only meaning is that it is a duty, which must be fulfilled within a specified time. If the time is gone, how can it be fulfilled?

The word Qadha means "compensatory". But there is simply no compensation involved here. There is a sin that has been committed. I realize that many scholars speak of this compensation as the way out. Weighing up the evidence in support of their argument, I feel I cannot subscribe to it. I find that there is still stronger evidence in support of the view I have explained. When a prayer is missed without a valid reason, then it cannot be compensated for. The only way to deal with that situation is to repent, resolve not to miss a single prayer again and seek God's forgiveness for that sin.

Perhaps it is useful to add that there are certain relaxations with regard to the timings of prayers. For example, when we travel we may combine Dhuhr with Asr at any time from the beginning of the period of Dhuhr to the end of Asr prayer. We can also combine Maghrib with Isha at any time during the range for both prayers. Also, when there is a good reason, which prevents a person from offering prayer, he may combine Dhuhr with Asr and Maghrib with Isha even in his hometown. What he should guard against is making that a habit. I must make it very clear that this is a concession under exceptional circumstances.

Other than this, the only justification for offering a prayer after its time has elapsed is if a person sleeps through the time of a prayer or loses consciousness, or if he forgets it altogether. In any of these cases, he can offer that prayer when he is fully aware of it. In this we rely on a Hadith, which states: "He who sleeps through a prayer or forgets it should offer it when he is aware of it, because that is its time." Therefore, if you wake up in the morning after the sun has arisen, you proceed immediately to prepare yourself for prayer and offer it straightaway. That is its time. You should not busy yourself with anything else, like shaving or dressing up, etc. Proceed to offer it straightaway [after preparing yourself for the prayer only.]

### ***Salat: Advanced On A Rainy Day***

Is there any tradition or Hadith concerning the advancing of Isha prayer so as to combine it with Maghrib on a rainy day? I have only seen this after I have come to work in Saudi Arabia. Please explain.

As you are well aware, Islam is a religion that is easy to follow. It does not wish to afflict people. When it rains, particularly in an area like the Arabian Peninsula, roads become muddy and inconvenient to walk. Hence, when it rains, Muslims are given the concession that they need not attend the congregational prayer in the mosque. Furthermore, if they are in the mosque, and they are offering Maghrib prayer when it is rainy, they may bring forward Isha prayer and offer it with Maghrib so that they do not have to come again to the mosque. If rain is pouring down at the time of Maghrib

prayer, then the person who is making the call should announce that people may pray where they are.

An authentic report related by Al-Bukhari quotes Abdullah ibn Al-Harith as saying: "Ibn Abbas gave us a sermon on a day with mild rain and mud. When the Athan was called and the person saying the Athan reached the phrase, "hay ala assalah" which means "hasten to prayer", he ordered him to say in a loud voice: "Pray where you are." Those who were present looked at one another, so he said: "This was done by people who were better than this man. It is an action of strong resolve."

It may be suggested that in our modern cities, rain does not cause much mud. There is no doubt, however, that it is still very inconvenient to walk in the rain. The concession is there to follow. Hence, we need not hesitate about benefiting by this concession. If it is raining, we need not go to the mosque for the congregational prayer. If we are in the mosque and it rains, then we may advance Isha and join it with Maghrib so that we do not go out twice on a rainy night.

### ***Salat: Al-Fatihah In Congregation***

Is it compulsory for a person in congregation prayer to read the Fatihah? Is the prayer valid without reading it?

Scholars have different views about the reading of the Surah Al-Fatihah by a worshipper who has joined a congregational prayer. Those who say that it is not required rely on a Hadith, which suggests that the recitation by the Imam is sufficient for the whole congregation. Those scholars who take the view that it is necessary for everyone in the congregation to read the Al-Fatihah in every rak'ah rely on a Hadith which says that prayer is invalid without reciting Al-Fatihah. Both Hadiths are authentic. If a person takes either view, his prayer will, God willing, be accepted.

### ***Salat: Bleeding During Prayers***

What can one do if he bleeds through the nose during prayer? Should he continue or not?

Some scholars, particularly of the Hanafi school of thought, consider bleeding as one of the things that invalidate ablutions. Their verdict on what should the person do if he bleeds in prayer is very detailed, and they relate some of these details to the amount of blood that is discharged. However, there does not seem to be any evidence to support this view. The evidence is more on the side of the view that bleeding does not invalidate ablutions. When Omar was stabbed in prayer, he resumed praying although he had lost much of his blood. No one of the Prophet's companions objected to what he did.

### ***Salat: Capital Punishment For Not Praying?***

In a program on prayer broadcast in our country a religious teacher said that if a person does not pray five times daily for three consecutive days, he may be executed. Please comment.

The suggestion you have quoted is preposterous. To suggest that a person who does not pray for three days can be taken and sentenced to death and executed straight-away is to betray one's ignorance of Islam and its teachings. But I can imagine the line of thinking which leads this man to say what he said, that is, if he is quoted correctly. Some scholars argue that a person who does not pray is a non-believer. If he was a Muslim and then reached that stage, then some people argue, he is an apostate and apostasy may incur capital punishment. But this line of thinking is not much different from the one which leads to the following conclusion: What is white is milk; eggs are white, so egg is milk.



Let us now examine the position of a person who does not pray for three days. Scholars have distinguished between two types of disbelief: one, which relates to action or lack of it. The first is concerned only with what a person believes in or denies. All scholars unanimously agree that if a person denies something, which is essentially known as an integral part of the Islamic faith, he is a disbeliever. If we are to apply this principle to prayers, we say that if a person claims to be a Muslim and denies that prayers are part of Islam, or says that it is part of it but not necessarily in the number or the manner which the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us, then he is a disbeliever. If his denial has come shortly after he had been a Muslim, then he is an apostate. In a Muslim state, an apostate is given a fair hearing before Muslim judges who may order that scholars should come and explain to him the Islamic faith and argue with him about his beliefs. If he insists on maintaining his apostasy, he is given three days to recant. If he does not, then he may incur the capital punishment, as happened indeed in Sudan recently when a man who claimed to be god was executed.

I would like to point here that this is not a simple case, but a very complicated one. To start with, the person concerned should have publicized his beliefs, which are contrary to Islam in a way, which is likely to undermine Islamic society. If he keeps his beliefs to himself, nobody will question him about them. When he is questioned about them, every opportunity is given to make him realize his mistake. Scholars of the highest caliber are brought to argue with him. In the end, if he is so stubborn, he is sentenced, but given three days to recant. He can easily escape punishment by publicly saying that he has renounced his erroneous beliefs.

What I would like to emphasize here is that a Muslim government is not at all interested in discovering who is following the right faith and who has funny ideas. It does not follow people into their homes to discover what they actually believe in. Therefore, a person may entertain the most preposterous thoughts and beliefs, without having any fear that anyone will question him about his ideas. The principle is clearly stated in the Qur'an: "No compulsion is admissible in matters of faith."

If a person who has much deviant ideas starts to publicize them and calls on others to share his beliefs, he is actually starting a rebellion against the very fabric of Islamic society and its basic concepts. His action is likely to result in division and conflict. When this happens, Islam moves to nip such a detrimental offshoot when it is still in the bud. Its method is to give the person concerned every chance to stop his seditious action. To escape punishment, that person need not do more than to state that he withdraws his earlier statements, even if he still believes in them himself. What Islam achieves by this is to stop the act of sedition, which could cause public disorder. If the person still maintains his ideas but keeps them to himself, no one is going to bother about him.

The other type of disbelief is that which relates to action, or the lack of it. Certain actions of disobedience to Allah have been described by the Prophet, peace be upon him, as actions of disbelief. A person who is guilty of any of these is questioned about his actions and the Islamic attitude is explained to him. If he has committed an act of disobedience for which a particular punishment is prescribed by Allah and this is proven either by the testimony of the required number of witnesses or by free confession, then the punishment is carried out. No authority can stop it. In the case of a person who does not pray, there is no prescribed punishment.

### ***Salat: Cellular Phones Ringing In the Mosques***

Nowadays many people carry their mobile or cell phones wherever they go. When they come into a mosque most people switch off their mobiles, or put them on the silent mode. Inevitably, however, some may forget, particularly if they come late and the congregation has already started. If

there is a call and the phone rings the person concerned is embarrassed. Some people suggest that he should reach the phone and switch it off without holding it. Is this permissible?

The worry seems to be connected with the movement involved, or perhaps with the distraction that it causes. But then we have to understand that Islam deals with human situations and takes into account human situations and then requires them to act as if there is no embarrassment or no difficulty. On the contrary, God has given us so many concessions in order to make things easy upon us, unless it involves something forbidden.

A person whose mobile rings when he is in prayer should switch it off. If this means reaching into his pocket and taking it out looking at it so that one presses the right button, then so be it. He should do so straightaway, so that he does not prolong the disturbance. This does not affect the validity of his prayer. It remains valid, and no harm is done.

Consider the alternative. The mobile will still be ringing, and some mobiles are set so that the second and third rings are louder. Some have a musical tone, and some are set with popular music pieces. So, if the mobile is allowed to ring on while the congregational prayer is in progress, the disturbance is really bad. Moreover, when it is not answered, the caller may think that he dialed wrongly, and may call again after a short interval. Where does this leave us, particularly if two or three mobiles ring in succession?

Taken from the practical point of view, this situation prompts a ruling that anyone whose mobile rings in prayer should switch it off straightaway without interrupting his prayer. If this means an extended movement, as in the case of the mobile being in an inner pocket of his clothes, there is no harm in that.

If there were any Hadith or ruling by the Prophet, peace be upon him, that such an action will invalidate prayers, then yes this argument would have been discarded. Hence, we need to verify it against the Prophet's statements and actions. What we should look for is the type of movement the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions made while praying. Abu Qatadah reports: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed while carrying Umama bint Zainab, his granddaughter, on his neck. When he bowed {i.e. did his Rukoo}, he would put her on floor, and when he rose from his prostration, he put her back on his neck." Ibn Juray, a leading Hadith scholar of the second century, says that he learned that this was in Fajr prayer. [Related by Ahmad and Al-Nasa'ie]. Here we see the Prophet, peace be upon him, carrying his granddaughter over his shoulder in an obligatory prayer, when he was leading the congregation in the mosque. This requires more careful attention than we need to take for switching off a mobile phone.

Ayesha reports: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, was praying at home, with the door closed. I came and knocked. He walked to the door and opened for me before returning to his praying position." [Related by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, Al-Nasa'ie and Al-Tirmithi]. She clarifies that the door was in the same direction as the Qiblah. On the basis of this Hadith, scholars rule that walking a couple of steps during prayer, for a valid reason, is permissible and does not affect the validity of prayer. However, all scholars agree that a long walk invalidates prayer. Moreover, the walk should not involve turning away from the direction of the Qiblah.

There are situations where greater movement is done, but these apply in special situations. I have chosen situations that have no emergency factor. The child could have been put on the floor before the start of prayer, but the Prophet, peace be upon him, carried her throughout, in every Rak'ah. The person at the door could have

waited or turned back, but the Prophet, peace be upon him, walked a couple of steps to open and a couple more to return.

***Salat: Certain Aspects Of Worship Allowed To the Prophet Only***

A Hadith mentions that the Prophet, peace be upon him, always prayed the Sunnah of Fajr, and two rak'ahs after Asr; but it is well known that there is no Sunnah to be offered after Asr.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, had certain aspects of worship which were allowed for him only, even though he made it clear to his followers that they must not do them. The clearest example is fasting two days in succession without breaking his fast. He made clear that we must not do this. Yet it was allowed to him, and he explained that God gave him sustenance during such periods.

The voluntary prayer he did after Asr is another such example. It was permissible for him, but he made clear that we should not do it. The reason for this is that people would often delay their prayers and it becomes close to sunset. Since other communities worshipped the sun, we must try hard to show that our worship is unlike others who worshipped deities other than God.

***Salat: Change Of Intention***

I was offering Sunnah prayer in the mosque, after the congregation prayer was over, when a man came and joined me. I changed my intention for his sake and made my prayer the obligatory one. When we finished, I started offering Sunnah again, when another man came and did the same. I did not change my intention this time and completed my prayer as usual. Please comment on my action on both occasions.

There is no harm in a person offering a Sunnah prayer being the imam of another person who is offering an obligatory prayer. This happens all the time, particularly in Ramadhan, when people who come late into the mosque, when the imam has started taraweeh while they have not prayed Isha yet. They continue with their prayer and the Imam continues with his. Both are valid and acceptable. So, when you continued with your Sunnah the second time and the other person prayed his obligatory prayers, both of you were correct and both your prayers were valid.

This first case is different because it involved a change of intention on your part. Such a change makes your prayer invalid, because you abandoned a prayer, which you had started and began another without fulfilling its essentials. For example, you start a prayer with takbeer but you have not done that, thinking that the one you did for your Sunnah was sufficient. How could it be when it was not meant for it? You need to repeat that prayer. As for the other person, his prayer is acceptable, God willing.

***Salat: Coaxing Those Who Do Not Pray***

A relative of mine attends to her religious duties except for prayer. She says that she cannot concentrate on her prayer. She says that she knows that she is doing wrong but hopes to be forgiven by God, because He knows her heart. No amount of advice and admonition has been enough to make her change her mind. Please advise.

No one should consider it his duty to make this young woman pray. Even her parents are required to do no more than to advise and remind her. The duty is hers to fulfill. If she fails to do it, she bears the consequences.

Having said that, I should add that her relatives and friends should continue to remind her of her duty, but they should take a different approach. They should clarify her misconceptions. A prayer is not only acceptable when the worshiper fully concentrates on it, without any distractions, it is acceptable, and rewarded by God, even when the worshiper experiences much distraction. If distractions were to nullify prayers, then none of us would be able to claim to have offered more than a few prayers a year. All of us may be distracted. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was also distracted on some occasions. Moreover, God would not have legislated for forgetfulness in prayer if that would have rendered it invalid.

### ***Salat: Combining & Shortening Prayers***

1. It is said that Osman, the third Caliph, was the one who offered prayers in the normal length at Arafat. He stated that as a resident of Makkah, he could not shorten and combine prayers. I also understand that to combine Zuhr and Asr prayers at Arafat is not obligatory but recommended. Hence, those pilgrims who offer these prayers in the mosques under the leadership of the appointed Imam are required to offer Zuhr & Asr, one after the other. Those who pray in their tents should preferably offer them at their proper timings. This is because prayer is a time-related duty. With the number of pilgrims being as it is these days, it is not practicable that all pilgrims offer their prayers with the Imam. Please comment.

2. If a person is starting a journey just when Zuhr prayer has fallen due, is it permissible for him to join Asr prayer with it before he starts his travel?

3. When I travel I shorten and combine my prayers. May I ask whether on a journey which involves stop-over at different places, can one treat these stops as travel and combine Asr with Dhuhur if one is certain that one would arrive at one's base well before Maghrib? If on a travel I offer Friday prayer, can I combine Asr with it?

1. When we speak about pilgrimage it is very important to understand that pilgrimage is a special duty, which must be done according to a certain fashion. God tells us in the Qur'an that "pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by Mankind." But pilgrimage includes duties that are done outside the Haram, [which is here a reference to the Ka'abah and the Haram area surrounding it]. If one omits these duties, his pilgrimage is both incomplete and invalid. What this means in practical terms is that although pilgrimage is essentially made to the Ka'abah, the first temple even to be consecrated for the worship of God, it is much broader in scope than a simple visit. God tells us about certain duties, which we have to perform during pilgrimage, but these are only the essentials which, if omitted, render pilgrimage invalid.

This is the same as in the case of prayers. In the Qur'an, God tells us on a number of occasions that we must attend regularly to our prayers. The Qur'an, however, does not tell us how to pray, although it refers to certain aspects of prayer. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has told us how and when to pray. He also pointed out to us the frequency of our prayers and the time range of each prayer, etc. He distinguishes between what is a duty and what is recommended in prayer. Moreover, he has given us a great statement, which refers everything concerning prayer to him: "Pray in the same manner as you have seen me pray." The comprehensive statement means that we have to follow the example of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in prayer. The practical result of this is that you do not see any differences in the basics of prayers between Muslims. They all pray in the same manner with the same intention, in order to achieve the same purpose. Prayer is, therefore, a mark of the unity of the Muslim nation. Anyone who denies any essential part of prayer, such as claiming

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that prayer need not be offered five times a day, or that it is less than seventeen obligatory Rak'ahs a day, does not belong to the nation of Islam.

On pilgrimage, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has given us a similar statement, truly broad in scope. As he started on his own pilgrimage, he said to his companions and through them to all believers in Islam: "Learn your rituals from me." His companions who went with him on pilgrimage recorded for us his journey step by step, action by action, word by word. Therefore, when we know that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has done a particular action of pilgrimage in a certain fashion, we should follow his example unless he has made it clear that something else is equally good. We know, for example, that the Prophet, peace be upon him, took his position in Arafat near the prominent rocks. But he told us that it was simply a position he has chosen and that every spot in Arafat is equally good. Therefore, we gain nothing trying to determine where exactly the Prophet, peace be upon him, stopped at Arafat in order to take our position there. The divine care manifested in the Prophet's statement is absolutely clear. Imagine what would have happened if a significant proportion of the two million pilgrims who attend every year at Arafat nowadays try to determine the exact spot where the Prophet, peace be upon him, stayed at Arafat and scramble to get there first. Where matters could be done without difficulty, the Prophet's companions and later scholars have pointed out advantage to be gained by doing exactly like the Prophet, peace be upon him. We find someone like Abdullah Ibn Omar, a great scholar among the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, taking a shower in his subsequent pilgrimage at the same spot where he saw the Prophet, peace be upon him, taking his shower. Although the Prophet, peace be upon him, might have done this for the sake of cleanliness, following his example earns reward. Therefore, Ibn Omar did it.

What we should know, however, is that what relates to worship in pilgrimage should be done as the Prophet, peace be upon him, did it. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, offered his prayers at Arafat, he combined Zuhr with Asr, offering each one in the shortened form of two Rak'ahs. Therefore, the proper way to offer prayers at Arafat is to combine these two prayers as the Prophet, peace be upon him, did. To do otherwise is to do it wrongly.

I would like to make this very clear. Everyone, even residents in Makkah offer their prayers at Arafat in combination, starting with Zuhr, and then, as soon as they finish Zuhr they follow it with Asr. One Athan [call to prayer] and two Iqamahs are recommended. When Prophet, peace be upon him, did this, all those who were residents in Makkah and who joined him on his pilgrimage did like he did. The Prophet, peace be upon him, did not point out to them that they should do otherwise. Hence, it is not right for anyone to object to this combination. Indeed, the reverse is true. Those schools of thought, which do not allow combination of prayers, do require the combination at Arafat. What you stated in your letter about Osman, the third Caliph, is wrong. He used to combine the prayers at Arafat, although he did not shorten them.

Shortening of prayers at Arafat is not required of those who are residents in Makkah according to several schools of thought. Some scholars like Imam Ibn Taimiyah and Imam Malik consider that shortening prayers also applies to them. What Osman did is to offer the prayers combined in the normal length. He married a woman from Makkah, and therefore he considered himself one of its residents.

No one should find this strange. As I say, pilgrimage must be offered in the same fashion as the Prophet, peace be upon him, offered it. On leaving Arafat, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked about Maghrib prayer. He made it clear to everyone who asked him that Maghrib should be offered later on, at a specified spot he was aiming to reach. When he arrived at Muzdalifah, he offered Maghrib and combined it with Isha'. Therefore, if any pilgrim offers Maghrib at Arafat, his prayer is not valid.

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He should wait until he arrives at Muzdalifah. What this signifies is that although prayer is valid anywhere in the world, since the whole earth is considered a place of worship for Muslims, on the day of Arafat, Maghrib and Isha' must be offered by pilgrims only at Muzdalifah. Those who are doing certain services during pilgrimage without offering the pilgrimage themselves can offer Maghrib at Arafat or anywhere else. But pilgrims must wait until they reach Muzdalifah when Maghrib prayer becomes due. If they do it before that, it is not valid.

2. If a person is about to start travel and the time for Asr is not due yet; he may offer Asr prayer together with Zuhr prayer, without shortening either prayer. That is perfectly appropriate. Indeed, it is advisable, particularly if he knows that it will be difficult for him to offer Asr prayer on time during travel, either because there is no place to do so at the airport or the station, and he would not arrive before Maghrib. It is better than offering this prayer on the train or the plane, or whatever means of transport he is using.

3. Some people think that the shortening and combining of prayers always go hand in hand, suggesting that once you shorten your prayers when traveling, you must combine them, and if you combine prayers, then you offer them in the shortened version. This is a mistaken notion. These are two separate concessions, which are used together when the conditions allowing each are met at the same time.

The combination of prayers means that the two prayers of Dhuhr and Asr are offered at the same time, either advancing Asr to the time of Dhuhr in what we may call, "advance combination," or "delaying combination." The same applies to the prayers of Maghrib and Isha.

This concession is given in the case of travel and illness. It applies particularly in times of rain, when Maghrib and Isha are combined so that people do not have to come to the mosque twice on a rainy night.

Having said that, I should also add that the Prophet, peace be upon him, combined prayers at a time when there was no rain, and when he was neither traveling nor ill. He made it clear that this he did in order to give his followers a chance to do their prayers without affliction. Scholars agree that this concession of combining prayers when [one] is in one's home town may be practiced, provided there is need for it and it does not become a habit.

For example, if you are so tired when you arrive home one day that the only thing you want to do is to go to sleep, and you fear that if you sleep, you may miss your Asr prayer, then it is permissible to combine it with Dhuhr before you go to sleep. Similarly, you may use this concession if you have to go to a business meeting and you fear that there may be no chance for you to offer your Asr prayer on time. In winter, when the days are so short, you may want to go to shopping in a place where there are no mosques, and you fear that by the time you come home Maghrib would be due. All these are real life situations when combining prayers makes matters much more comfortable.

We avail ourselves of the concession and combine two prayers at one time, without shortening them.

Prayers may be shortened if one is traveling. The concession starts when one leaves the area of his hometown and ends when he is back in that area. Whatever stopover one may make are part of the travel. Besides, when one arrives at one's destination, he continues to avail himself of the concession to shorten one's prayers until he goes back home, provided that one does not intend to settle down. So a travel of two weeks is just the type during which prayers may be shortened.

On such travels, prayers may also be combined. If one is returning home and Dhuhr prayer falls due, he may offer both Dhuhr and Asr prayer even though he expected to arrive at his destination before Asr is due. He need not repeat that prayer when he arrives. If during one's travel, one offers Friday prayer, he may combine Asr with it, according to some scholars. Others do not agree to this, saying that no prayer may be combined with Friday prayer. I am more inclined to the first view, which allows such combination.

### ***Salat: Combining Prayers & the Newly Weds***

It is said that combining two prayers when one is resident and not Traveling is permissible. May I ask whether this is true? Is it applicable to a newly wed couple who may need to take a shower more than once if they are to attend to their five obligatory prayers at their regular times?

The Prophet, peace be upon him, once combined two prayers when he was neither ill nor Traveling. His companions explained his aim was to make things easier for his followers. Scholars explain that this is a concession, which is permissible to use when needed, provided that it does not become a habit. Today, we find that this concession is extremely useful for people who live in northern areas when the day is very short and the time range for each prayer is too short. If you are living in a non-Muslim country, where there are only a few mosques, and you need to go out for some business, you may be unable to attend to all your prayers on time. Using this concession becomes very useful.

But you must be careful that you do not develop a habit of combining prayers. The prayers that may be thus combined are Dhuhr and Asr, or Maghrib and Isha. You can combine each two at the time of either one of them.

As for the situation you have mentioned, I think if the couple is reasonable in their approach, they will not need this concession. They only need to manage their time properly.

### ***Salat: Commandment Making It Obligatory***

You have mentioned in the past that "we are commanded by Allah to offer five separate prayers everyday". Could you please let me know where can I find this commandment?

The order to attend to prayers is mentioned frequently in the Qur'an, either directly or in reference to the qualities of believers. There is no question about prayer being an essential obligation of every believer. There is a famous Hadith, which tells us that there are five pillars upon which the structure of Islam is built. These are: The declaration of the Oneness of Allah and the fact that Muhammad, peace be upon him, was His messenger, regular attention to prayer, payment of Zakah, fasting in Ramadhan, and pilgrimage to the Ka'abah, for those who are able to undertake the journey. These are general commandments that tell us that we must offer prayer.

As you know, we learn many of the details of our religion from the Prophet, peace be upon him. When he commands us to do something, it is commandment of Allah relayed to us by the Prophet, peace be upon him. It is common knowledge that no one may be a Muslim unless he declares that he believes in Oneness of Allah and that Muhammad, peace be upon him, is Allah's messenger. The second part of this declaration means that Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was the person through whom Allah made clear to us His message and what He wants us to do or avoid. Allah tells us in the Qur'an:

***"Whatever the messenger bids you, fulfill it and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it"*** [Exile — "Al-Hashr" 59: 7].

This is a statement which applies to everything that the Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us. Therefore, when the Prophet, peace be upon him, says to us: "Pray as you have seen me pray", then we must follow his example and pray in the same manner as he offered his prayer. If anyone offers prayer in a different fashion, it will not be accepted from him. He will not be a Muslim because he chooses for himself a method of praying other than that taught by the Prophet, peace be upon him. He cannot protest that the Qur'an does not tell us how to pray exactly, but simply mentions that we must offer prayers.

When the Prophet, peace be upon him, came back from his night journey from Jerusalem and his Ascension to heaven, he told his companions that Allah has made it obligatory to all Muslims to offer five prayers everyday.

There are numerous instances where the Prophet, peace be upon him, mentions that Muslims have to pray five times daily. A Bedouin came to him and asked: "Messenger of Allah, tell me what Allah has made obligatory to me of prayer?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered: "The five daily prayers, unless you wish to volunteer more." This Hadith is related by Al-Bukhari. This is also the Hadith, which tells us that when the Prophet, peace be upon him, sent his companion Mu'ath ibn Jabal as governor of Yemen, he walked with him and spoke to him about the conduct of his duty.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, told him to explain to the people of Yemen that Allah wants them to believe in Him alone as the only deity in the Universe and to believe in Muhammad, peace be upon him, as Allah's messenger. The Prophet, peace be upon him, then told him: "When they have accepted this from you, tell them that Allah has made it obligatory to them to offer five prayers everyday."

In addition to this, there is the fact that ever since the time of the Prophet, Muslims offer five daily prayers and there is no disagreement among the companions of the Prophet, or their successors, or scholars in any generation since then, that these five are obligatory prayers. This has become so famous and well known that it is one of the basic elements of Islam "that are essentially known to all people." The general rule is that anyone who denies such a matter, which is essentially known, to all people is a disbeliever.

### ***Salat: Concentration In Prayer & Distracting Thoughts***

1. Although I attend to my prayers regularly, I am seldom able to concentrate properly. Often I have doubts about the activities and movements included in the prayer. What I would like to know is whether my prayer is valid.

2. An unmarried man suffers from being distracted by a variety of thoughts when he offers his prayers. Sometimes, sexual thoughts occur to him as he is praying. Is his prayer valid?

1. Every one who starts prayers should concentrate fully on the task in hand. He should always think of what he is reading or reciting or doing. If he reflects on the meaning of what he says, he is bound to find it easier to concentrate on his prayers. If you have learned certain Surahs of the Qur'an without understanding them, you better try to learn the meaning of each verse so that you can help your concentration by thinking of the meaning. However, if one nevertheless is distracted or suffers a lapse of concentration, which results in a confusion in his mind about what stage he has reached in his prayers, there is an easy solution to this problem. If, for example, you doubt whether you have completed two or three rak'ahs, then you are certain that



you have done two rak'ahs but you are doubtful about the third one. Therefore, you continue your prayer on the basis of that which you are certain, i.e. two rak'ahs, and then just before you finish your prayer after you have completed your Tashahhud you prostrate twice in compensation for forgetfulness. You then finish your prayer normally. If you nevertheless omit to do these two prostration, your prayer is still valid.

Distraction in prayer happens often, especially when one is preoccupied with immediate problems of his daily life. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was once leading his companions in a congregational prayer when he finished it after completing two rak'ahs instead of four. One of his companions questioned him about this and when he realized what has happened, he ordered his companions to complete their prayers. No one had to start his prayers afresh. That shows that despite the distraction, the prayer is valid.

2. Everyone is often distracted during prayer by thoughts of different types. Some of us think of their immediate concerns, while others entertain thoughts of past experience and events. We should always try to concentrate on prayer. The best thing is to concentrate on what one is reading. But this is not always possible. This is why sometimes we forget how many rak'ahs we have prayed. This happened to God's messenger himself. The prayer remains valid and need not be repeated.

In the particular case cited by the reader, what troubles this person is that thoughts of sex come into his mind as he is praying. When this occurs, the man should try hard to drive such thoughts away, reminding himself of God, or the meaning of the verses he is reading, or anything related to prayer and faith. He need not interrupt his prayer or repeat it.

### ***Salat: Congregation — A Duty On the Muslim Community***

1. What are the rules for holding a congregational prayer? How do worshipers stand? What is the advantage of praying in a congregation? Is it compulsory to form a congregation?

2. I have noticed that most women either pray at home or do not pray at all. Is it obligatory for women to offer their five prayers in mosque as men?

1. To pray in a congregation i.e. with Jama'at is a distinctive aspect of Islamic worship. Many scholars consider that holding a congregational prayer and joining congregational prayers is compulsory for all Muslims. Allah says in the Qur'an; "***Bow down with those who bow down.***" This is a clear reference to prayer. If it was not a duty, we would have been given a concession not to pray in congregation when we are in a state of fear. Allah, however, has changed the requirements of prayer in such state without canceling its congregational aspect.

It does not mean, that every Muslims must offer every single obligatory prayer in a congregation. It means that the holding of a congregational prayer is an obligation of the community and it is also obligatory on every individual to be keen in congregation prayer whenever possible. Such attendance is indeed a marking of strong faith. From the literature of early Islamic periods, we can conclude that a person was considered good if he regularly offered his obligatory prayer with the congregation in the mosque.

Moreover, offering a prayer in a congregation enhances our reward. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says that praying with the congregation earns 27 times the reward of the same prayer offered individually. Since every one of us is always in need of greater reward from Allah, we should be keen to offer our obligatory prayers in the mosque with the congregation. The Prophet, peace be upon him, also

recommends us to offer obligatory prayers at home, so that our homes are not denied the blessings of prayer.

The minimum number of worshipers required for congregation is two, one of who should be the imam. If there are only two worshipers, the imam stands a little ahead and the other person stands to his right. If there are more than two, then the imam stands on his own and the other worshipers stand in a row, leaving a distance, which is sufficient for them to do their prostration. If one row is complete and a second row is to be formed, it starts at the point exactly behind the imam and worshipers stand to the imam's right and left, in a balanced way. Every new line starts in the same way, right behind the imam. But it should have at least two people. If the last line is complete, the next one cannot be started by one person only. He either pulls one of the people in the last row back so that they could form a new line or he should wait until another person comes in to join the prayer. In a congregational prayer, the worshipers follow the imam without leaving any gap between his movement and theirs. When he gives the signal for the next movement, all worshipers follow suit. [Care must be taken not to advance your action in anticipation of that signal for the next movement].

2. Women are exempt from the requirement of attending congregational prayers in the mosque. This is due to the nature of their role in looking after young children and household duties. If they go to the mosque to attend prayers, they are welcome to do so. In a congregational prayer in a mosque, women stay in the rear forming their own ranks. They are, however, required to offer the same obligatory prayers in their respective time ranges. When a woman has her menstruation period, she is exempt from prayer. The same exemption applies to a woman in her postnatal period. It is this exemption that sometimes may give the impression that many women do not offer prayers. It is important, therefore, not to judge them on the basis of a casual impression. Many women attend to their religious duties with keenness and enthusiasm.

Perhaps I should also explain that while congregational prayer is a duty on the Muslim community, it is not obligatory on every single one of us to attend every single obligatory prayer in the mosque. Allah has given us a time range for each prayer and allowed us to pray individually because He knows that our circumstances may be difficult and we may not be able to attend congregational prayers all the time. Nevertheless we must be keen to pray with the congregation in the mosque as frequently as possible.

### ***Salat: Congregation — At A Mosque, On Job Site, Or In the Office***

1. There is a mosque in the compound where we live, but some people prefer to offer their obligatory prayer in their rooms. Is their prayer valid? On the other hand, there are three mosques near our working site. Nevertheless, employees gather to have their congregational prayer on site, rather than go to one of those three mosques. Is this acceptable?

2. Some of our colleagues insist on praying in the office despite the fact that there is a mosque close by. Please comment.

3. I live with a group of my friends in a bachelor accommodation provided by our employers. When we first came, most of us used to miss some of our prayers. However, we are all praying regularly now. Sometimes we find it difficult to go to the mosque for congregational prayer and we offer prayer in congregation at home or in the office. Some people suggest that our prayer is invalid. Please comment.

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1. Congregational prayer is one of the duties of the Muslim community. Mosques provide such congregation and they must be used. Moreover, congregational prayer is rewarded 27 times more than the same prayer when offered individually.

To show how important offering the prayer with the congregation in the mosque is, I will refer to the time when Amr ibn Umm Maktoom, a blind companion of the Prophet, asked him whether he could offer prayer at home, because sometimes he did not feel up to walking to the mosque, particularly with roads being uneven and having some pitfalls. The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked him whether he could hear the Athan, i.e. the call. When Amr said that he could, the Prophet, peace be upon him, told him that he could not find any justification for him to stay at home. However, the prayer of those people at home remains valid and discharges their duty of offering prayer, although they miss out on the greater reward.

They should however, come to the mosque from time to time in order to discharge the other obligation of offering congregational prayer.

Forming a congregation for the employees at the working site is perfectly acceptable. Because if everyone was to go to the mosque, the time taken for prayer would be longer.

A Muslim employee should always take care not to take out of his working hours more than absolutely necessary for prayer and other matters that are unavoidable.

2. Present-day working conditions are so different from what used to be the case in old days. Therefore, scholars of past generations may have said certain things about prayer, which may not be easily applicable today. If people in an office arrange their own congregational prayer, when prayer falls during working hours, that is perfectly appropriate, even though a mosque is close by. No matter how close the mosque is, going there takes more time. If this can be accommodated with the needs of the work, then it is fine for the employees to go there. But if prayer in the office is more convenient, or even more suited to the requirements of the work, it is better to pray there.

3. It is definitely better if you offer your obligatory prayers with a congregation in a mosque. The Prophet, peace be upon him, states: "Prayer in congregation is rewarded 27 times more than the prayer of the individual." When the Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked about the best action a person can do, he answered: "To offer prayers when they fall due." Congregational prayers are offered in the mosque shortly after they are due, then prayer in the mosque with the congregation is far better than any other place.

However, every one of us works within the constraints of his personal circumstances. Allah has not made it obligatory that we pray any prayer at any particular moment or in a particular place. He has given us a range of time for each prayer. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "The whole earth has been assigned to me as a place of worship and a source of purification." A Muslim may pray anywhere. When you offer your prayers at home, they are perfectly valid. If it so happens that two of you are at home or in the office and you want to offer your prayer, it is far better if you offer in congregation. What you should guard, however, is against substituting congregational prayer at home [or office] for prayer in the mosque. In that way you cut yourself from the local community. This will not do. Whenever you can attend the congregation at the mosque, you should do so. If you are praying at home, it is far better to pray in congregation than to pray alone.

### ***Salat: Congregation — At Home By Family***

Should a family offer obligatory prayers at home in congregation, how do they stand in rows?

If a family including parents, sons and daughters offer a congregational prayer at home, then the Imam should be the man who recites the Qur'an best. This means that he could be a son while the father is in the congregation. The first row is for men, including boys, and the second row is for women, including girls. Should this take place when there is a large family gathering, then the same pattern as followed in mosques is followed here, with men in the first rows, followed by boys, then women.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Changing Places After A Prayer***

Why do people change their places after a congregational prayer is over in a mosque in order to offer voluntary prayers? I personally prefer to stay in the same place. Is it acceptable?

It is perfectly appropriate if you offer your voluntary prayer in the same place where you offered your obligatory one with the congregation in the mosque. Indeed, there is no restriction on the places where you can offer your prayers, since the Prophet, peace be upon him, has told us that the whole earth is considered a place for prayers for the nation of Islam. However, it is more convenient to change places in order to leave a free passage for those who have finished and want to go out. If all people in the congregation were to offer their voluntary prayers in the position where they offered the obligatory one, there will remain no gap for anyone who has already finished and wants to leave, or for those who wish to go out immediately, either because they have some work or because they wish to attend voluntary prayers at home, as recommended by the Prophet, peace be upon him. Some people, however, do not change places and they are at no fault.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Children In Congregation***

Is it permissible to allow children to stand in the same line with their elders in congregation prayer?

If you are speaking of a large mosque in which a congregational prayer attracts several rows of worshippers and there are a number of children in the mosque, then children may preferably form a line behind the congregation. However, some people take this advice as meaning that a young child is not allowed to stand in the same line as grown-ups. This is not true. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us to encourage our children to pray when they are seven. There is more emphasis requiring to teach them to pray when they are 10. Moreover, younger children are allowed in the mosque. We have the incident when the Prophet, peace be upon him, was leading the congregation and he prolonged his prostrations for a long while, until his companions felt that he might have suffered something. When the prayer was over, they told him that they were worried about him. He explained that his grandson mounted his back and he did not wish to interrupt the child's fun. There is no doubt that the Prophet's grandson at that time was less than seven years of age. Otherwise, the Prophet, peace be upon him, would have taught him to pray. There is nothing to suggest that the Prophet's grandson was more adept at purifying himself than other children of his age. If a child's clothes are dry and there is no apparent sign of the child carrying any impurity, then we assume that he has purified himself well. He is allowed in the mosque. He may stand in the same line as older people, particularly if it is feared that by placing him behind the congregation, he will be running around and disturbing the worshippers. Moreover, his father or any other adult who has brought him into the mosque will be all the time worried that the child could run

away. It is more preferable in this case that the child stands next to his father or relative. It is sufficient that the child is closing a gap in the line, which would otherwise be unfilled.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Filling A Gap During Prayer***

Once I was in a congregational prayer when the person next to me pulled me toward him to fill a gap in the line, but my concentration was disturbed. To my knowledge when one is praying he should behave as one standing in front of God who is watching him. Is the action done acceptable?

You are right and the person who pulled you to fill the gap is right as well. It is true that when we are engaged in prayer, we should be fully concentrating on the task at hand, realizing that we are standing in front of God, addressing Him and He is listening to us. Therefore, our concentration on prayer should be at its highest. However, when we are in congregational prayer, we should also make sure that we stand in lines as we have been taught by the Prophet, peace be upon him.

Each line starts exactly behind the imam who should always be kept in the middle. This means that people should stand either to the right or the left of the center point leaving no gaps between them. They can ensure that by standing shoulder to shoulder in straight lines. If there is a gap in a line, the person next to it should move to fill it, making sure that the one who moves is the one whose movement is toward the center. If you see a gap in the line in front of you, you should move up to fill it. At no time gaps may be left in the lines. If you make such a move, you are able to regain concentration easily.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Imam Forgot To Recite Aloud For Maghrib Prayer***

1. The imam forgot to read aloud in the first rak'ah of Maghrib prayer. After starting the second rak'ah in the same fashion, i.e. reading in private, he was reminded by some of the worshippers, but he carried on in the same way. Did he do wrong? Should he have done differently? Should he have prostrated himself at the end to rectify his omission?

2. Once I was leading a congregation in Maghrib prayer but I omitted to recite loudly in the first two rak'ahs through forgetfulness. When I had finished, one of these who prayed with me said that we should have offered two prostrations for forgetfulness, otherwise our prayer was invalid. Please comment.

1. What the imam did at the end was right. He obviously forgot to recite aloud the parts of the Qur'an he was reading in his prayer, as he should have done in the first two rak'ahs. When he was reminded, it was too late to rectify the mistake. Even if he himself remembers before starting the second rak'ah that he should be reading aloud, he should carry on as he has started. In this way, he would offer the prayer in the same form.

This is the proper thing to do in these situations. If he is to change in mid-course, his prayer would have a mixture of two forms, which is not right.

If the imam offers two prostrations at the end of his prayers, the congregation should follow his lead and join him in these prostrations. That would be appropriate. If he does not do that, his prayer is correct and valid. The same applies to every one in the congregation.

2. It is recommended to recite loudly in the two rak'ahs of Fajr and the first two rak'ahs in each of the obligatory prayers of Maghrib and Isha. Whether a person is praying alone or leading a congregation, he should follow this recommendation. The two prostrations, i.e. sujood which are offered at the end of one's prayer and give the name of "sujood sahu", compensate for any omission or addition due to forgetfulness. Books of Fiqh abound in details of which errors in prayers may be compensated for with these prostrations. It is perhaps sufficient to say here that if a worshipper omits certain types of obligatory actions of prayer, he should offer these two prostrations before he finishes his prayers. As for recommended things, i.e. those known as Sunnah in prayer, no compensation is required for omitting them. Since they are not obligatory, why should something be offered in their stead? Nevertheless, some of these qualify for two prostrations of 'sahu' when they are omitted through forgetfulness.

With regard to reciting aloud or in secret, the rule is well known. As I have already said, reciting aloud in Fajr, Maghrib and Isha is recommended, i.e. a Sunnah. Scholars have expressed different views with regard to the omission of reciting aloud and whether it qualifies to be compensated for with two prostrations of 'sahu'. All that we need to say here is that if one offers these two prostrations, one does well and good. If he omits to do them, his prayer is perfectly valid.

Perhaps I should add that if a worshipper who is offering a day prayer, i.e. Dhuhr or Asr, recites aloud in the first two rak'ahs through forgetfulness, and while praying he remembers that he need not have recited aloud, he should continue his loud recitation in the first two rak'ahs. If the reverse situation occurs and a worshipper recites in secret in Fajr, Maghrib or Isha and then he remembers that he should have begun his recitation loudly, he has the choice whether to continue his recitation in private or to start again aloud, while continuing his prayer. He needs to interrupt it and start again. What this boils down to is that your prayer and that of congregation you led was valid, although you have not offered these two prostrations of 'sahu'. Your friend who objected was wrong in saying that the prayer was not valid. Had you done these prostrations that would have been appropriate as well.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Imam Making A Mistake***

As the imam was supposed to stand up for his fourth rak'ah in Zuhr prayer, he sat instead for a very brief period, thinking that he has finished four rak'ahs and should sit down to conclude the prayer. The congregation reminded him and he stood up for the fourth rak'ah. Should he and the congregation do two prostrations at the end to compensate for this mistake?

The two prostrations at the end of prayer known as Sahu are meant to rectify any mistake or forgetfulness in prayer. If it is a congregational prayer, only the imam's mistake counts. If he has made a mistake, then he makes up for it by two prostrations, at the end, and the entire congregation follows suit. In the case the reader asks about, the imam has done a mistake, because he sat for Tashahhud when he still needed to do another rak'ah. He would have continued and probably finished the prayer, had the congregation not reminded him. Therefore, two prostrations for Sahu were in order.

I should add that these prostrations are recommended, not obligatory. This means that if a person makes a mistake and rectifies it during prayer, but forgets or omits to do the two prostrations, his prayer is still valid.

***Salat: Congregation — Imam Missed Ablution***

After completing the congregational prayer one evening, the imam stood up and announced that he had just remembered that he did not do his ablution. He told the congregation to repeat their prayers. This led to much confusion with some people arguing that their prayer was correct and valid. About half of the congregation repeated their prayer while the other half left. Who was right?

The imam need not have mentioned anything about his earlier forgetfulness. The prayer of the congregation is correct. Those who left the mosque without repeating it were correct, because their prayer was valid. Those who repeated the prayer, will, Allah willing, be rewarded for it as a voluntary prayer. It is needless to say that the imam himself must repeat his prayer.

It is reported that Omar ibn Al Khattab once lead the dawn prayer. After he left, he discovered the traces of a wet dream on his clothes. He took a shower and repeated his prayer, without ordering any one in the congregation to repeat their prayers. This incident is also reported of Uthman ibn Affan. When he discovered the traces, he said: "I have indeed grown old. I have indeed grown old." He meant that in his old age, he could not remember having had a wet dream. He repeated his prayer ordering no one to repeat his or her.

***Salat: Congregation — Imam Without A Beard***

You have clearly stated previously that every Muslim should wear a beard because this is the Sunnah of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Then there should not be "ifs and buts," and every Muslim should wear a beard. A person leading prayers must be bearded. Could you please, then, answer the following questions: 1.) Is it not obligatory on the part of every Muslim to obey what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has ordered? 2.) Is there any incident during the life of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and of the rightly guided caliphs when prayers were led by an imam without a beard? If not, then this cannot be approved according to your own verdict in the case of the celebration of the Prophet's birthday and similar situations. You have stated that in these cases that if an action was not practiced by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions, then it is an innovation and against Islam. By the same argument, it is not possible for an imam to be without a beard.

The simple answer to your first question is "Yes, indeed." It is certainly obligatory on the part of a Muslim to obey what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has ordered. This is stated clearly in the Qur'an when Allah says: "Take whatever the Prophet, peace be upon him, gives you and desist from anything he forbids you." With regard to wearing a beard, I have already stated [on other occasions] that every Muslim should do so. I have nothing to add on this.

Turning away from the subject of wearing a beard for a moment I would like to explain that not everything stated in the Qur'an and Hadith in the imperative form constitutes an obligation in the strict sense of the word. Take for example Verse 31 of Surah 7, which speaks of how to dress when one goes to the mosque. This is given in the imperative form and addressed to "the children of Adam," which means that the order is given to all mankind. Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Translators of the Qur'an render its meaning in a variety of forms. These are four of them:

1] Beautify yourself for every act of worship; 2] Take to your adornment at every mosque; 3] Dress well every-time you pray; and 4] Wear your best clothes to every place of worship.

My own understanding of this verse is that it relates to how one should dress when one stands up for prayer, whether at home or in the mosque, although it should be observed more carefully in the latter case. Whether we take it to mean dress only or adornment in general, it tells us to take care of our appearance when we pray. Once again it is expressed in the imperative form. Now, does this constitute an obligation, which must be observed literally and strictly every-time we pray, or every time we go to the mosque? If so, what do we say to a construction worker who hears the call to prayer and goes to the mosque wearing his working gear? Do we tell him not to go to the mosque for the congregational prayer because he has at home better clothes which he must wear in fulfillment of this order given in the Qur'an? Furthermore, if you are at home wearing ordinary clothes, which are clean, and you hear the call to prayer, do you have to change into your best gear before you go to the mosque. If you say that it is not obligatory to do so, how do you explain this Qur'anic order? I am sure you will agree with me when I tell you that this Qur'anic verse indicates a preference rather than a commandment. In other words, if you wear clean, presentable clothes when you go to the mosque, you have fulfilled this order. If you go to the mosque wearing your working gear, your prayer is still valid. It is certainly better for someone whose job causes his clothes to be dirty to have near at hand a clean dress into which he could quickly slip before he goes to the mosque. But if he does not do so, we do not tell him not to come to the mosque.

I have given this example in order to explain to you that some orders are given to indicate preference, not obligation. These must not be understood in their strictly literal sense. Otherwise, things will become very difficult for people. If we make things difficult, we run the risk of doing the opposite of what the Prophet, peace be upon him, commands us: "Make things facile, not difficult."

The answer to your second question is that I do not know. I very much doubt whether anyone led the prayer during the lifetime of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions when he was not wearing a beard but it was the general practice at the time to follow the Prophet's Sunnah more strictly. Moreover, it was socially unacceptable that one should appear without a beard.

Having said that, I must admit that I am amazed at your analogy, which equates this with celebrating the Prophet's birthday and similar actions. Such an analogy does not hold. When we speak about a person without a beard, we are speaking of an omission. When we speak about celebrating the Prophet's birthday, we are speaking of an addition. The two are not only different; they are worlds apart. In the second case, i.e. that of addition, one is introducing into the religion something which is not part of it. In other words, this constitutes an allegation that our religion could be improved upon, or that the form which has been conveyed to us by the Prophet, peace be upon him, was not complete. Allah forbids that any of us should think so for a moment. Our religion is complete since Allah has made it so. It is perfect as the Prophet, peace be upon him, conveyed it to us. No addition can be made to it.

The case of an omission is certainly different. What it means is that someone neglects a duty or a Sunnah. If we treat this neglect or omission on the same basis as we treat addition, we are demanding that every Muslim should be perfect. While we should always try to improve ourselves, perfection cannot be expected from anyone. Allah describes the believers with whom He is pleased as those who "avoid the cardinal of sins and gross indecencies, with the exception of minor offenses." In other words, these good believers who earn the pleasure of Allah commit minor sins. I will go further than that and say that even a person who commits a grave sin may still earn the pleasure of Allah, if he works hard for His forgiveness.



Brother, I am sure you agree with me that we strive all our lives to be among those whose good deeds exceed by a fraction their bad deeds, and we may, with His grace, scrape through into heaven. If you agree to that, I say that there is a world of difference between this concept and the strict, perfectionist discipline you try to impose. I beg you to reflect on what I have said to appreciate the difference. [Strive for excellence and not perfection, because perfection belongs to Allah alone.]

What you are saying is that a person who does not wear a beard must not lead prayer. May I ask: should he pray or not? If you say he should pray, is his prayer acceptable to Allah and rewarded by Him? Is it valid? If it is, then he may lead the prayer. If you say that he must not lead the prayer, you are in effect saying that his prayer is not valid. You have to prove this with strong evidence. I do not think you can provide any. It is not for us human beings to say to anyone among us that his prayers are not valid.

Not only that, but the prayer of any Muslim who may have committed even a cardinal sin, is valid and acceptable, as long as he believes in the Oneness of Allah and in the message of the Prophet, peace be upon him. What do you do if you see someone doing something, which is clearly forbidden, then coming to the mosque to offer his prayers? Do you tell him to go away? Obviously not. Can we say that his prayers are not valid? Decidedly not. It is only Allah who decides whose prayers to accept and whose to reject. Because He is so merciful to us, He accepts our prayers as long as we do not associate partners with Him and do not intend our prayer to be a means to show off or to deceive people. In other words, if we genuinely address our prayer to him, He accepts it. Moreover, He credits it to our account with Him. In other words, it offsets some of our sins. When Allah's mercy is so encompassing, how can we restrict it with rules of our own?

Let me put to you this question: If you go to a mosque and find that the congregation has already started the prayer, led by an imam who is without a beard, what do you do? Do you join that prayer? If so, then you admit that it is valid. If you do not, then you are disobeying the Prophet, peace be upon him, who tells you, and all Muslims, to join a congregation even when the imam's behavior leaves something to be desired. This he has ordered us to do, so that the Muslim community will always be united. Moreover, wearing a beard is not one of the criteria for the selection of an imam. The Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us that the one of us to lead the prayer should be the one who recites the Qur'an best. If two or more recite the Qur'an equally well, then the one of them with the greater knowledge of Islam should lead the prayer.

I have discussed your objection at length because what worries me is the attitude, which it betrays. It is unfortunately an attitude, which has spread among certain sections of the Muslim community. It seeks to impose a narrow interpretation on everything Islamic. I am afraid that by doing so, they deprive Islam of one of its greatest assets which Allah has made inherent to Islamic faith and practice, namely, ease and flexibility. Islam is a religion, which is easy to follow. Anyone who tries to impose a mantle of rigidity on it does a disservice to Islam. This is what we understand from the Hadith of the Prophet, peace be upon him which may be rendered in translation as follows: "Indeed, this religion is characterized by ease; then go through it gently. Anyone who tries to impose rigidity on this religion will be defeated by it."

### ***Salat: Congregation — Imam's Actions Too Fast For Following***

A person in congregation finds himself late in his reading of the Surah Al-Fatihah when the Imam bows for Rukoo, so he completes his reading. By the time he begins to bow, the Imam has stood up. Finally the man catches

up with the Imam while the latter is in prostration i.e. Sujood. Please comment.

The very term, Imam, means a leader to be followed. So when he proceeds with his prayer, the congregation must follow suit immediately, without any one in the congregation taking it slow so as to be left behind, or moving fast so as to go ahead of the Imam. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "The Imam is there to be followed. When he bows down, you should bow down, and when he rises, you should rise." [Related by Al-Bukhari]

This shows very clearly that the case in question is wrong. The man went on reading Al-Fatihah when he should have bowed down like the Prophet, peace be upon him, has explained. He might have felt that if he did, he would not have completed his reading, which is obligatory according to some schools of thought. But even these schools of thought would require him to bow with the Imam. There are no two ways about it. The only thing would have been allowed to him is that if he could have finished his reading very quickly and bowed down before imam rose. But even then, following the Imam is obligatory. When the Imam moves from one position to another, the congregation should follow. If one has not completed the task in hand, his prayer is still valid.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Imam's Command Be Followed Or the Action***

Some people anticipate the imam when they are in congregational prayer and make their movements either with him or even preceding him. Please comment.

It is a very serious flaw in prayer if a person precipitates the imam's action. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "The imam is there to be followed." This is a clear instruction that everyone in the congregation should wait for the imam to make his move before they move. The Prophet, peace be upon him, also says: "Does not a person who lifts his head before the imam fear that God may change his head or his image into that of an ass?"

Imams should advise their congregation of the serious nature of this breach so that they may abide by the Prophet's instructions.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Imams Following Different Practices In Prayers***

1. In some mosques, the imam moves forward and backward during the prayer in order to be near the microphone, but sometimes this makes his voice extremely loud. Before starting the prayer, one imam spends considerable time to ensure that the rows are straight. Another takes a relatively long time standing after rising from the position of bowing or in the sitting position between the two prostrations. Some remain silent for sometime after reading the Fatihah. Please comment on such practices.

2. Some people stay silent for a while when leading congregational prayers before resuming reading aloud. Could you please explain why?

1. There is no doubt that the imam is responsible for making the congregational prayer right. He should advise the congregation to make their rows straight and ensure that the first line is straight. But this is easy to achieve if everyone stands shoulder to shoulder with the person next to him. Some imams make strenuous efforts on this point, which reflects their keenness, but then they can easily err by being too cautious.

It is also the responsibility of the imam to ensure that the prayer is done in comfort. Nowadays, with microphones and loud speakers, noise could be very loud. He should ensure that it does not irritate his congregation by being too loud.

There are certain supplications that we are recommended to say in the positions mentioned by the reader, and in others such as prostration and bowing. However, the imam must not make his prayer, or any part of it too long, because he should consider that people might not be able to tolerate such lengthy situations. For example, a person with back pain cannot remain in bowing position too long, and an asthmatic person may find prostration too strenuous if it is made unduly long. The Prophet, peace be upon him, spoke harshly to one of his companions who recited long passages of the Qur'an in prayer, and advised him to make his prayer short. If one is praying alone he may make his prayer as long as he wishes, but if he is leading the prayer, he should be considerate.

According to the Shaf'ie school of Fiqh the imam is advised to remain silent, or to read the Qur'an privately, for a time sufficient for members of the congregation to read the Fatihah themselves, as this school requires everyone of the congregation to read the Fatihah in every rak'ah. However, this is a matter of choice. The imam can go on and read aloud without waiting for his congregation to do anything. In this case, the people praying behind him must not read it, because the fact that he has already read the Fatihah is sufficient for them as well.

2. An imam who follows the Shaf'ie School of Fiqh will read the Fatihah aloud in Fajr prayer and in the first two rak'ahs of Maghrib and Isha, then stay silent for a short while before resuming reading aloud. His silence is to allow the congregation to read the Fatihah privately, because according to this school, every one must read the Fatihah in every rak'ah.

If the imam is reading aloud, we must listen attentively, according to them. So, in order to reconcile the two requirements, the short silence is observed.

### ***Salat: Congregation —Iqamah Is Obligatory Or A Sunnah?***

We were about to offer prayers in congregation at the office, when the telephone rang. The imam answered it while iqamah was being said. When he had finished, he asked for the iqamah to be said again. Should he have done that, considering that we were only three persons joining the prayer?

The iqamah, or a shortened call to prayer, is said immediately before an individual or a congregation start their prayer. It serves to put the worshipper in a frame of mind most suitable for his worship. It is recommended or encouraged, i.e. Sunnah, not obligatory. If a person does not say it, or if the congregation start without any one of them saying it, that does not detract in any way from the validity of the prayer.

If one has said iqamah and then something took place to delay him from starting his prayer, it is open to him to decide whether he wants to say the iqamah again or not. However, if the distraction is short, then the iqamah need not be said again. Suppose that when the imam answered the telephone, he explained to his caller that he was just about to pray and he would return the call after he had finished, then it would have been more appropriate if he started the prayer without repeating the iqamah. On the other hand, if the caller was his boss and he wanted to ask him about a certain matter and the telephone conversation took a few minutes, then repeating the iqamah is perhaps more preferable.

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## ***Salat: Congregation — Join In Even If You Have Already Prayed***

### ***Commentary By Adil Salahi — Arab News***

The Prophet, peace be upon him, made use of every opportunity to teach his companions, and later generations of Muslims, what is important to them in their life, both in relation to faith and in ordinary matters. If he wanted to stress a point, he often alerted his companions by making a gesture or using a particular expression. When his companions were on the alert, he would give them an advice, or an admonition. He was always precise, using the occasion with great skill, and making his point short and clear. We never see the Prophet, peace be upon him, engaged on a very long speech, like some orators do. Yet his command of his language was unrivaled. He realized that one could not hold the attention of his audience for a long time. Therefore, he preferred a short reminder, concise and to the point.

One example is found in the Hadith in which Abu Tharr Al-Ghifari reports that he once brought the Prophet, peace be upon him, some water for his ablutions. The Prophet, peace be upon him, shook his head and bit his two lips. Abu Tharr reports: "I said: May my parents' life be yours! Have I hurt you?" He said: "No. But you will see rulers, or imams, who delay offering their prayers beyond its time." I said: "What do you command me to do?" He said: "offer your prayers on time. Then, if you find yourself with them [when they pray] then pray with them also. Do not say, 'Since I have already prayed, I will not pray now.'" [Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Al-Tirmithi and Abu Dawood].

We note first how the Prophet, peace be upon him, made a gesture to capture his companion's attention and alert him to what he would be telling him. We know that when the Prophet's companions were with him, they were always eager to learn from him. So they would be in full attention. We note this with the response of Abu Tharr. He immediately notices the Prophet's gesture and worries lest he might have inadvertently hurt him. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, realizes that his companion was fully attentive, he gives him a very important piece of advice.

The first point the Prophet, peace be upon him, makes is that some people in high position will be offering their prayers later than its preferred time. As we know, each prayer has a time range, with the earlier part preferred over the later one, although the prayer would still be valid. A ruler, or an imam, should maintain exemplary conduct. Therefore, he should be always keen to offer prayers at their preferred time. When delaying prayers becomes a habit, as it is understood from the wording of the Hadith, a careless factor begins to creep in, albeit very discreetly. This is the reason for the Prophet's expression of amazement. Rulers and imams are in full control of their time. No matter what duties they have to attend to, they can manage their time well, so as to offer their prayers at the preferred time, thus earning greater reward.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, then informs his companion what to do in such cases. As an individual, he should remain keen to offer his prayers early in their time range. Thus, he would fulfill his duty as best as he could. He is not supposed to do more than that, apart from offering advice when this is possible.

This might create a difficult situation, when an individual has prayed early and finds himself with a congregation who have not yet offered the same prayer. The Prophet, peace be upon him, makes it clear that in such a situation, the individual should repeat his prayer. He should not step aside and say that he would not join the prayer on account of having already prayed. To do so is inadvisable on two counts: the first is that it would give an impression that Muslims are not totally united when it comes to prayer, and the second is that it could allow for a feeling of superiority to creep into the thinking of the person concerned. He would be seen in a different light as a

person who takes the lead in offering prayers. If he joins the congregational prayer, he would be offering voluntary prayers, which earns him additional reward.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Joining Congregation & Combining Prayer***

When a traveling person who wishes to combine the two prayers of Zuhr and Asr enters a mosque and finds the congregation offering Asr prayer in progress, what should he do? Should he pray Zuhr on his own before joining the congregation for Asr, or should he join the congregation straightaway?

In this situation, the traveling person should join the congregation straightaway, making his intention clear to offer Zuhr prayer, because he cannot offer Asr first. There is no problem with the fact that the congregation, or the imam, is offering a different prayer. He completes the prayer in 4 Rak'ahs with the imam. When he has finished, he offers his Asr prayer in 2 Rak'ahs only.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Joining For A Different Prayer***

1. If a Traveling person goes to the mosque to offer Maghrib and Isha prayers, and finds the congregation about to start their Isha prayer, what should he do?
  2. If one has missed Asr prayer and joined the imam in the mosque for Maghrib prayers, how should he approach his prayers?
1. There is no harm in joining a congregation offering a different prayer to the one you want to offer. What is important is to make sure that one can start with the imam and finish with him. With regard to Zuhr, Asr and Isha, there is no problem, because when the traveler joins a local congregation, he prays as they do, i.e. four rak'ahs. The problem is when you want to start your Maghrib prayer with a congregation offering Isha. If you begin with the imam, you would have finished your Maghrib when the congregation has one more rak'ah to go. Therefore, the best thing is to wait until the congregation finish their first rak'ah and start when they begin their second. Thus, you finish with the imam. Of course this means that you sit for Tashahhud after offering one rak'ah, but this is immaterial, because you must follow the Imam.
  2. If you [offer your prayers regularly but] have missed Asr prayer for a legitimate reason, such as oversleeping or loss of consciousness, and you want to offer it with Maghrib, try to offer it before the iqamah for Maghrib is called. If it has already been called, then you have to join the congregation and offer Asr. When the imam finishes Maghrib prayer, you rise up to add one Rak'ah to complete your prayer to four Rak'ahs, and then you offer Maghrib normally. It is not proper in such cases to start with Maghrib prayers and offer Asr afterwards. You have to offer prayers in their correct order.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Joining Late***

Could you please explain how to treat one's prayer if one joins a congregational prayer that has already finished one or more Rak'ah.

If you join a congregation in a prayer consisting of 4 Rak'ahs when the congregation are in the third Rak'ah, you may either treat your first Rak'ah as the first or the third Rak'ah. If you opt for the latter, you are counting your Rak'ahs according to what the imam has completed. Therefore, when the imam finishes, you have to make up your first and second Rak'ahs. On the other hand, if you treat the two Rak'ahs you pray with the congregation as your first and second, you need to complete your prayer after the imam has finished by praying the third and fourth Rak'ahs.

Different scholars approve both ways. [the second case is practicable only if you know what Rak'ah you are joining in.]

***Salat: Congregation — Joining the Mosque Prayer At Home***

1. Our home is just opposite the mosque, separated by a very narrow lane, and we can see the inside of the mosque. Is it appropriate to join the congregational prayer while we remain at home?

2. We live very close to a mosque and we can hear the Imam reciting the Qur'an and announcing every new action in the prayer. Is it acceptable that my wife joins the congregation staying at home?

1. While a congregation may stretch very far, extending into several kilometers if necessary, it does not seem appropriate to join the congregation in the situation you describe. The rule is that you could join a congregational prayer at a reasonable distance if you do not have any physical impediment separating you from the Imam. This is logical, because a congregation means a group of people joining together in one action, so they need to be together.

Although in the situation you describe there seems to be a close proximity when you are at home and the congregation is praying at the mosque, yet you are not actually together. You have a closed door between you and the rest of the congregation. No one could come in and join the congregation at your end. It just does not seem right. Besides, if you are so close to the mosque, what prevents you from crossing this narrow alleyway and joining the prayer in the mosque? You will certainly have more reward there.

2. What scholars say about such questions, as joining the congregation at a distance is that there should be an easy access for a person who joins his congregation to reach the imam. If it was his intention to go to the Imam then he should be able to walk to him without any serious barrier. They give the example of a congregation at one side of a river and a group of people on the other side. Can they join the same congregation? The answer is that if they joined the congregation, their prayer is valid, but it is not particularly encouraged to have such a congregation. It will probably be more appropriate for the people on the other side of the river to have a congregation of their own.

Inside your home, with probably staircases to go down and then go out of the building to reach the mosque, the impediments are more serious than that of a medium-size river. If a congregation is not advisable on both sides of such a river, it is more so for a person in his home joining the congregation in the mosque. Indeed, if we were to say that it is appropriate, then it would be appropriate for the whole neighborhood to join the congregation from within their homes. The Imam would then be offering the prayer with a fewer people in the mosque and with more people joining him in their flats and apartments in surrounding buildings. That is not the purpose of the congregational prayer. Congregational prayer serves a very important social purpose. It would be missed if people were to stay in their homes and join the congregation in their separate flats. The proper congregation is when they come to the mosque and join together. If women are keen to join the congregational prayer, they should also go to the mosque where a place should be provided for them. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Do not prevent female servants of God from going to God's mosques."

***Salat: Congregation — Leading Prayers & Equality Of Men & Women***

We are a family of four. Sometimes we all pray together in a congregation. We take the task of leading the prayer in turn. When it was the turn of our

mother to lead the prayer, someone suggested that a woman cannot lead the prayer.

The question on whether a woman may lead the prayers does not have anything to do with the equality of the sexes. There is no doubt that Islam considers men and women equal. That can be seen in the fact that the duties Islam requires of both men and women are the same. Both offer the same prayers, fast the same month and perform the same kind of pilgrimage, attending to all the duties in the same way.

That, however, does not preclude that some differences may be needed in some situations to allow for the fact that the two sexes are different in certain ways. Such differences may require some concessions to be given to one but not the other of the two sexes.

An example is seen in the fact that a woman does not offer any prayer during her period and she is not required to compensate for that later. She is also not required to fast during her period, but she must fast later in order to bring her fasting days to the same number as men and women who do not have the period should fast.

The question of woman's place and appearance in prayer relates to propriety, not equality. In any community two people may be equal but they may have different tasks and duties. In the question of leading the prayers, no woman may lead a congregation which includes one man or more or even one which includes boys. She leads a congregation of women only. Even when she does so, she stands in the middle of the first row, not ahead of it as a man does.

So, it is correct that your mother could not lead the prayer when you or your brother are in the congregation.

Having said that I should also explain that I find the system of leading the prayer by turn rather unusual. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has explained that the person who should be the imam is the one who recites the Qur'an best. When two men recite the Qur'an equally well, the task of leading the prayer goes to the one who has wider knowledge of Islam. Then we apply different criteria in accordance with what scholars have outlined.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Leading Prayers & Women Leading***

On what conditions can a woman lead a congregational prayer?

A woman may lead a group of women in a congregational prayer in the same way as a man does. When she does, she simply stands in the middle of the line, not ahead of it. She recites loudly in Fajr, Maghrib and Isha and quietly in Dhuhr and Asr in the normal way.

When the congregation is formed of women only, then it is highly preferable that a woman leads the prayer rather than a man, unless the man's wife or a close relative such as his mother or sister or daughter is in the congregation. If no such relative is among the worshipers and he heads the prayer, the prayer is valid, although he is the less preferable choice to lead it.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Leading Prayers & Young Person Leading***

A boy has completed memorizing the Qur'an, at the age of 13, His family hold their own congregation to pray Taraweeh, with him leading the prayer. However, they were told that he could not lead the prayer on account of his being a minor. Please comment.

Young man of this age is perfectly capable of leading the prayer, whether it is obligatory or Sunnah like Taraweeh, if he meets the conditions for leading prayers. These conditions are having the knowledge of what invalidates prayer and avoiding them, and being the best reciter of the Qur'an in the group he is leading. Since this young man has completed memorizing the Qur'an, learning good recitation no doubt, then he is capable. The Prophet, peace be upon him, told a delegation of new Muslims that the best among them in reciting the Qur'an should lead them in prayer.

When they went to their people, it was a young man who could read the Qur'an best and he led the prayer. Admittedly, he was older than the boy was in this case, but the Prophet's instruction holds.

It is the one who recites the Qur'an best that should lead the congregational prayer. If this boy was 7 or 8 years of age, and his recitation is perfect, we may still not appoint him to lead the prayer on account that he may not be able to look after his purification, or some similar consideration. At 13 a boy is almost a man, so there is no harm in him leading the prayer.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Straightening the Lines In Prayer***

Could you please explain how the lines should be aligned in a congregational prayer? Should the point of alignment be the front or the back of the feet, and how close should one bring his foot to his neighbors' foot? Some people seem to be very careful that worshippers should stand with their feet touching their neighbors' feet, and even their ankles. Please comment.

Although this is an important point, it is often taken to extreme, with some people trying hard throughout the prayer to ensure that the line is straight. In their enthusiasm they go to extreme, often causing their neighbors discomfort. Thus they do more harm than good.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us that the imam should ensure that the lines of the worshippers in a congregational prayer are straight. He also made clear that the point of alignment is the middle of each line, just behind the imam. There must be no gaps left between worshippers. Therefore, they must stand, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, taught, shoulder-to-shoulder. When shoulders are touching, we are certain that the line is straight. Thus, the gap between their feet is small, but without the discomfort that results from touching feet.

When feet and shoulders touch, each worshipper will be standing with his legs wide apart, which is both uncomfortable and unsightly. Hence, the Prophet's Hadith: "Stand shoulder to shoulder." If we take the feet as the aligning factor, our lines may not be straight because people's feet differ in size.

### ***Salat: Congregation — Two Congregations & One Following the Other***

People back home say that only one congregational prayer should be held in the mosque for any obligatory prayer. Is this correct?

Some scholars are of the view you have mentioned, namely that one congregational prayer only could be offered in a particular mosque.

However, this is the weaker view. Most scholars agree that it is perfectly permissible for any group of people to form a second or third congregation, or indeed any number, provided that [no two are held at the same time, and] none has deliberately intended not to join the first one.



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***Salat: Congregation — Two Congregations Simultaneously***

In a mosque in our town, the followers of the Hanafi and Shaf'ie sects offer their prayers in two congregations which are held separately but simultaneously, following two imams. Is this allowed?

This is an ugly aspect of ignorance, which must be stopped altogether. When a person does not join a congregation, he must have serious doubts about the faith of the imam leading that congregation. If these doubts are based on the fact that the imam belongs to a different school of thought, then this attitude shows how ignorant the person is about the differences between the various schools of thought in Islam. If the two congregations start at the same time, both are invalid. If one starts after the other, then the second is invalid.

What we know of the history of Imam El-Shaf'ie is that he went to Baghdad where he met with the leading figure of the Hanafi school and discussed important issues with Imam Abu Yousuf and others. As you are aware, Imam Abu Yousuf was the most important figure in the Hanafi school of thought following the death of his mentor, the founder of the school, Imam Abu Hanifah. Imam El-Shaf'ie joined the congregations there without any question. What you should try to achieve is for the two imams in your local mosque to learn more about their schools of thought and how they differ from each other. Once they get to know more, they will feel that their attitude is ludicrous.

***Salat: Congregation — Who Should Lead the Prayer?***

What are the criteria to choose someone to lead a congregational prayer? If you enter a mosque and find that in the absence of the regular imam, someone is leading the prayer whom you know to be unsuitable, should you join them or not?

If a group of people is offering prayer together, they should choose someone from among them to lead the prayer. The one to be chosen is the one who recites the Qur'an best or the one who has learned more of the Qur'an by heart. If two people are of the same ability in this respect, then the elder of the two is to be chosen. No one may lead 'another in his own home' or place of authority without the latter's permission.

What this means is that if two or three people are offering prayer in the home of any one of them, then the house owner or occupier should lead the prayer, unless he permits one of them to lead. Moreover, it is the congregation who chooses the imam, not the imam who imposes himself on them.

From another point of view, it is permissible that a young boy leads a group of adults in prayer, and a blind man leads a group of people all of whom enjoy a good eyesight. There is nothing wrong if either the imam or the one being led by him offers his prayer seated for a good reason, nor with either of them having had dry ablution while the other having had normal ablution. Either the imam or the one following him may be a traveler or offering voluntary prayers while the other is resident or offering obligatory prayer. Again, the imam may be a person who has a lesser standing in society than the people being led by him. All such situations are acceptable.

If you come to the mosque and you find that someone whose conduct leaves something to be desired is leading the congregation, you should join the prayer because it remains valid. It is much better that you show that you are one of the group than to pray alone. Moreover, if you had offered your obligatory prayer and went into a mosque or joined some people in a certain place and you found the people were about to offer the same obligatory prayer you have offered, you should

join them. You must not appear to be isolating yourself from a congregation. Such a situation is liable to raise questions about your decision.

***Salat: Congregation — Woman In Congregation With Husband***

Where exactly should the wife stand physically in relation to her husband when they pray in congregation?

If two women are praying in congregation together, the woman leading the prayer stands a little ahead of the two who must stand to the right of the imam. However, if the congregation is composed of one man and one woman, whether she is his wife or his sister or any other relation to him, she stands behind him, not to his right.

If the congregation is composed of two men and one woman, the imam stands in the front and the other man a little behind and to his right, while the woman stands behind them.

If the congregation is composed of one man, one boy and one woman in addition to the imam, the imam stands in the front and the other man to his right and the boy to his left while the woman stands behind. If the man and the boy stands to the imam's right, that is acceptable. If they stand in a row behind him, the arrangement is appropriate, if the prayer is voluntary, but in obligatory prayer the matter is debatable. However, the woman stands behind them in all situations. If the congregation has several men, boys and women, the front row is for men who are followed by the boys and then by the women. [Added: In no case can a woman ever lead a congregation that has men in it.]

It is strongly discouraged for a woman to stand in a congregational prayer in the same row as men. However, her prayer is not rendered invalid. It is important for her, however, to observe the rules for congregation - as outlined.

***Salat: Congregation — Women In Mixed Congregation***

Suppose a man and his wife are offering an obligatory prayer at home together. Where does the woman stand in relation to her husband — to his side, a little behind him?

When a woman joins her husband or father or brother in a congregational prayer, and they are the only ones offering that prayer, he leads the prayer and she stands right behind him.

If two men are forming a congregational prayer, one of them leads the prayer, and the other stands to his right, slightly behind. If there are two men and one woman, then the two men stand as if they are lone, with one person slightly behind the imam to his right, and the woman stands behind them. If there are three or more men, then two men form a row behind the imam, and the woman stands on her own further behind. If there are a group of men and women, then the women form their rows behind the men's rows.

***Salat: Covering Ankles***

If there is a Hadith which requires men to expose their ankles, is there any need for more clarification by scholars? My friends argue that rulings are needed only on those situations which are not mentioned in the Qur'an or the Hadith.

It is true that when you have a Qur'anic verse or a pronouncement by the Prophet, peace be upon him which is directly related to a certain situation, then no one can give a special ruling on the matter. However, there are numerous situations in which

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the role of a scholar is to relate the statements available to each particular case. In such situations, verdicts are required and these take the form of a religious ruling or a fatwah. This task should never be under-estimated. It is very important task and can only be done after a thorough study of Islam and how rulings are deduced from available statement.

You speak about men being required to expose their ankles and ask whether there is any need for any clarification by scholars. What I can tell you is that if there is any Qur'anic verse or authentic Hadith which explicitly makes this requirement, then no one can argue about it or make a statement that differs with it. But such a requirement is certainly not mentioned in the Qur'an. I have not seen or heard of any Hadith, which aspires to any degree of authenticity which makes that requirement of all Muslim men. Indeed, the reverse is true, because in cold winter days, the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and other Muslims used to wear what is known as "khuff" which is a pair of soft shoes which normally cover the ankles. Moreover, the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to wear socks and wipe over them, when they needed to have ablutions or wudhu. It is well known that socks cover the ankles.

Having said that, I should perhaps explain that in the early days of Islam, it was socially considered a sign of arrogance for any person to wear a dress lower than the middle part of his legs. That [social consideration] meant that the proper dress of a man reached down midway between one's knees and one's ankles. To show any sign of arrogance or to demonstrate conceit is forbidden in Islam. Hence, the insistence of some scholars on the need to wear what is modest and far from suggesting conceit. Nowadays, most Muslim societies have a different view of appropriate dress for men. Many are the Muslim communities where the normal dress is that of a suit, socks and shoes. This means covering of ones legs including one's feet. If this is the normal type of dress, it follows that it is perfectly acceptable to wear during prayers. Otherwise, if we were to insist on the same length of dress which used to be worn in the early Islamic days, we would require anyone who wears a suit to take off his shoes and socks, and fold up his trousers. This is totally unnecessary because it neither follows a Sunnah nor gives a decent appearance.

I can tell you that a great deal ... is being said by people who have little knowledge of Islamic Fiqh. There is simply no virtue in exposing ankles, whether in prayer or outside it. Anyone who has a different view should support it by evidence from the Qur'an or the Hadith.

### ***Salat: Covering Head***

Followers of the Hanafi school of thought argue that because the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions always covered their head in prayer, anyone who does not follow their example would go astray. Please comment. Is there any authentic Hadith to support the view that covering one's head in prayer is necessary?

There is no Hadith, which requires or recommends Muslim men to cover their heads when they offer their prayers, whether obligatory or voluntary. It should be remembered that the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions used to cover their heads when they were in the mosque or in the marketplace or indeed anywhere else. So did the rest of the Arabs. In other words, this was the customary dress in Arabia, which continued after Islam. [Certain head-gears are linked to specific areas. Arabs, Indonesians, Nepalese, Russians, Pakistanis, Moroccans, etc. can be linked to their origin with their head-gears.] As such, wearing a cap or covering one's head by a man for prayers is neither recommended nor obligatory. It is certainly not a Sunnah.

Does it mean that every Muslim has to wear a head covering at all times? Wearing a head covering was traditional in Arabian society at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him. He would have pointed out that it is recommended or obligatory in prayer if it was so. The fact that he did not tell us that means that he only had his head covering as part of his traditional dress. If someone wears a head covering in prayer in order to follow the example of the Prophet, he is rewarded simply for his intention. However, since the Prophet, peace be upon him, has not pointed out anything regarding this particular matter, we cannot say that it is recommended. [When following this example of Prophet, peace be upon him, earns us a reward, why should we argue over it and not adopt this practice as far as it may be? ]

### ***Salat: Covering Head Or Uncovering Ankles***

People here in Saudi Arabia offer their prayers in mosques without covering their heads, and they may also wear trousers covering their ankles. Such practices are strongly shunned in other country. Which is correct?

There is no requirement, or recommendation, to cover one's head in prayer. This is a question of tradition. The Prophet, peace be upon him, did not give instructions on this point. As for covering the ankles, this is a misunderstood point. During the Prophet's lifetime, a person who wore long robes, covering his ankles, or touching the ground, did so as a gesture of arrogance, pressing the point that he was rich.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, spoke strongly against this, but in his Hadiths he always mentioned that doing so in a gesture of arrogance is forbidden. This means that when arrogance is intended then the action is forbidden. We understand this from an authentic Hadith, which states this prohibition but goes on to say that Abu Bakr said to the Prophet: 'My robe often drops on one side.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said to him: 'But you do not do this in a gesture of arrogance.'

When we consider people's clothes these days, we find that a large proportion of Muslims wear trousers which go down to their feet. Yet anyone who wears trousers or anyone who sees such a person never entertains the thought of arrogance. It is a normal type of clothes that is very common. Hence, it does not come under the prohibition. Those who advise people to turn the bottom of their trousers up to leave them hanging above the ankle overlook the element of arrogance intended by the Prophet, peace be upon him. They take that any covering of the ankles is forbidden, which is not so. They themselves do not advise against wearing socks in prayer, which again cover the ankles.

### ***Salat: Crossing the Path Of A Praying Person***

It is suggested that it is better to stand for forty years than cross the path of a person engaged in prayer. May I ask whether this applies to people offering prayers in the mosques in Makkah and Madinah?

It is strongly recommended that when a person offers his prayers he would put in front of him some sort of a barrier at a point which is a little farther than where he places his head on the ground when he prostrates himself. That barrier could be anything, whether wide or narrow. Even a stick is sufficient. If he has nothing to place in front of him then he may draw a line on the ground to separate his praying place from the surrounding area. When a person has placed such a shield or screen, then anyone who crosses his way beyond it does not have any effect on his prayer.

What you have mentioned is correct. A highly authentic Hadith quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "Had any person who crosses the path of someone

engaged in prayer known what sin he incurs, he will have preferred to stop for forty years rather than cross his path." [Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim and others]. The Hadith does not specify whether the Prophet, peace be upon him, meant forty days or forty years. That is immaterial. Another Hadith related by Muslim quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "It is better for any of you to stand for one hundred years rather than cross the path of his brother when he is engaged in prayer." The Prophet, peace be upon him, orders his followers to try to prevent anyone who is about to cross their path when they offer their prayer. But if someone crosses the path nevertheless, it does not affect the validity of the prayer itself. [Path of prayer is limited to the point of prostration.]

An exception is made in Makkah, where the requirement of putting a shield or a screen does not apply. That is because of the enormous crowd that gathers in Makkah during pilgrimage and peak Umrah season. If a praying person is required to prevent everyone that intends to cross his path, he would not be able to concentrate on his prayer.

### ***Salat: Delayed & the Acceptable Reasons For It***

If one discovers on waking up that he has had a wet dream, but time is too short to allow taking a shower before sunrise, what should he do?

In such a case, when one wakes up a few minutes before sunrise, he should proceed immediately to get ready for prayers. In the case of having a wet dream or being in the state of ceremonial impurity, he should proceed to remove it by taking a shower. If he must heat the water because it is too cold and he fears for himself, he should proceed to do that.

The important thing is not to waste time in any activity other than getting ready for prayer. Needless to say, if he needs to relieve himself, he should do so. If he busies himself only with getting ready for prayer, it is hoped that Allah would accept his prayer as having been offered on time, although it may take him until the sun has risen before he is fully ready. The point is that the delay was caused by oversleeping and oversleeping is one of two reasons, which allow a prayer to be offered after its time-range has lapsed. The other situation is to have forgotten that particular prayer completely.

### ***Salat: Delaying Isha Prayers***

What do you say about a person who is in the habit of delaying his Isha prayer until midnight or later? What if he sometimes falls asleep and then wakes up at 2 or 3 o'clock, or even just before Fajr to offer Isha?

All Muslims are aware that prayer is a time-related duty binding on every Muslim, whether man or woman. It must not be delayed until its time range is over. The time of Isha starts normally when the red twilight has disappeared which is approximately 1.5 hours after sunset. Its time finishes at midnight. According to Islamic rules, midnight is not at 12 o'clock, but the actual middle point between sunset and sunrise. If a person has not offered Isha with the congregation at the beginning of its time range, he does well to delay it until the end of its time.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, has mentioned that it is only out of fear of making things difficult for his community that he stopped short of ordering them to delay Isha. So when a person delays Isha until shortly before he goes to bed, he does well as long as he offers it within its preferred time which extends until midnight.

If in some unusual circumstances one delays Isha further than midnight, he is still praying it at its proper time as long as he offers it before Fajr. Many scholars extend Isha time until Fajr, on the rule that the time range of each prayer extends until the

next prayer is due, with the exception of Fajr, the time of which lapses at sunrise. If this person falls asleep and wakes up to pray Isha before Fajr is due, he has not done wrong.

### ***Salat: Different Praying Methods***

1. Since Islam is one faith, why are there different methods of doing the essential acts of worship, such as wudhu and prayer? Why do we have to follow four Imams, and not one method? What is the correct way of doing the wudhu, or ablution? Since people wear different sorts of clothes in prayer, may I ask whether it is permissible to pray wearing a T-shirt, or trousers going below the ankles? Why do people not pay attention to those who are praying and cross their paths?

2. Did the Prophet, peace be upon him, offer his prayers in different ways?

1. We do not follow four Imams, but we follow the Prophet, peace be upon him, and understand his guidance through the four schools of Fiqh. They simply explain things and show us the way. The differences are mostly based on what the Prophet, peace be upon him, did, and he did things differently on different occasions, to indicate that the different methods are acceptable. This makes things easier, because if there were only one way to do every single thing, people would have had great difficulties in attending to their religious worship.

The correct way to do the ablution is the one, which satisfies the requirements and adds a few recommended things. What is obligatory in performing the ablution, or wudhu, is that we wash our faces, hands up to the elbows, wipe over a part of our heads and wash our feet up to the ankles. When we do these with the intention of performing wudhu, our ablution is complete. Now we can add a few more things to increase our reward, such as rinsing our mouths, wiping our ears, repeating each wash three times, etc. For a man to wear a T-shirt or long trousers in prayer is perfectly acceptable. People cross in front of someone engaged in prayer because they are ignorant of the importance of refraining from doing so.

2. Basically prayer is the same, but schools of Islamic law differ in certain aspects of prayer. These differences are largely due to the way prayer was taught by different companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to different communities.

The differences suggest that the Prophet, peace be upon him, actually resorted to different times to some variations in the form of prayer. The Prophet, peace be upon him, performed his prayers in such different ways to indicate that they are all acceptable.

### ***Salat: Doctors In the Casualty Departments***

If a doctor working in the casualty department of a hospital does not have time to offer his prayers at the right time, what should he do?

If a doctor has to attend to cases of emergency, he attends to those before he attends to his prayers. There is a rule, which says that "preservation of life takes priority over the preservation of religion." When the emergency is over, the doctor should pray as soon as possible. If this means that he has missed an obligatory prayer, he prays the missed prayer before another emergency calls.

### ***Salat: Dry Cleaned Clothes & Their Purification For Prayers***

Can we offer prayers wearing clothes that have been dry-cleaned?

If the clothes had not been contaminated with any impurity before sending them to be dry-cleaned, then they are suitable for offering prayers. What worries me is that

the clothes might have impurity fallen on them beforehand. If the impurity is not removed before they are dry-cleaned, then dry cleaning does not purify them.

### ***Salat: Eating Onions Or Garlic Before Prayers***

Is it forbidden to eat onions before prayer?

No, it is not forbidden. A Hadith gives us the following instruction: "Whoever eats garlic or onions should not come near our mosque." This is due to the fact that these two types of food give a bad mouth smell. In order not to give an offensive smell, irritating other worshippers, a person who has just eaten them is told by the Prophet, peace be upon him, not to go to the mosque. But he can pray at home.

Scholars say that this ruling applies to anything that gives a foul smell, such as tobacco and some chemicals. Thus, a smoker should not go to the mosque unless he makes sure that he first changes the foul smell of tobacco. Besides, tobacco smoking is ruled as forbidden in Islam.

A worker in a plant that uses foul-smelling substances should change his clothes and wear some perfume before going to the mosque. It is important to keep the mosque a welcoming place, clean and pleasant smelling.

### ***Salat: Error In Recitation & the Need To Repeat Prayer***

If after the prayer is finished, one discovers that the imam had made a mistake in his recitation, should he repeat the prayer?

No repeat of the prayer is necessary by anyone, not even the imam if he discovers the mistake. A Hadith tells us that an angel is sent down to correct the recitation and present it to God as correct. Thus, the prayer is valid for all participants despite the mistake, even if one knows the mistake straightaway but cannot correct the imam because one is well behind, which means that the imam would not hear him if he tries to correct him.

In fact, it is better not to correct the imam if we realize that he has misread something, unless the errors means a grave change of meaning, such as replacing a promise of God's mercy with a threat of punishment.

### ***Salat: Exemption For Women — the Situations***

Could you please explain the position with regard to exemption from prayer for women during their period, especially if it is prolonged.

Some scholars mention a number of days for the minimum duration of a woman's period and they also quote a figure to indicate the maximum days of such a period. There is no Hadith to indicate a minimum span of time when a woman is in menstruation. What we can say is that the minimum is a single flow. Nor is there a maximum period for menstruation. We do not have any reliable report to estimate its duration.

I say this knowing that some scholars mention one full day, i.e. twenty-four hours, for the minimum period of menstruation and ten or fifteen days for its maximum. None of these figures relies on a specific and authentic Hadith. Menses is recognized by its color. The Prophet, peace be upon him, is quoted to have said: "The blood of menses is dark, easily recognized." During a woman's period, her discharge may have different colors, ranging from almost black, to red, to yellow or a dark color between white and black. Normally, a woman can distinguish whether her discharge is menses or not.

Some women may have a prolonged discharge, but that does not mean that they have a prolonged menstruation. If a woman has such a prolonged discharge, then she has to distinguish between her menses and a discharge that does not stop her from offering prayers or fasting. There are three situations:

i] A woman with a regular period. This is the case of a woman who used to have her menstruation lasting for six, seven or eight days on a regular basis. If she happens to have prolonged discharges afterward, then she should take count of her normal period, then she takes a bath and begins prayer. This is understood from a Hadith when, Umm Salamah, one of the Prophet's wives, asked him about a woman who was having a continuous discharge. He said: "Let her consider the number of days and nights for which she used to have her period every month. She need not pray during those days. Afterward, she should take a bath, use a piece of cloth or cotton, and offer her prayers." [Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and others]. This Hadith applies to a woman who used to have a regular period before she developed this disorder.

ii] A woman who does not have a regular period and cannot distinguish her menses from ordinary bleeding. The Prophet's sister-in-law, a young woman, had this trouble when she had just attained puberty. She told the Prophet, peace be upon him, that her discharge had prevented her from praying and fasting. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said to her: "I suggest that you use cotton because it absorbs blood." She told him that her discharge was too strong for that. He suggested that she should tie herself properly, but she again said that her discharge was too strong. He said to her: "I will describe to you two courses of action and you may choose either of them." He then explained her condition and told her: "You count your period six or seven days, as God knows, then have a bath until you feel that you have purified and cleansed yourself. You offer your prayers for twenty-four or twenty-three days and nights, and fast as usual. Your action is sufficient for that. You may repeat this every month as other women have their normal periods and cleanse themselves in accordance with their regular time of menses and cleanliness. Alternatively, you may choose to delay offering Dhuhr prayer and bring Asr prayer forward: You have a shower then pray Dhuhr and Asr together; then you delay Maghrib and bring Isha forward and combine the two prayers together. Then you have another shower for Fajr prayer and offer it. You may do like this and fast and pray if you can." The Prophet, peace be upon him, then added: "This last course is the one I would prefer." [Related by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and At-Tirmithi]. Al-Bukhari commented that this is an authentic Hadith.

iii] If she does not have a regular period but can distinguish menses from other discharge. In this case, she relies on distinguishing one from the other. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said to a woman named Fatimah who had the trouble of prolonged discharge: "Menses is dark and can be distinguished. If your discharge is such, then refrain from praying. If it is of the other type, then have ablution and offer prayer."

### ***Salat: Facing Flame [Fire] In Prayer***

On one occasion, there was a power cut in the mosque just before a congregational prayer. Someone placed a candle in front, but the Imam, who was not from our village, refused to start the prayer until the candle was removed. He explained that it was not permissible, but he failed to provide evidence. Could you please explain whether he was right.

The Imam was right in removing the candle, although the prayer would not have been invalid if the candle remained in front of you. The ruling is that facing a fire, of any sort, in prayer is reprehensible, or Makrooh. This is due to the fact that some groups of idolaters used to worship fire and always prayed facing it. Therefore, it is reprehensible to place a fire in front of us when we pray, so as to leave no chance of apparent similarity between our prayer and what idolaters did.



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This applies not only to fire, but to any aspect of idolatrous worship. It is also reprehensible to offer any prayer at the point of sunrise, sunset and when the sun is at the highest point in the sky. This is due to the fact that some idolater groups worshipped the sun, and prayed at these points in time. Islam is keen that our prayer should not resemble any idolatrous practice.

### ***Salat: Facing Grave***

You have pointed out that it is not acceptable that a person faces a grave when he prays. In Prophet's Mosque, part of the congregation faces the Prophet's grave. How is this allowed?

It is correct that it is forbidden to face a grave during a prayer. It is also not permissible to build a mosque at the place of a grave or at the graveyard. I have dealt with this question more than once.

However, at the Prophet's Mosque, no one faces his grave, because his grave is not raised over the ground. Besides, there is a wall built around it, to separate it from a portion of the mosque. The wall serves as a separating area, which does not allow the grave to be in view of the worshipers. Moreover, we should not imagine the Prophet's grave as a tomb or something built high over the ground, or that cement or bricks or any other building material is used with its construction. The whole thing is made according to the Sunnah which recommends that grave is only slightly higher than the ground. With the passage of the years, the Prophet's grave and those of his two companions, Abu Bakr and Omar have become level with the ground and no one is allowed inside the built-up area around. There are specific instructions in Islam against giving graves any sort of association with worship in order not to allow any habit or practices of other religions which give the dead a saintly position, to creep into our faith.

### ***Salat: Fajr Prayers & Allergy***

I suffer from acute allergy, particularly in cold weather. This means in practice that I cannot take a shower early in the morning, as it is very likely that I would have problems after that. What should I do if I need to take a shower after a wet dream? I often delay Fajr prayer until late in the day, when taking a shower causes no problem. Am I right in doing so, or should I offer my Fajr prayer without taking a shower?

Prayer is a time related duty, as it is described in the Qur'an. This means that every prayer has a time when it must be offered. If its time lapses, it is not possible to offer that prayer, except in certain situations, such as forgetfulness, unconsciousness and being engaged in battle [or certain other conditions when consciously advancing or deferring only to combine is permitted]. In all other conditions, prayer must be offered during the time specified for it. In your case, there is no question of a license to delay the Fajr prayer, because you are aware of it and you can offer it on time. Your difficulty in performing the necessary ablution which is a shower in the case of intercourse or a wet dream. In this case the concession God has given us to exercise when water is scarce or harmful apply to you.

God has allowed us the concession of dry ablution, or *Tayammum*, to replace either *wudhu* or *ghusl*, i.e. both ordinary and grand ablution, in case of water scarcity or illness which makes the use of water inadvisable. To do the *Tayammum*, one selects a place of clean earth, or a place where dust gathers. This may be a piece of furniture, or a carpet, or it may be the floor in one's home, or a place in open ground. It should be a clean place, where no impurity has fallen. One strikes twice with one's hands, shakes the dust and wipes one's hands shakes the dust and wipes one's face and one's arms after these strikes. He then offers his prayers normally. In your case

where the difficulty concerns the ghusl, but not the wudhu, you should perform the wudhu and the Tayammum for Fajr prayer. Later in the day, say when you come back from work, you take your shower, and offer your prayers normally. You do not need to repeat the Fajr prayer after you have taken your shower.

May I stress to all my readers that when they have a practical problem, they should seek advice from a scholar. That is because there are solutions and concession, which God has kindly, given us, so that the difficulties that we may encounter in life do not stand between us and performing our worship duties. We should not try to find solutions on our own, because God's solution is always better and easier to follow, as this reader will undoubtedly acknowledge.

### ***Salat: Fajr Prayers & Lifestyle***

The Fajr prayer has very low attendance in mosques in all cities. What, in your view, should or may be done to awaken people so that they do not miss this very important prayer? What are the duties of individual believers and society in this connection? Perhaps you would like to throw light on this problem, taking into consideration our present-day lifestyles and pattern of work and leisure time.

To say that Fajr prayer is important is to state the obvious. Indeed, it is so important that the Prophet, peace be upon him, repeatedly drew the attention of his companions and, by implication, all Muslims in all generations to the fact that to attend regularly to this prayer is a mark of strong faith. Neglecting it is, by contrast, a mark of hypocrisy. A believer who repeatedly misses dawn prayer through keeping late hours will not be happy with himself until he has managed to make a habit of waking up for this prayer, even though this may mean that he interrupts his sleep. On the other hand, a person who is used to waking up for Fajr will feel miserable on a day when he misses it, sleeping through the one-and-half hours allocated for it.

To illustrate the effect of offering this prayer on time, and that of missing it, the Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us that Satan sits by a believer's head shortly before dawn as he is asleep. He tells him that it is still a long time before the break of dawn and he may continue to sleep. He ties three knots on him and waits until after the call to prayers is made, and then he tells him again that he may sleep for a long time yet. If the sun has risen without that man getting up to pray Satan urinates in his ear and tells him to continue to sleep. Satan leaves him feeling happy that he caused him to miss his prayer. On the other hand, if a believer wakes up on time and mentions the name of God, one knot is untied. If he makes his ablution, another knot is untied and when he had prayed the third is untied. He feels fresh and happy and begins his day feeling very cheerful.

This is a figurative picture which the Prophet, peace be upon him, gives us to emphasize the effect of praying Fajr on time. We can feel the truthfulness of this description ourselves, every time we wake up for dawn prayer as well as on the nights that we miss it.

What we understand from all this is that we have to try hard to wake up for Fajr prayer every day. We must take all the precautions necessary to ensure that. The best precaution is to go to sleep early. A person who goes to bed an hour or two before dawn is unlikely to be able to wake up on time for Fajr. On the other hand, going to bed early increases the chances that he will not miss this very important prayer. Perhaps I should point out here that if a person takes reasonable precautions to ensure that he wakes up for Fajr and still misses it, he incurs no sin, provided that it is not his habit to miss this prayer. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was Traveling with his companions on a certain occasion and they marched most of the night. When they stopped to rest, the Prophet, peace be upon him, asked for a volunteer to

wake them up for Fajr. Bilal undertook that responsibility. However, shortly after the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions were fast asleep, Bilal was also overtaken by sleep. He was marching with the rest of the Prophet's companions and he was just as exhausted as they were. Nobody stirred until the sun sending its hot rays awaked them. The Prophet, peace be upon him, felt sad that he and his companions missed Fajr prayer. He instructed them to immediately have ablution and pray. He did not reproach Bilal, knowing that he could not help it. From this incident, we know that when one has taken reasonable precautions to ensure that he wakes up for Fajr, and still misses it, he incurs no sin. The Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us that if we sleep through the time range of any prayer, we should offer it immediately on waking up. The same applies when we miss a prayer out of genuine forgetfulness. The important thing is that we do not make a habit of praying Fajr after sunrise. That is unacceptable. Having said that, I should perhaps add that there are people who have a sleeping problem of one sort or another. They are still required to make an extra effort to get up for prayer.

Your reference to lifestyle is very valid indeed. People are interested in watching television, which means keeping late hours. People have videotapes, DVD or VCD players, which they like to watch and they may be playing these well into the early hours each night. How can they expect to wake up on time for Fajr?

Electricity has made it possible for us to work at night in the same way as we work during the day. Instead of thanking as we should, for the great benefits, which we gain from having these lighting equipment by attending to our religious duties, we make a bad use of it by organizing our time in a way that does not help us wake up for Fajr. We have borrowed this time arrangement from other nations, which do not have a duty of worship similar to ours. We should have been more careful about what to borrow.

We need to have a fresh look at the arrangement of our time. We will find it much better to revert to our old timetable, going to sleep, say an hour or two after Isha' and starting our day much earlier than we do now. There are certain problems involved, especially with businessmen who have to maintain contacts with their customers, clients or suppliers abroad. Real as the problems are, they are not insurmountable. If we look into this question, we need to take into consideration the Hadith of the Prophet, peace be upon him, which states that the early time of day is blessed for the Muslim nation. This Hadith is phrased in such a way that admits taking it as a statement or as a prayer. A prayer by the Prophet, peace be upon him, is always answered, so it is equivalent to a true statement. We certainly do not want to miss out on a blessed time.

I must admit that television is a major factor in all this. Watching TV or videos is a personal choice. It should not prevent us from looking into the question of organizing our time. There is certainly a case to be made for making use of the larger part of the night for rest and starting work very early. This is the natural way of things. The night is made for rest and sleep, not for watching television or having very late dinner parties.

***“Have We not made the earth a bed and set the mountains as pegs. And created you as pairs, and made your sleep for rest and the night a covering and the day for seeking livelihood?”*** [the Tidings — “An-Naba” 78: 6-11]

### ***Salat: Fajr Prayers & Voluntary Prayers After***

I normally offer 2 Rak'ahs after the obligatory dawn prayer. A few days ago, someone told me that I should not do that. He added that such voluntary prayers are not allowed until noon. The reasons he gave me were not convincing. Please comment

There are times during the day when offering voluntary prayers is not appropriate. These are from the time one offers the obligatory dawn prayer until about half an hour after sunrise, and after one has completed the obligatory Asr prayer until sunset, and at the time when the sun is at its highest point at midday. This means that the practice of our reader, offering two Rak'ahs of Sunnah after Fajr is wrong. He should follow the guidance of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and not offer such voluntary prayer at that time. An exception to this rule is that, should a person arrive in the mosque for dawn prayer and find the congregation has started. He cannot then begin with the voluntary Sunnah. He has to join the congregation. In this case, he may offer the Sunnah after he has finished the obligatory part with the imam. He may also delay it until after sunrise. One may give different reasons for the restriction. However, I am not attempting any. I only say that we learn the obligations, practices and requirements of our religion from the Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him.

Whatever he teaches us is good, true and faultless. He made this restriction and we obey it without hesitation. After all, we have learnt every thing about prayer from him. He instructed us: "Pray as you have seen me pray." When we follow his example, God rewards us for that, in addition to the reward we get for performing our duties.

### ***Salat: Fajr Prayers, Cold Weather & Bath Before Fajr***

It is well known that taking a bath or shower is obligatory in certain circumstances. Sometimes it is very difficult to take a shower before Fajr in winter, because of the cold weather. Can there be any relaxation of this rule?

There can be no relaxation of this rule. If water is available then a shower or a bath is needed to remove the state of ceremonial impurity. It seems to me that the way out for you is to have your shower before you sleep. This is infinitely better from the religious point of view, and also from the health point of view.

### ***Salat: Fears Of A Would Be Immigrant***

I am about to move to Britain where I will take up work. Since Friday is a working day there and mosques are few, what should I do with regard to Friday prayers?

You will be surprised at the number of mosques that are available in Western countries. When you get there, you should find out which are the nearest mosques in your locality and arrange with your employers leave of absence at the time of Friday prayers. Most people arrange to take their lunch break at that time, and attend Friday prayers at their nearest mosque.

If you are working in a remote area, and you are the only Muslim there, you offer Zuhr prayer instead. But if there are a few Muslims working at the same place, you could join together and arrange Friday prayers at your place of work.

### ***Salat: For the Fulfillment Of A Need***

1. My son, who is studying in Australia, tells me that he and his friends offer the prayer known as Salat Al-Hajah, when they have an examination. I wrote to him not to do so, as this is an innovation. Was I correct?
2. Is there a special prayer or supplication, which one may offer for the accomplishment of a purpose, which one needs badly.

1. The principle of seeking God's help in meeting what we need is perfectly legitimate in Islam. In fact, God invites us in the Qur'an, to pray to Him for what we need and He promises to respond to us and grant us what we pray for.

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We may pray to God, at any time for anything we want provided that it is not one of things God has forbidden. Moreover, it is always better to do something good before putting our request to God. Thus, it is better to offer some obligatory or voluntary prayer, or read some parts of the Qur'an, or give something for charity before we pray God for what we need.

Having said that, it should be pointed out that the prayer to which the reader refers is a special type of prayer described in the following Hadith. "Whoever is in need of something to be done by God or by a human being should perform ablution in a perfect way and offer two voluntary Rak'ahs. He follows that with glorifying God and praying for God's messenger. He then says: "There is no deity other than God the Forbearing, the Most Generous. There is no deity other than God the Most High, the Supreme. Limitless in His glory is God, the Lord of the mighty throne. All praise belongs to God, the Lord of all worlds. I appeal for what ensures the bestowing of Your grace, and Your total forgiveness. I pray to You to grant me a share of every good thing and to spare me every type of sin. My Lord, do not let any sin of mine without removing it by Your forgiveness. My Lord, remove every worry I have and facilitate every need of mine that is pleasing to You. You are indeed the most merciful."

This Hadith is related by Al-Tirmithi who classifies it as ghareeb, which means that it is reported by a single transmitter at least in one stage of its transmission. As such, it is lacking in authenticity, even though its reporters are reliable. This means that the prayer called Salat Al-Hajah in this particular form is not a confirmed Sunnah.

Another more authentic Hadith is related by Imam Ahmad with a reliable chain of transmitters. It quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "Whoever performs ablution well and offers two voluntary Rak'ahs and completes them to perfection will be granted by God whatever he prays for either immediately or in God's good time."

This is in line with Islamic teachings. It requires no special form of prayer or supplication and simply recommends a good deed to begin with and a supplication addressed to God with sincerity. The answer of his prayer is guaranteed, either immediately or after sometime, as God deems best. We know that when God delays answering a prayer, He gives us better than what we ask for. Therefore, we always gain.

2. If you badly need something to be accomplished, then the advice given by the Prophet, peace be upon him, in an authentic Hadith that you do a good ablution, washing every organ well and making sure of adding what is recommended in a proper ablution, such as washing your face, arms and feet three times instead of once, etc. You then offer two voluntary rak'ahs trying to concentrate well on your prayers.

When you have finished, you do your supplication and request Allah to grant you your purpose, whatever it is, as long as it is something permissible. According to the Hadith, Allah is certain to answer your prayers either immediately or at a later time of His choosing. In another Hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us that if Allah chooses to defer answering a particular prayer of ours, He rewards us for it in the life to come. When we will see what He gives us instead, we should wish that He had not answered a single supplication of ours in this present life, but had stored it for us in the hereafter. In the light of the foregoing, I can add a little word of advice. Although the purpose you are keen to have accomplished is perfectly appropriate and understandable, it may be that its postponement or non-accomplishment is better for you and the person concerned. While it is appropriate to continue to request it in your supplication, you must not feel downhearted if it is delayed. Allah is certain to choose for you what He knows to be better for you.

### ***Salat: Friday Congregation & Other Congregational Prayers***

It is clearly noticeable that mosques are overfull when it is time for Friday prayers, but only a few worshipers attend the congregation for the five daily obligatory prayers. Does this mean that Friday prayer is more important than the obligatory prayers? People say that they offer these prayers at home. Is this permissible if they do not have a reason to be absent from the mosque? What is the punishment for missing an obligatory prayer without valid reason?

The Friday prayer is different from other obligatory prayers in the fact that it must be offered in congregation. If a person offers it on his own, he violates the requirements, and his prayer is not valid. Hence, people realize that they must offer it in mosques. Hence mosques are full on Friday.

Although offering the obligatory prayer with the congregation is strongly recommended, if any of them is offered individually, it is valid and acceptable. Hence, to require all people to attend the mosques five times a day, is to go too far. The question that arises here: is praying individually valid or not? If anyone says that it is not, then he must put forward his evidence. If he cannot do so, then he is adding to our religion something at his own behest, which is unacceptable. There is no specified punishment for missing a particular prayer. The matter is left to God whether to punish the offender or not.

### ***Salat: Friday Congregation & Some Questions***

May I ask whether Friday prayers are Fardh or Wajib? How to perform the Zuhr prayer on Friday? Is it with all Sunnah prayers, or with all obligatory prayers?

The two terms are used differently by different scholars and schools of Fiqh. Some, like the Shaf'ie school use the term Wajib sparingly, while the Zahiri school does not use it. In fact, linguistically speaking, the two terms mean the same thing, which is "obligatory". However, the Hanafi school distinguishes between the two, making Wajib a lesser requirement. All schools are in agreement that Friday prayer is obligatory and it must be done by every Muslim male who has attained puberty. They also agree that it replaces Zuhr prayers on Friday. Hence, there is no need to pray Zuhr, if one is praying Friday. Nevertheless, it is recommended to offer two rak'ahs of Sunnah before Friday prayer and two after it. One may increase these to four rak'ahs before it and four after it, but certainly the obligatory prayer of Zuhr should not be offered by anyone who attends Friday prayers and offers it with the Imam.

### ***Salat: Friday Congregation & Then Dhuhr Prayer***

1. Back home, after Friday prayer is finished, a section of the congregation offer Dhuhr prayer in congregation. Please explain.

2. Because we had to meet a relative at the airport, we missed Friday prayer in the mosque. We prayed Zuhr when we arrived back home. However, we were told that we could not pray in congregation because it was a Friday, and we had to pray separately. But we were very uncomfortable about this. Please comment.

1. According to the Shaf'ie school of Fiqh, when you have several mosques in the same town, all offering Friday prayers, then you should offer Dhuhr prayer afterward. This is because a condition added by Imam Al-Shaf'ie for Friday prayer is that it should be one congregation in each village, town or city. In this case, Dhuhr prayer is not required. The evidence in support of this view is not particularly strong.

2. What you were told about praying separately was wrong. The Prophet, peace be upon him, led his companions in prayer when they all missed their dawn prayer after having marched for much of the night and were very exhausted. This means that it is perfectly appropriate, or indeed encouraged, for a group of people who have missed a prayer for a valid reason to offer that prayer in congregation once they can do so. The point that has been given to you is that missing a Friday prayer is a special case. It is indeed a special case because a person who misses Friday prayer in the mosque does not pray it as a Friday prayer, or Jumu'ah, but as Zuhr prayer.

What could happen is that several people arrive in a mosque after the Friday prayer has finished. If they were to offer Zuhr together in a group, they may give the impression that they were forming a separate congregation because they may have some objection to the Imam who led the Friday prayer. In order to avoid giving such an impression, they are recommended to pray separately. But in your case, you were offering your Zuhr prayer at home. There would be no chance of giving anyone a wrong impression. It would have been better for you to offer that prayer together in a congregation, with one of you leading the prayer and the other two joining him.

### ***Salat: Friday Congregation & Women Attending the Mosque***

Is it appropriate for women to attend Friday prayer in the mosque, if it is convenient for them to do so?

Yes, it is perfectly acceptable that women should attend Friday prayers, although it is not obligatory for them. Muslim women have been attending Friday prayers in all Muslim countries since the Prophet's time. They attend Friday prayer every week in the Sacred Mosque in Makkah and in the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, as well as in Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

Wherever it is convenient, they may attend if they wish. God has been kind to us, taking into account the duties women have to perform and the fact that they often need to look after young children. Therefore, He has not made Friday and congregational prayers obligatory to women. But He has not barred them from them. Hence, they may attend whenever they please. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Do not prevent female servants of God from attending God's mosques."

### ***Salat: Friday Congregation At Workplace***

Is it permissible to offer Friday prayer anywhere other than a mosque? I work on a site where the nearest mosque is about 20 km away, and when it is time for Friday prayer, we are actually working. There are only a few Muslim workers while the majority are non-Muslims. When we inquired about the possibility of taking time off for prayers, we were told to pray on site. Is that permissible?

Friday prayer is very important, and it must be offered in congregation. It is meant to tackle the situation of the Muslim community and to remind people of God and the Day of Judgement. God has prohibited buying and selling at the time of Friday prayer, making it clear that when the Friday prayer is called, all Muslims should go straight to attend the prayer, and they must stop trading. This ban extends to every sort of activity, which is meant to earn money. So an employee should leave his job and attend the prayers.

However, special circumstances may exempt one from attending the prayer. One of them is the non-availability of a mosque or a congregation at a convenient place. In your case, your employer would not have been able to prevent you join the prayers if there was a mosque locally where you could have attended the prayer. But traveling such a distance is not required to attend the prayer.

Therefore, the best alternative is that the small group of Muslims at your work site should arrange that the prayer is held every Friday on site. One of you may deliver the Khutbah [which need not necessarily be in Arabic] and lead the prayer. In this way, you have the reward of the prayer and none of you misses it while at the same time you do not need to take time off for that purpose.

### ***Salat: Friday Congregation In the Army Camps***

We are on security duty in an army post, which is around 30 kilometers away from the nearest place where Friday prayer is held. There are about 250 of us, and we are here on more or less permanent basis. We cannot go to Friday prayer at such a distance. Instead we arranged to hold it on camp, but every now and then someone comes and says that Friday prayer is not valid in our place, and it is discontinued. We read your ruling to some factory workers, telling them to organize Friday prayer on site, because they are at a similar distance from the nearest town. We consulted a local Fatwa council and they said that we should not organize Friday prayer. Could you please clarify this confusion.

The first point to consider is the reason why those people come and tell you that you cannot organize the Friday prayer at your camp. You have not specified this in your letter, but I imagine that they have based their verdict on that you need the Muslim ruler's permission to organize Friday prayers at your place, or on that your camp is not a village or a settlement of human habitation. Moreover, they make the basis of their ruling the views expressed in their school of Fiqh, which is most probably the Hanafi school. We have no problem with any of the schools of Fiqh Muslims follow, not only the four major ones, but the other ones with lesser following as well. However, we need to remember two very important points: 1] the rulings of these schools were mostly recorded over a thousand years ago; and 2] in each school, later scholars gave rulings that may be contrary to the standard ones in the same school.

Both these considerations are of great importance. The second one makes it clear that later scholars, who followed the same methodology, arrive at a different ruling because they may have a point of evidence that had eluded earlier scholars, or because certain aspects of life were given more importance in their own time. Some people are wary when we speak about changing times requiring different rulings; but this is agreed by all scholars of note, because God has given us a broad measure of choice, and what we do within this area is acceptable to Him. This is what basically makes Islam easy to follow in all situations.

Different schools of Fiqh stipulate different conditions for the validity of Friday prayers. For example, some stipulate that the minimum number of worshippers should be 40, while others give different figures, such as 3, 4, 7, 12, 20, 30, 50 or 70. Some stipulate that it should be in a city, or a town, or a village of so many thousand inhabitants.

Scholars have discussed these conditions and proved that they really do not carry any sanction from the Qur'an, or the Sunnah.

What they agree on is that it is a binding duty on every Muslim male who is adult, and in a state of health that enables him to attend it. Certain conditions exempt people from attending it, such as travelling, illness, etc. It must be offered in congregation, which means that it can be offered by only two people, if that is the number available. This is based on the Hadith that states: "Two or more make up a congregation." From what the reader says, this camp includes a mosque where congregational prayers are held regularly. Those on duty do not attend the congregation, but offer their prayers later. There are 250 people, most of who will



attend the Friday prayer, unless they are on duty. Since the duty is one of security, it is a valid reason for exemption. The choice is between organizing Friday prayer or not.

The answer is that they must organize it, because Friday prayer is one of the main rituals of Islamic worship, and it must not be neglected in any place where there are a group of Muslims. In fact, they do not need to ask anyone for a view or permission, because they are expected to offer this prayer and they cannot travel 30 kilometers for this purpose. If anyone says that they should not, then that person should provide the evidence for his ruling. The evidence must be from the Qur'an or the Hadith. It should not be from the views of any scholar, whoever he may be.

As I said earlier, we often quote a view from a particular school of Fiqh, which undoubtedly did a great service to Islam by providing methodologies for deducing rulings on a large variety of situations. However, these views were recorded several centuries ago. We today live in a totally different world. The major scholars who founded these schools lived in a Muslim state, where the Caliph was the one who either led the Friday prayer, or ensured that it is organized. In our world, few of the rulers attend Friday prayer, let alone think about its organization. Where would you get permission for organizing it in your camp? The fact is that you have that permission, evidenced as it is by allocating a room or space for your regular prayers. If you look at other situations, you find people in the West organizing Friday prayers at work, wherever a few Muslims happen to be working. Do we tell them that they should not organize Friday prayer, which is a major ritual of Islamic worship? To suggest that is ludicrous. In fact, whenever scholars from the Muslim world visit them, they attend their Friday prayers and praise them for organizing it. You should not hesitate to organize your Friday prayer. In fact you must do so. We want Friday prayers to be organized in every army camp throughout the Muslim world. The day will come, God willing, when it will be so.

### ***Salat: Friday Prayers By Women — On Their Own***

Can a group of women offer Friday prayer on their own, with one of them giving the Khutbah or sermon and then leading the congregation?

Women are not required to offer the Friday prayer. Instead, they offer the Zuhr prayer in the normal way.

However, if a woman, or a group of women, attend the Friday prayer in a mosque, it is perfectly appropriate and compensates them for Zuhr prayer. But the situation you are considering is not right. Why would women offer the Friday prayer instead of Zuhr when what is required is Zuhr? There is no advantage in that. Besides, God has exempted women from Friday prayer because it is easier for them to offer Zuhr, particularly when they have to attend to young children.

To establish something that Islam does not require is to create an imposition. This is not acceptable.

### ***Salat: Friday Sermon & Salat Greeting the Mosque***

1. If one arrives in the mosque at the time when the Friday sermon is already in progress, does he offer two Rak'ahs in Sunnah prayer first before sitting down to listen?
2. It is said that when the imam delivers his sermon on Friday, all activity must come to a halt. What about a late comer offering two rak'ahs by way of greeting the mosque?

3. I have always understood that the reason that Friday prayer is only two rak'ahs is that the Khutbah compensates for the other two, which we normally offer in Dhuhr prayer. Some people suggest that it is strongly discouraged to offer voluntary prayer when the speech is being delivered. I have seen people continuing to offer such voluntary prayer when the sermon is in progress. Please comment.

1. Schools of Fiqh or jurisprudence differ on this question. Some recommend that when we enter the mosque on Friday, we offer two voluntary Rak'ahs of prayer as greeting to the mosque and then sit down to listen to the sermon. Others, notably Imam Malik, require such a person to sit down and listen without offering any prayer. Both have valid evidence supporting their views.

Therefore, one should follow the view with which one is more comfortable. After all, these two Rak'ahs are voluntary, and if one does not offer them one does not do any wrong. If one is keen to offer them for the reward, but reluctant to do so because of the objection often expressed, one may offer instead two extra Rak'ahs after one finishes Friday prayer. There is no restriction on the number of voluntary Rak'ahs one may offer after the obligatory prayer is over.

2. Scholars take different views on this particular question with one school of thought making a strict rule that once the sermon, or Khutbah, has started, then it is not permissible to offer any prayer by any person. What is agreed to by all schools of thought is that once the sermon has started, no one who is already in the mosque may stand up to offer voluntary prayers. As for a late comer, he may offer his two rak'ahs in greeting the mosque immediately after he enters, and before he sits down. Once the Prophet, peace be upon him, was delivering the sermon when one of his companions entered and was about to sit down. The Prophet, peace be upon him, instructed him to offer two rak'ahs. As you realize, this prayer, i.e. greeting the mosque is voluntary. Therefore, if a person does not do it, he commits no sin. If he does it, he is rewarded.

3. I think it is wrong to relate the fact that Friday prayer consists of two rak'ahs only to the requirement of having a sermon before it. Otherwise, we would have to say that the sermon should be as long as or as short as the two rak'ahs or the attendance of the whole sermon would be obligatory to everyone. As it is, Friday prayer is deemed to be offered correctly and in full if one misses the whole of the sermon, but attends the prayer itself. It is certainly most important to attend the sermon and to make sure that one arrives in the mosque early enough to listen to it in full. But that is not a condition for the validity and acceptability of the prayer itself. What we say is that Friday prayer is made in this fashion because God has willed it so. Besides, the sermon is meant to discuss matters of importance, which are relevant to the life of the Muslim community, or to remind the worshippers of God and the Day of Judgement.

According to the Maliki school of thought, if a person arrives in the mosque when the sermon is in progress, the only option available to him is to sit down and listen. Other schools of thought make it permissible to offer two short rak'ahs in greeting to the mosque.

During the time of the Prophet, a man came into the mosque while the Prophet, peace be upon him, was delivering the sermon. He sat down to listen, but the Prophet, peace be upon him, interrupted the sermon to tell him to offer two short rak'ahs, and the man complied. The Maliki school of thought considers this a special case because the Prophet, peace be upon him, wanted to draw the attention of the community to the fact that the man was in a situation of extreme poverty. That would

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have ensured that he would receive some charitable donations, or Sadaqah. Other scholars take it as an indication of permissibility.

### ***Salat: Friday Sermon In Arabic***

1. It is a common belief among Muslims in a non-Arabic speaking country that the sermon given before Friday prayers must be in Arabic, saying that it is not permissible for any language other than Arabic to be used on the pulpit. What imams do, therefore, is to give a sermon in the local language prior to Friday prayer. When the time for Zuhr is called, this is concluded and the imam gives a short Khutbah in Arabic. I shall be grateful for your comments.

2. According to translation of the Qur'an, in a south Indian language Malayalam, the translator states in his comments on the Surah called "Friday" that the whole sermon should be given in Arabic. He argues that at the time when Islam spread into non-Arab countries, the sermon on Friday was still given in Arabic by the companions of the Prophet, some of whom were speakers of the local languages. Therefore, we cannot do what the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions have not done. This means that we have to give the sermon in the same language they gave, i.e. in Arabic, even when the audience is largely non-Arab. This seems to be at variance with a ruling that you have given earlier, in which you have stated that it is permissible to give the sermon or Khutbah in the local language. Please comment.

1. Friday prayer is the one obligatory prayer, which we must offer in congregation. It is offered at midday on Friday, and preceded by a sermon given by the imam. This sermon is meant to discuss the situation of the Muslim community and its problems. Moreover, its purpose is to make worshippers aware of their obligations towards their Lord and to remind them of the hereafter so that they may be more conscious of their duties. It has, therefore, a dual purpose; social and religious. It stands to reason; therefore, that it should be given in the language which is commonly understood by the worshippers.

When we say that something is forbidden or not permissible, we must have a basis for our statement. That evidence can only be a statement given in the Qur'an or by the Prophet, peace be upon him. I can say without any fear of ever being contradicted that there is nothing in the Qur'an or in the Sunnah which states that to use any language other than Arabic on the pulpit or Minbar, is forbidden. Whoever makes this assertion cannot substantiate his claim in any way. We have to remember here that there is no sanctity for any language as such. It is true that the Qur'an is in Arabic and the Hadith is also in Arabic. That does not make the Arabic language sacred. It has been honored by the fact that Allah has chosen it for His message, but to say that the words of the language have any sanctity is to make a wild claim.

Moreover, Allah tells us in the Qur'an that He sent messengers to different people. Every messenger addressed his people in their language. No one used a language, which was not understood by his people. How can we expect, then, an imam to speak to a congregation of worshippers in a language, which they do not understand?

If the congregation is composed largely of people who do not speak Arabic, then the imam must give the Khutbah or sermon in the language, which they speak. When he quotes from the Qur'an or the Hadith, he may give that quotation in Arabic and add its translation. Nothing more is required. The practice, which you have mentioned, has become widely common in certain parts in the Muslim world. There is no need

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or basis for it. I recognize, however, that it will be very difficult to change such a habit, unless knowledge of Islam in that part of the world spreads much more widely.

2. In order to deal with this question, we have to consider the purpose of the Friday sermon and the evidence for or against its delivery in the language of the congregation. If we have clear instruction from the Prophet, peace be upon him, we have to follow it without hesitation. When we take such a comprehensive view, we will be able to decide whether the argument advanced by the commentator you have quoted is valid or not.

The Khutbah or sermon, delivered by the Imam on Friday midday prayer has a number of specific objectives, such as reminding the congregation of God and the Day of Judgement, urging them to fulfill their Islamic duties and implement Islam in their lives, discussing their immediate problems as a community in the light of Islamic teachings and try to find solutions for these problems. The Friday sermon, therefore, has a very important role to play in the life of the Muslim community. It is a symbol of a joint action for the common welfare of the community. It is highly important therefore, that the Friday sermon be understood by most, if not all, worshippers. If the Imam chooses for his sermon a topic, which is not easy to understand by the majority of the people, he fails in his duty to involve them all in the message he has to give. The same applies if he uses a highly literary style, which is not easily understood by the majority of the worshippers. When we speak of style, we mean that he is actually using the language they speak in a way, which is understood only by a few. What can be said if the Imam uses a foreign language, which is understood by only one or two of the congregation?

Some people will be quick with their protests that it is not any language, which the imam may choose at will. They insist on using the Arabic language because it is the language used in the Qur'an. That brings the question whether the sermon has any sanctity in itself, or whether the Arabic language has such sanctity. It is also important to know whether the Islamic message and Islamic teachings can be expressed in a language other than Arabic.

A verse in the Qur'an tells us one of the signs, which God has given us as an indication of His Oneness and how He likes to be worshipped is the fact that He has created us in different colors and complexion. And He has made us to speak different languages. The verse is concluded with the following assertion: ***"In this there are indeed signs for people endowed with knowledge."*** Linguists tell us that the differences in languages are not merely of the type, which exist between Arabic and Persian, Turkish and Greek, English and French, etc. Dialects of the same language may differ so widely that the speakers of different dialects can hardly understand one another. Moreover, there are certain characteristics in the speech of every individual, which distinguish it from that of every other speech of the same language. The question is posed in departments of linguistics in universities whether in the study of human speech, we should study a language. For our own purposes, we need only to understand that the speech of every individual is different from that of all other speakers of the same language in order to realize what sort of range these differences encompass. And how it is possible for the speakers of a major language, such as Arabic or English, with all their dialects and accents, to understand one another. But this great variety of the same major entity is common to all aspects of creation. We are all human beings. Our constitution and features are the same, but we are so different that every single one of us is an entity. There are billions of people in the world today, but no two persons are exactly the same, unless they are identical twins. Even then there are differences. Not only so, but the same person is not repeated twice in the history of mankind. That sort of variety applies to all aspects of creation. It is indeed a testimony to the greatness of the Creator.

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Since God has made us so and since He has willed that we speak so many languages, it follows that no language has a special distinction, which makes it stand out as more honorable or sacred. Indeed, no language has any aspect of sanctity. It is true that God has revealed his word, i.e. the Qur'an in Arabic. That is an honor to Arabic certainly, but it does not mean that the message of Islam can only be explained in Arabic. When we offer our formal worship, we conduct our prayer in Arabic. That is because when we pray, we recite God's own words. These have been revealed in Arabic and we repeat them as they have been revealed. But the message of Islam can be expressed and studied in any language. A clear example of that may be found in the story, which tells us that a delegation arrived in Madinah at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, representing a tribe which spoke a dialect of Arabic, which changed the "L" to "AM". His purpose was clearly to make these people understand what he said. Moreover, he encouraged some of his companions who he recognized to have very good memory to learn foreign languages. For example, he asked Zaid Ibn Thabit to learn Syrian because the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to receive letters from Northern Syria. Zaid reports that he learned that language in a fortnight. All this goes to show that Islam has recognized the importance of speaking to people in their language and putting the message of God to them as clearly as possible.

Moreover, God had sent messengers to different nations prior to Islam. The message was one, but the details differed according to the circumstances in which it was given. If Arabic had any special sanctity, you would have expected the message of God preached by other messengers to be given in Arabic. But God tells us in the Qur'an, that every messenger spoke to his people in their own tongue. The fourth verse of Surah 14, reads:

***"Never have We sent forth any messenger otherwise than with a message with his own people's tongue, so that he might make the truth clear to them."***  
[Ibrahim— "Ibrahim" 14: 4]

Moreover, the Prophet, peace be upon him, instructs us to speak to people according to their understanding. The message of God can therefore, be expressed in any human tongue, so that people can understand it. When we realize that Islam is God's message to all mankind, then its teaching must be available to all people in their own languages. The sermon delivered by the Imam on Friday is one method by which the teachings of Islam are explained and illustrated to people. Therefore, it is important that people listening to the sermon should understand it. This they cannot do unless it is given to them in their own language. Obviously, when the Imam quotes verses from the Qur'an, it is far preferable to use the original Arabic text together with the translation of the meaning.

I feel that the above is sufficient evidence to show that it is permissible to use other languages in the Friday sermon. As for the statement that the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions did not use any language other than Arabic in their sermons, I believe that is a mistaken usage of a sound argument. To start with, it cannot be proven. To prove that claim, you have to show that one of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, delivered the sermon in Arabic when he was in a mosque in which the overwhelming majority of worshippers did not speak Arabic, but spoke a certain language, which he knew perfectly well. Even then you have to show that his choice of the language of the Khutbah was based on his knowledge that the Khutbah should be given only in Arabic. If you prove that, you will still need to show that his knowledge was correct. I do not think that anyone could prove that such a case exists.

When we make a certain judgement on the basis that the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions behaved in a particular manner when they faced a certain situation, we have to be careful how to apply this rule. It certainly applies in matters

of worship but in most cases it concerns additions. Take for example the celebration of the middle night of the month of Sha'ban. We have no instructions by the Prophet, peace be upon him, to celebrate that night and we know that none of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, celebrated it. To suggest that this might have a particular significance, which requires that it be observed in a certain manner is an addition to Islamic worship and it cannot be accepted. In the case of the Friday sermon, the most that can be said is that the occasion to give a Khutbah in a different language by a companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not arise. This is either because they did not speak the languages of the congregation or because a large section of the congregation understood Arabic. Therefore, this argument based on the practice of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, does not stand.

A basic rule of Islam tells us that things are permissible unless pronounced otherwise. To deliver the sermon of Friday in a language other than Arabic remains permissible unless we have a clear statement in the Qur'an, or by the Prophet, peace be upon him, to the contrary. Since no such statement exists, it is permissible. Indeed it should be the practice when the congregation does not speak Arabic. That is certainly better than the sort of sermons delivered in the great majority of mosques in certain parts of the Muslim world. The sermon is no longer than two minutes and composed by rhythmic phrases, which mean nothing to the majority of the worshippers or indeed to the Imam who delivers them.

### ***Salat: Gradation Of Fardh, Sunnah & Wajib***

Could you please explain the different types of prayers: what is Sunnah, Wajib & Fardh?

What is Fardh in prayer refers to the five obligatory prayers. They are two Rak'ahs of Fajr, four each for Zuhr, Asr, and Ish'a, with three of Maghrib. There is nothing else obligatory in prayer.

What is Sunnah refers to recommended prayers, offered on a voluntary basis. This means that if one does not pray the Sunnah, one does not commit a sin, but is deprived of the reward he would have otherwise earned in following a Sunnah of the Prophet, peace be upon him. The well-known Sunnah prayers are: two Rak'ahs before Fajr, two before Dhuhr; [the Hanafi school of thought considers four before Dhuhr] and two after it, two after Maghrib and two after Isha'.

An even more strongly recommended Sunnah is the Witr, which is three Rak'ahs to be rendered after the Fardh and Sunnah in Isha. The Hanafi school of thought considers it Wajib, which means that it is binding. But this is difficult to accept, as it would raise it to a status approximating the obligatory prayers. If we say so, we mean that a person who does not offer Witr leaves himself open to be punished by God. But God does not punish anyone for leaving out something He has not imposed as a duty.

There are other recommended prayers, but in a lesser extent than the ones I have mentioned above. These are called Nafil in some parts of the world. These include 2 Rak'ahs before and after Dhuhr in addition to the ones outlined as Sunnah and four Rak'ahs before Asr prayer.

### ***Salat: Greeting the Haram i.e. the Grand Mosque In Makkah***

Upon entering any mosque, we are recommended to offer two rak'ahs as a greeting to the mosque. However, some scholars suggest that one who arrives in the Grand Mosque in Makkah for Umrah should start with tawaf,

which is also regarded as a greeting prayer. How far is this correct and when does it apply?

Offering two rak'ahs as a greeting to a mosque is not restricted to when you enter the Haram for prayers only. This applies anytime when you enter the Haram, whether you are performing the Umrah or the pilgrimage or just arriving for one regular prayer or sit in the mosque and read the Qur'an. Tawaf does not count as a greeting prayer, but it is the proper greeting of the Ka'abah.

You perhaps realize that tawaf is a form of prayer which means that everything that applies to prayer applies to tawaf with the exception that it is permissible to talk during tawaf. In other words, you have to have ablution for tawaf and you better occupy your time with glorification of Allah and praising Him as well as praying Him for anything you wish. When you finish tawaf you are recommended to offer two rak'ahs as Sunnah of tawaf, and it is preferable to offer them behind the place known as Maqam Ibrahim.

### ***Salat: Greeting the Mosque But Imam Not Offering This Sunnah***

I have never seen an imam who offered the two rak'ahs of greeting the mosque when he comes in on Fridays. He normally comes into the mosque at the last minute, when the Athan is called and go straight ahead to deliver their sermons. Are imams exempt from offering this Sunnah?

No one is exempt from a Sunnah prayer. It applies to every body. However, by definition, a Sunnah is not obligatory. A person has the choice whether to offer it or not. Once Omar ibn al-Khattab offered only one rak'ah in a Sunnah prayer in the mosque. He was asked about it. His answer was that it was only voluntary: people may reduce or increase it as they wish. It is not right that we question or criticize people on their practice of Sunnah. Had it been absolutely necessary to offer a particular prayer, God would have made it obligatory.

Having said that, I would like to mention that in most mosques there is a room for the imam, where he rests or studies if he is not engaged in prayer. The imam might have offered the greeting prayer on his arrival and went to his room. He does not need to offer it again when he enters the mosque a second time. Besides, it is not right to watch what people may or may not do. We should concentrate on our own action, trying always to do any voluntary act of worship we can in order to increase our reward and ensure that God may forgive us our sins.

### ***Salat: Impurity Falling On Clothes***

Should some drops of urine fall on one's clothes, how to clean them for joining prayers in the mosque, particularly if one is out at the time.

An important condition for the validity of prayers is to be in a state of purity, in body, clothes and the place where one is praying. Urine is an impurity. Hence, should it drop over one's body or clothes, it should be washed off before one can pray. If it falls on one's clothes, the best way to remove the impurity is to wait until it is dry, then pour water over the spot or the area where it had fallen.

It is enough that the area is soaked. It is not necessary to wash the whole garment. Only the spot or the area that has been contaminated. If one cannot wait for the garment to dry, he removes the impurity by pouring a larger amount of water over the contaminated area.

### ***Salat: In North Europe & At Similar Longitudes***

In my home town in north Germany Isha prayer in summer is due about midnight, while Fajr is about 3 a.m. Could you explain the point about combining prayers, as this is subject of controversy?

Summer represents real hardship when one tries to observe all prayers on time. Muslim scholars have looked into the timing of prayers in northern areas in summer. They have worked out certain formulas to determine when exactly Isha and Fajr prayers fall due. The normal formula for areas below latitude 45 do not apply in May, June and July in these areas. Hence, whatever timing is mentioned for such northern areas is approximate, not accurate.

In order to reduce the hardship, one may offer the Isha prayer, together with Maghrib prayer, shortly after the sun has set. That gives more time for sleep and enable those who use this concession to attend to their Fajr prayer in a more relaxed way. Perhaps I should add that combining the two day-prayers, Zuhr and Asr, occasionally for convenience, and the two evening prayers, Maghrib and Isha, is appropriate. This is a concession, which is applicable in ordinary situations, and it is given for no reason other than convenience. This is simply because Islam is a religion of ease. It dislikes hardship. With the long days in summer in northern areas, there is a real hardship, which may be reduced by combining the two evening prayers. Hence, people may avail themselves of God's concession.

### ***Salat: Intention Or Niyyah***

1. When I offer a Sunnah prayer, what should I say when I make my intention? Should I say that I am offering this prayer as a Sunnah for God, or for the Prophet?

2. My friend contends that it is enough to have the intention to pray as one performs ablution. A clear intention before starting the prayer is not necessary. I find it difficult to accept this. Please comment.

1. There are two points to be clarified here. The first is that we offer all our worship to God alone. No one else has any share of our prayer. It is true that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has recommended us to offer Sunnah prayers, but he made clear at the same time that such prayer is offered to God alone.

This is what we say in every Rak'ah when we read the Fatihah, and say as we address God Almighty: ***"It is You that we worship; and it is from You that we seek support."*** Moreover, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has repeatedly emphasized that none other than God is worthy of worship. Islam is based on the concept of God's absolute Oneness, and this is manifested above all in dedicating all our worship to Him alone. To address your Sunnah prayer to the Prophet, peace be upon him, is to be guilty of associating partners with God, which takes a person out of the fold of Islam altogether.

The second point is that when you formulate your intention to do anything, you do not say any words. Intention is an act of mind, not words uttered as all speech uttered. It is possible to say words expressing an intention, but no intention is formed, simply because the person saying these words is either absent-minded at the time, or saying them for a different purpose. An example is that of a teacher explaining what should be in a person's mind at the time of starting a prayer.

This means that when you stand to offer a particular prayer, your concentration should be on that prayer, formulating your intention to offer that particular prayer. In every day matters, we often use the verb 'intend' to express what we have in mind without ever associating it with saying any form of words. You say, for example, "I



intend to take a holiday next week”, or “I intended to give him my vote, but on reflection, I changed my mind.” Both the original thought of giving that person your vote and the subsequent change of mind are intentions, but they are never formulated in words.

The same applies to intention with regard to prayer, fasting or any other act of worship, except pilgrimage and Umrah. In the case of these two a verbal declaration signifies the start of the duty, although the intention was formed earlier.

2. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: “Actions are but by intentions.” This means that if one goes through the actions and movements of prayer and says the same passages and Surahs he is required to say without having a clear intention to pray, then he has not prayed. He has simply gone through the actions and movements of the prayer. Similarly, if one has a clear intention for ablution, then his ablution is correct and valid. His intention does not incorporate prayer, because it is possible to have ablution without praying after it. Similarly, it is possible to offer two or more obligatory prayers with the same ablution, if it is not invalidated through any of its causes of invalidation. How can one then formulate an intention that incorporates ablution as well as indefinite number of prayers [or unspecified number of Raka’ah in any prayer]?

I have no doubt that clear intention is necessary before starting any prayer. If one does not have such clear intention, then his prayer is not valid. It is not enough to make the intention to pray when one is about to do the ablution.

### ***Salat: Interrupting Prayer***

In what situation is it permissible to abandon or interrupt prayer?

In normal circumstances, there is no situation, which allows a worshipper to cut short his prayer or abandon it before he finishes it. Even if one finds himself facing a snake or a wild animal while praying, he should not abandon his prayer.

He may kill the snake or hide from the animal, but he may and should continue with his prayers.

If a mother, for example, sees her young child about to fall or harm himself or cause some harm to the house, or cause trouble, she may move to prevent him from doing what mischief he intends to do or to protect him from an unwelcome accident. She may do all this, however, while continuing praying.

If one is alone in the place where he is offering his prayer and someone knocks at the door, he may raise his voice to make that person aware of his presence, or he may walk to the door to open it without turning away from the Qiblah, but he may not cut his prayer short.

### ***Salat: Janazah Prayer — For A Child***

In the case of a child’s death, from what age will it be required that the Janazah prayer is offered for the deceased?

The Janazah prayer should be offered for any Muslim who dies. It is a short prayer offered just before the body of the deceased person is taken for burial. It is a collective duty, which means that it is obligatory on community.

If a group of the community, or even one person offers it, the duty is deemed to have been fulfilled. If none does, then the whole community is at fault and will have to answer for its failure. This prayer may be offered at any time when the burial is about to take place, either in a mosque, or when the body is taken from the person’s home,

or from the hospital. It should be offered in the same way for a deceased man or woman or child.

Any child who dies, whatever the age, should have the same prayer offered for its soul, regardless of its age. The Janazah prayer should be offered even for a stillborn child.

***Salat: Janazah Prayer — For A Fetus***

A man who works abroad learnt that his wife had a miscarriage after five months in her pregnancy. The fetus showed signs of life, but inevitably died soon afterward. However, there was no Janazah prayer before burial. How to remedy this omission?

If miscarriage takes place before the pregnancy has completed four months, then the fetus need not be washed before burial. There is no need either to perform the Janazah prayer for it. But if four months have been completed and the miscarried fetus shows signs of life, then it is treated in the same way as the death of a living person. It should be washed and prepared for burial. Janazah prayer should be offered as well.

As this was a miscarriage after five months and life was clearly indicated, someone should have offered the Janazah prayer for it before burial, in the same way as it is offered for any deceased person. That this was overlooked, the situation could be corrected by the father, who may offer this prayer even though he is in a different country. This is all that may be required in such a situation.

***Salat: Janazah Prayer — For One That Committed Suicide***

Is it acceptable to offer funeral prayer for someone who has committed suicide?

Yes. At the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, a man killed himself. After he was prepared for burial, he was brought to the mosque for the final prayer for the deceased, i.e. "Janazah". The Prophet, peace be upon him, told his companions who were present to offer that prayer for the dead man, but he himself did not join them. Scholars agree that prayer for the deceased may be offered for a person who had killed himself, but the ruler of the Islamic State should not be the one who leads the prayer. The questions with regard to the status of a person who has committed suicide arises from the fact that suicide is a grave sin, which no Muslim should contemplate. We have some reports, which equate it with denying the faith altogether.

In a Qudsi Hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, reports that God says: "My servant has affronted Me with an assault on his life, and, therefore, I banish him from heaven."

This is certainly true, but we cannot put ourselves in a position where we judge people so as to decide who is believer and who is not. How can we tell that the person who has committed suicide was in full command of his senses, when he ended his life with his own hands? In many cases, a person kills himself as a result of suffering a severe mental disturbance. It is, therefore, God who judges him. As far as we are concerned, we treat him, as we knew him. If he was a Muslim, we offer "Janazah" prayer for him, with a sincere supplication to forgive him.

***Salat: Janazah Prayer — In Absentia***

We follow the practice of offering 'Salat for a deceased person' who has died at our home country because we are not able to participate in the prayer

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for an immediate relative back home. Some say that this is a deviation from the norms. Does Islam sanction this practice?

When news of the death of Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia was conveyed to the Prophet, peace be upon him, he and his companions offered this prayer, which is a special prayer for a deceased person before his burial. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was in Madinah while the Negus died and was buried in Abyssinia. Hence, to suggest that this prayer is a deviation betrays total ignorance.

Some scholars, however, suggest that if we know for certain that this prayer has been offered for the deceased person at his hometown or village, then to offer this prayer when away is not necessary. But there is nothing in the Sunnah to support this restriction. The fact that the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions offered this prayer for a deceased person who died more than 1000 kilometers away shows that it is perfectly appropriate. No one may argue otherwise.

An individual or a congregation may offer prayer for an away deceased person. When we offer it, we should turn towards the Qiblah in Makkah, even though the person might have died in a place that lies in a different direction. The prayer is offered in the same way as if the deceased's body was present, without any difference.

### ***Salat: Janazah Prayer — Joining Late***

Should one join a prayer for a deceased person after it has started, how does he make up for the part he missed?

The prayer for a deceased person, i.e. Janazah prayer, is a congregational prayer consisting of four Takbeers, which is signaled by the Imam saying *Allahu Akbar*. After the first one we read the opening Surah of the Qur'an, Al-Fatihah; after the second we read the second half of Tashahhud; after the third we pray to God to bestow His grace on the deceased and forgive him or her for their sins; and after the fourth we say a short prayer for all Muslims in all generations.

If one arrives late and finds that the Janazah prayer has already started without knowing which part it has reached, he joins the imam, starting his prayer normally. He is better advised to finish his prayer with the imam without completing any missed part.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked by his wife, Ayesha: "Messenger of God, I sometimes offer the Janazah prayer but cannot hear some Takbeers." He said to her: "What you hear, follow the imam; and what you miss, you need not compensate for it." This is the standard view. However, some scholars prefer that a person who has missed any part of the prayer for a deceased person should complete it after the imam has finished. Whichever view one follows is acceptable, although the first one, which means to finish with the imam, is perhaps weightier.

### ***Salat: Mark On the Forehead***

You once said that praying on a hard surface or a dirty place brings the prayer mark on the forehead of some people. I feel that this contradicts Verse 29 of Surah 48, which speaks of the effect of prostration being seen in the faces of worshippers.

Certainly the verse you refer to mentions that prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and those who are with him have certain qualities which are worthy of praise. It goes on to say:

***“You recognize them by their marks on their faces, traced by prostration. ...”***  
 [Victory — “Al-Fath” 48: 29]

Here the recognition is general. It is not a special case. They are recognized by people generally, as their worship and prostration leave their “trace” on them. That “trace” is, as Muhammad Asad says, “the spiritual reflection of... faith in the believer’s manner of life and even in his outward aspect.” You may even take it literally and say that prayers leave its mark in a sort of calm serenity in the overall bearing of a person.

This is totally different from the black mark on the foreheads of some people, which is wrongly associated with prayer. The Qur’anic verse does not refer to any physical mark. To say so is to suggest that people who have the mark are given a testimony in their favor. That leaves others who do not have that mark feeling inferior. It is not right.

May I also point out that this mark is quite common among people of certain countries, but not noticed among the population of other countries. Does that tell us something? May be it confirms what I say about the causes of that mark which is sometimes so bad that you could see that it conceals some infection.

### ***Salat: Miscellaneous Questions — Duha, Tahajjud & Tashahhud***

**Duha** — Could you please explain how many rak’ahs should one pray in Duha?

**Tahajjud** — If in Ramadhan one has prayed Witr after Isha and Taraweeh, can one offer more prayers at night?

**Tashahhud** — Could you please explain the right way of holding one’s finger in the last part of prayer, i.e. Tashahhud.

Duha prayer is a voluntary Morning Prayer, with a time range that stretches from about half an hour after sunrise to about half an hour before Zuhr or noon prayer. It may be offered in any even number of rak’ahs with a minimum of two and a maximum of 8, but they should be short rak’ahs, and the reading of the Qur’an in this prayer is done silently. One may offer it if one has time, and omit it when one is busy. If you have offered your Witr prayer, after Isha and also after Taraweeh in Ramadhan, then you decide to do some more night prayer, you can do so. This is the case if the occasion to pray presents itself without prior intention. If your intention to do such night prayer is made early, i.e. before you offer Witr prayer, then you should delay Witr until you have finished your prayers for the day.

There are several ways of how to hold one’s finger in the last part of prayer, i.e. Tashahhud. This indicates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, might have done this in different ways at different times. All these forms are permissible. However, what seems to be better supported by texts is to raise one’s first finger, i.e. the one next to one’s thumb, so that it points ahead and with a slight hump.

### ***Salat: Missed By Mistake***

A woman started having a blood discharge and thought it was menses which was totally unexpected. She stopped offering prayers. Subsequently it was confirmed that the discharge was not from menstruation. Therefore, she took a bath and continued with her normal prayers. What does she do about the prayers she had missed?

The Prophet, peace be upon him, has told us very clearly that Allah, out of His grace does not question about what we do as a result of a genuine mistake, out of

forgetfulness or by compulsion. This lady has missed prayers through a genuine mistake. She had a discharge, which she thought to be of the type, which would require her not to pray. She acted on that until she realized she was mistaken. Hence, she is not accountable for missing those prayers.

However, those prayers, which were obligatory to her, she, would have normally offered them. They remained outstanding. She should have offered them immediately after taking her bath. Now that they remain outstanding, she should offer them as soon as possible. She should also pray Allah to forgive her for this delay. Although it is not intended, still we need to ask Allah's forgiveness for any omission or mistake we do. Moreover, we are always in need of Allah's forgiveness. He certainly grants it to anyone who asks for it sincerely and with a genuine resolve to abide by Allah's laws. Nevertheless, human beings are liable to be in error at every juncture. Hence, praying for Allah's forgiveness is strongly recommended at all times.

### ***Salat: Missed Consciously***

Due to very heavy workload, I miss my prayers during the day and offer all my prayers in the evening. I call Athan and iqamah for each prayer. Please comment.

Allah describes prayer in the Qur'an as a "time-related duty" which He has made obligatory to the believers. Since it is time-related, it must be offered at the appropriate time appointed for each prayer. I am afraid that a heavy workload does not provide an exemption from offering prayers on time, unless one works for an establishment, which actually prevents him from offering prayers. In that case, you should try and find a job somewhere else. On the other hand, if leaving the work in hand in order to offer prayer will result in some damage to the work produced or cause harm to the company because of delayed work, it may be pardonable to delay prayer until one has an opportunity to offer it. [Added: Certain security jobs or some jobs requiring continuous attention to safety of a plant operation may cause delay in prayers, but] This should not be [allowed to become] a daily occurrence.

One should always try to offer prayers on time. In cases of emergency, one may pray Dhuhr and Asr together, and Maghrib and Isha together. Again this should not become a habit. When one offers such prayers together, one calls one Athan for all of them and says an iqamah for each prayer.

### ***Salat: Missed Prayer Time Unknowingly***

May I cite the case of a person in a desert on a cloudy day who has no means of knowing the time. Zuhr as he thinks that it is already due. Later on, the sun comes out and he discovers that the time for this prayer is not due yet. Does he have to repeat his prayer?

Since he has determined that his prayer was done before time and he is now within the time range of Zuhr prayer, he repeats it. If its time is over, and he is now at Asr time, but he is pretty sure that he prayed Zuhr before time, he does not have to repeat it. It is a genuine mistake that God overlooks.

### ***Salat: Missed Sunnah***

May I ask if it is appropriate to offer the Sunnah prayer after the lapse of its time, as in Qadha?

Sunnah prayer after the lapse of its time can be offered only in very restricted situations, as in the Sunnah of Fajr that is left out because one arrives in the mosque and finds that the congregational obligatory prayer has already started. In this case, he has to join the congregation. He may then offer the Sunnah either after the

congregation has finished or after sunrise. But in other cases, the Sunnah is not offered in compensation.

Suppose that you are at work and you have very limited time for prayer that you use for offering your obligatory prayer. You cannot manage to offer the Sunnah with it. When you go home in the evening, you should not offer the missed Sunnah. What you can do is to pray as many of voluntary rak'ahs as you wish. There is no restriction, apart from observing the times when voluntary prayer is discouraged.

### ***Salat: Missed Through Unconsciousness Or Negligence***

If one has missed a prayer and wants to offer it in compensation, i.e. Qaz'a, should he offer both the obligatory part and the Sunnah, or only the obligatory part?

Prayer is a time-related duty, which means that when an obligatory prayer is missed, its time has lapsed and it cannot be offered unless there is a valid reason for missing it. The valid reason is being unconscious of it either through sleep or forgetfulness.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Whoever sleeps through a prayer or forgets it should offer it when he is conscious of it, because it is then that it is due." This means that if you sleep through Fajr prayer despite having taken the necessary precautions to wake up, then you must offer it as soon as possible after waking up. This is not Gaza or compensatory prayer; it is offering it on time, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, says.

Gaza is supposed to compensate for missed prayer, but if a prayer is missed through negligence, it cannot be compensated for, because its time range has lapsed. The only way is to genuinely repent and resolve not to neglect prayers again. When you offer a missed prayer, you offer the obligatory part only, but the Sunnah of Fajr and the Witr prayers can be offered after the time has lapsed.

### ***Salat: Movements In Prayers — Irrelevant***

Some people make numerous movements when they stand up to pray. Are such movements allowed in prayers?

When a person stands up in prayer, he should consider that he is in a meeting with his Lord who has created him. He should behave with all the respect, composure and humility that such a meeting requires. He should not engage in all sorts of movements, like some people do. That is not allowed in prayer, and it could lead to its invalidation.

### ***Salat: Movements In Prayers — Too Many Movements***

Is it appropriate to pray behind an imam who makes too many and totally unnecessary movements during the prayer, such as adjusting his head cover and robes?

Your prayer behind such an imam is perfectly correct and valid, since you are not responsible for his behavior. There are differences between schools of Fiqh concerning movement during prayers and whether they invalidate the prayer or not. Some schools say such movements, even if they are frequent do not affect the validity of the prayer. Unfortunately, some people use this to make totally unnecessary movements that not only make their prayer the opposite of serenity and tranquility, both of which are needed in prayer. You find that such a person begins to move his hands here and there immediately after starting prayers. He may first adjust his headgear, then take something out of his pocket to look at, then he replaces it only to reach his other pocket and take out a tissue to blow his nose, etc. This is all wrong

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and unbefitting of standing in front of God and addressing Him. Such people need advice by good scholars.

***Salat: Movements In Prayers — Various Positions***

1. In our home country people are taught not to raise their hands during prayer, while I have come across several Hadiths which suggest that this is a Sunnah. Could you please explain. Similarly, women are taught to put their arms on the ground when they prostrate themselves in prayer, while this is a posture the Prophet, peace be upon him, disapproved of. Please comment.

2. Is there any regulation about how to stand in a congregational prayer? People also sit in different positions during prayer. What is the right one?

1. In your country the Hanafi School of Fiqh is followed, and it disapproves of raising the hands during prayer. Other schools recommend it on the basis of certain authentic Hadiths. The discrepancy results from the fact that the Hanafi scholars were not aware of these Hadiths. Now that people can be more aware of Hadiths, they should follow them, as the founders of these schools strongly urged, saying: "If you come across an authentic Hadith, then implement it because I uphold the view it states."

Women pray in the same way as men, except that they should keep their bodies closer. This does not mean that they put their arms on the floor, but rather they should be kept close to their main bodies.

2. All positions which people use when they sit during prayer are permissible. However, it is recommended in the last sitting of a prayer consisting of three or four rak'ahs to bring ones left leg under the right one and allow one's left hip to be in contact with the ground.

When you stand up in congregational prayer you must make sure that the row in which you stand is straight. Each row begins in the middle, right behind the imam, and worshippers should stand on both the right and left sides of the imam. They stand shoulder to shoulder to make their rows straight.

It is permissible to drink or pass water when you are standing, although we are recommended to sit down before we drink.

***Salat: Movements In Prayers — When Carrying Young Children***

I have seen people in the Haram carrying their young children when they offer their prayers with the Imam. They put them down when they kneel for their prostration and pick them up again when they stand up. This causes a lot of movement in prayer, which according to some schools of thought renders the prayer invalid. Is this correct?

This is perfectly appropriate, because it ensures that the parent will not be distracted by the child running about during the prayer, and the child won't cry if he feels neglected. The movement involved does not affect the validity of the prayer.

Suppose a snake appears in front of a person engaged in prayer. The worshipper is allowed to fight it until it is killed, or to change place so that he is not in danger. That this may involve several moves is perfectly understandable and acceptable.

### ***Salat: Movements In Prayers & the Head Cover***

It is noticed that some imams make too many movements in prayer. For example, an imam wearing an Arabian headdress may set it properly every time he stands up after prostration. If he were to wear a turban or a cap, he would not have to set it right. Please comment.

Too many movements in prayer are contrary to the required serenity, or *Khusoo'*. While such movements do not invalidate the prayer, it is much better to remember that when we pray, we are standing in front of God. When you stand in front of your boss, or a person of authority, you do not make too many unnecessary movements. So, it is better to limit your movements to what is necessary. We cannot suggest that someone who always wears a scarf, or a *Ghutrah*, should change it to something else for prayer. What we can tell him is to be calmer, in accordance with the serenity he should observe.

Moreover, you suggested two different head covers. But covering one's head is not a requirement of prayer. If one prays wearing no head covering, his prayers are perfectly valid. He is not considered to have omitted anything required or recommended.

### ***Salat: Neckties In Prayer***

Some of my friends maintain that it is forbidden to wear a necktie, particularly in prayer. Is it true?

No, that is not true. I know that this sort of thing is frequently said, and that some people suggest that the original idea of wearing a necktie was that it should be in the form of a cross, and, as such, it becomes a symbol for Christians. I am very doubtful of what is said about the origins of necktie. However, the wearing of a symbol of a religion other than Islam is not permissible. Therefore, if we know for certain that the necktie is a symbol of Christianity and that it is meant as a cross, then we should not wear it. The fact is that today no one, whether a Christian or a follower of other religion, thinks of a cross when he wears his necktie. It is not only that the shape is not that of a cross, but the linkage does not occur to anyone. Hence, we can discount this suggestion without any hesitation.

Large areas of Muslim world today have adopted the Western style of dress, which include a suit, a shirt and a tie. In these areas, no one thinks of this type of men's-wear as an imitation of non-believers. Hence, it is permissible to wear it. Similarly, it is permissible to wear it in prayer.

### ***Salat: Neglecting Prayers Willfully***

Is it true that a person who does not pray five times a day is not a Muslim? In an argument, which I had recently with a friend, he maintained that such a person is not a Muslim. He quoted a Hadith in which the Prophet, peace be upon him, says that the difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim is prayer. My own view, which I expressed to my friend, is that a person who does not pray is a sinner but he remains a Muslim. I should be grateful for your comments. Will you also please comment on the case of a person who misquotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, in order to win an argument.

What is certain is that we cannot make a judgement that a certain person is a Muslim or not on the basis of a matter like this. Within the issue of neglecting to pray there are several cases, each of which has a ruling of its own.



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To start with, a person who offers his five daily prayers is a Muslim. There can be no question about that. Anyone who accuses him of not being a Muslim is making a false accusation, for which he is punishable, unless he provides a clear proof to support his view. That is not easy to come by, unless the person so accused is a hypocrite or a spy who wants to pass as a Muslim. The truth is that prayers are the mark of a Muslim at the individual as well as community levels. If you come to a village at night in a country where Muslims and non-Muslims are of approximately equal numbers, and you do not know whether it is a Muslim village, you will be certain of its Islamic character when you hear the call to prayers at dawn. Conversely, if you wait until sunrise and you do not hear the call to prayers, you are pretty certain that the particular village has a non-Muslim population. The Hadith of the Prophet, peace be upon him, which your friend has quoted should be taken in this light. Moreover, prayer has a far-reaching effect on a person's character and his behavior. When you pray five times everyday, you are always aware that you either have finished one prayer a short while ago or will be praying in a short while. That should always keep your religious conscience alive, so that whenever the temptation to commit a sin presents itself, you are better able to resist it. It is to this fact that reference is made in the Qur'anic verse, which may be rendered in translation as follows. ***"Indeed, prayers restrain people from committing indecency and everything that is wrong."*** The importance of prayers to a Muslim, therefore, cannot be over emphasized.

Now what about a person who willfully neglects his prayers? The answer allows four different cases. You will find people in almost all the Muslim societies of today who, generally speaking, do not pray. Left to themselves they do not even remember that prayers are due. If they, however, find themselves occasionally in the company of people who attend to prayers, they join them. They may also pray on the odd occasion when circumstances may make it either advisable or unavoidable that they should pray. However, when Ramadhan comes, a total change overtakes them. They attend regularly to their prayers and they are even keen to attend prayers in the mosque to earn the reward for congregational prayers, which is twenty-seven times higher than praying alone. If someone jokingly asks them whether prayers are a duty only in Ramadhan, they may answer by quoting the famous saying: "A person who fasts and does not pray is like a shepherd without his stick."

These people recognize that prayers are a duty and they will never deny that this duty is applicable to them. They will always say that they do not have the willpower to offer their prayers regularly. They may genuinely ask you to pray to help them have the strength of faith to pray regularly. Can we classify such people as non-Muslims? The answer is decidedly 'no'. They are Muslims, who do not obey orders of God, as they must. The same applies to anyone who attends to his prayers on and off; in whatever variety they may take. Some people may pray one day and omit prayers two days, while others may pray on Fridays but not on other weekdays. A third group may pray at home but not at work and so on. All such people are Muslims but their attitude to prayers leaves much to be desired.

God tells us in the Qur'an, that there are people who may ridicule prayers, they may make fun of them or of their prayers. They may speak about the actions and movements which prayers include and laugh at them. Others may deny that prayers are a duty. Such people may argue with you on the wisdom behind prayers and ask whether God is in need of our prayers, implying that since He has no need of it, it is useless to offer. I remember one person telling me that he prays in a great variety of ways, because he has a special relationship with God. He glorifies Him in his own personal way, without having to go through these movements and reading standard sentences and phrases, which sound like cliches. Indeed, there is no end of such arguments, which maybe advanced by people who neglect prayers. Such people have a common denominator, namely, that they do not believe that prayer is a duty imposed on us by God. These are certainly not Muslims, even though they may protest that they believe in the Oneness of and the message of Prophet Muhammad,

peace be upon him. Their prostrations are of no value. If they truly believe in the message of Muhammad, peace be upon him, they would have followed him. He tells us that prayers are a duty. If they deny that, then they are either accusing him of invention or addition. Thus, they actually prove that they lie when they assert that they believe in his message. On the other hand if they truly believe in God, they have to follow His messenger. It is God who decided how He wants His servants to worship Him. He has made that known to them through His messenger. They cannot choose any other way.

Moreover, there is a general rule in Islam, which is certainly applicable to such people. It says that anyone who denies anything of Islam, which is essentially common knowledge, is an unbeliever. This applies to prayers by any account. The Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us that the structure of Islam is built on five pillars, the second of which is prayers. Hence, no one can be a Muslim without knowing that prayers are a duty. If one denies this fact, he is not a Muslim.

As for your other question, it is certainly great sin to deliberately misquote the Prophet, peace be upon him, for any reason. If one does this, simply to win an argument, he is certainly committing a grave sin. While there is no specific punishment to be administered to such a person, a Muslim judge may inflict on him a very severe punishment. Moreover, if he attributes something to the Prophet, peace be upon him, which he knows that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has not said, he is not only a liar; he incurs the punishment of hell. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "He who deliberately and willfully attests a lie against me will have his seat reserved for him in the fire."

Having said that, however, I should remind you that I have already hinted that your friend has referred to an authentic Hadith. It is over the way this Hadith is implemented that you have differed. Let us be more lenient with our friend, especially when he discusses matters of our faith.

### ***Salat: Night Workers, Their Salat & the Need For Sleep***

Since God does not wish to overburden His servants, what should be the timing of prayers in the case of a night worker who needs to sleep during the day. Should he wake up for every prayer?

A person who has to work at night can determine the time of his sleep in the most convenient way that enables him to offer his prayers on time. We must not forget that all Muslims have to offer the dawn, or Fajr, prayer before sunrise, even though they might not have had more than a couple of hours of sleep before it. They wake up, pray and go back to sleep if they need to. The same could be said for night workers and their daily prayers.

### ***Salat: Obligatory & Sunnah In Prayers***

Could you please explain what is obligatory and what is recommended or Sunnah in prayer?

If we take a prayer from start to finish, we say that the iqamah or the call to start the prayer is recommended when one is praying alone.

The intention is obligatory, but the intention is not vocalized. It remains a matter of mind and thought. Reading the opening supplication is a Sunnah, while reading Al-Fatihah in every Raka'ah is obligatory.

It is recommended to read additional verses, or a Surah of the Qur'an in the first two Raka'ahs.

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Bowing, i.e. Rukoo, rising after it, doing two prostrations, i.e. sujood, and a sitting in between in every Raka'ah are obligatory. What we say in each one of these positions is recommended, or Sunnah, as is the phrase, *Allahu Akbar* or "God is Supreme", which signals each such movement.

Sitting down for Tashahhud after the first two Raka'ahs is recommended or Sunnah, while it is obligatory after the final Raka'ah.

The reading of the first half of Tashahhud is obligatory, while the second half is recommended. Saying Salam at the end is obligatory. All this applies in every prayer and every Raka'ah.

For an imam and a person praying alone to read the Qur'an as stated above is obligatory according to all schools of thought. When one is praying with a congregation, some schools of thought do not require him or her to read the Fatihah and a passage of the Qur'an in any part of his prayer. They consider the recitation by the imam to be sufficient for all.

### ***Salat: Offering Only Obligatory Prayers & Not the Sunnah***

In a previous article, you said that a prayer is complete if only the obligatory part has been offered. In my part of the world, most people and many scholars say that unless all Sunnah prayers are offered together with the obligatory part, then that prayer is not complete and a Muslim has to be accountable for it. Could you please further elaborate? I have noticed that some people in my home country refrain from prayer because they find it too difficult. You mentioned in one of your answers that if a person omits a Sunnah, Allah would not question him about it. Can you please explain this further? Is it not true to say that if you offer a Sunnah, you are rewarded for it?

These are the only two of several letters which I have received on this subject which I had thought is basic knowledge for every Muslim. The fact is that my answer to a reader's question has provoked so many requests for elaboration, compels me to come back on this issue in greater detail.

A Fardh or obligation is something that Allah has commanded us to do, either in general or specific terms. He could make the order in the Qur'an or He could give it to us through the Prophet, peace be upon him, in an authentic Hadith. For example, the obligation of prayer has been imposed by numerous Qur'anic verses which tell believers to "attend regularly to your prayers". The Prophet, peace be upon him, has made it clear that "Allah has made it obligatory for you to offer five prayers every day and night." The two obligations run side by side, and it is not sufficient for a Muslim to offer less than the five obligatory prayers every day. Again, the obligation of Zakah has been imposed in the Qur'an, when Allah says on several occasions, "and pay out your Zakah". It is the Prophet, peace be upon him, who has given us the details of how much Zakah we should pay on every type of property that we have. In both instances, what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has told us becomes part of the obligation, because he has only sought to explain what the Qur'anic obligation entails.

There are many other examples of details of obligations being given by the Prophet, peace be upon him. What the Prophet, peace be upon him, defines as part of the obligation becomes also obligatory.

It is important to realize that Allah grants maximum reward for the fulfillment of the obligation He has made binding on His servants. In a Qudsi Hadith, the Prophet,

peace be upon him, mentions that Allah, the Al-mighty, says: "My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed on him." This is due to the fact that the fulfillment of an obligation Allah has made binding denotes recognition of Allah's authority and submission to His orders and readiness to fulfill what He has required of us. It is demonstration of total submission and obedience to Allah. Hence, Allah rewards for it so generously.

If one does not attend to his religious obligations, one will definitely have to account for his negligence. He will have to answer even for a single obligatory prayer missed or a single Riyal short of Zakah, or a single day of non-fasting in Ramadhan, etc. When a human is being held to account for a missed duty, he is in a serious position. Unless Allah forgives him that omission, then he will have to be punished for it. Punishment in the hereafter is too serious to be trifled with.

The term "Sunnah" means, from the linguistic point of view, a road or way. From the religious point of view, it means following the Prophet's example, or his method or what he has indicated as recommended. For example, Allah has made it obligatory on all Muslims to fast during the day throughout the month of Ramadhan. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has recommended us to add to this obligation taraweeh prayer at night. If one acts on the Prophet's recommendation and attends to taraweeh prayer as the Prophet, peace be upon him, has recommended, he stands to earn a much greater reward than a person who does only the obligatory part of fasting. When you do your taraweeh prayer, you also demonstrate your love of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and your readiness to follow his example. This is a much clearer demonstration of your love of the Prophet, peace be upon him, than celebrating his birthday or chanting his praises in what is termed as "Na'at".

Now the Prophet, peace be upon him, has recommended us, either by verbal statement or by action to offer Sunnah or Nafil, with each one of the five obligatory prayers. Reports of how many rak'ahs he recommended with each obligatory prayer differ, with some people suggesting that with Dhuhr alone, 10 rak'ahs of Sunnah or Nafil are to be offered. Some go to the extent of saying that unless this total of 14 rak'ahs are offered every day at Dhuhr, then Dhuhr prayer is incomplete. This betrays a gross misunderstanding. The fact is that what is obligatory is known as "Fardh" which is made up of 17 rak'ahs for all five obligatory prayers, in this order: Two rak'ahs for Fajr, four for Dhuhr, four for Asr, three for Maghrib and four for Isha.

A question may be asked here: If a Muslim offers only these 17 rak'ahs everyday, and does not offer any Sunnah throughout his life, what does he miss? The answer is that he misses a great deal of reward, because Allah gives generous reward for supererogatory works. Let us quote here the same Qudsi Hadith from which we have made the earlier quotation: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, is quoted to have said: "Allah, the Almighty says: Whoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his ear with which he hears, his eye with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks. Were he to ask something of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it." [Related by Al-Bukhari].

What is meant by "supererogatory works" mentioned in this Hadith is any voluntary action, which is offered over and above the religious duties Allah has imposed. This relates particularly to prayers, since the Hadith uses in Arabic the same word we use to refer to voluntary prayers.

But will such a Muslim who does not offer any voluntary prayer throughout his life be questioned by Allah about that? To suggest that we will be questioned for omitting any

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Sunnah is to make a very serious statement, for which evidence is required. To state that is to make a claim that Allah will question people about things that He has not imposed on them. How can anyone suggest that? Why would Allah question us about that, when He is the most fair of all judges? If he has not made something obligatory, would he ask about its omission? If the traffic law in your country does not require you to stop at a "Give way" sign, when the visibility is clear, would a policeman standing at that junction be justified to book you for not stopping? Would you not be able to stand in court and say that you could see very clearly and there was no need for you to stop and you simply negotiated the junction safely? Do you think that the policeman who booked you would be reprimanded for so doing? If this were true in human courts, would it not be true in Allah's court when Allah is the most fair of judges? If anyone says that Allah will question us about what is recommended or what is Sunnah, then he is making a very wild statement for which he can have no proof.

If we say that Allah will not ask us about the Sunnah, how can anyone say that our prayer is incomplete unless we pray the Sunnah? How can anyone suggest that if you do not pray 14 rak'ahs at Dhuhr time, your prayer is incomplete? The fact is that Allah questions us only about those matters that He has imposed on us as duties or those He has forbidden us. If we commit something that is forbidden, He will question us about it. If something were neither of the first sort nor of the second, why would He question us about it when He has given us no instructions regarding it?

The fact is that if the whole Muslim nation in all periods of history did not offer a single Sunnah, Allah will not question anyone of them about it. Let me give you this example: Allah has imposed the duty of offering the pilgrimage on every Muslim once in a lifetime. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has recommended us to offer a voluntary pilgrimage once every five years. Suppose that a Muslim offer his pilgrimage duty when he was 25 and did not go on pilgrimage again until he died at the age of 80. Will Allah ask him on the Day of Judgement: Why have you not made 10 extra pilgrimages? If anyone says yes, then he does not know what he is talking about. If we say that Allah will not ask him about those 10 pilgrimages because he had fulfilled his duty, then what distinguishes prayers from pilgrimage or fasting or Zakah?

Let me remind you here the Hadith reported by Talha ibn Obaidallah, one of the best known companions of the Prophet: "A Bedouin came to Allah's messenger, peace be upon him, with a disheveled hair and said: Messenger of Allah, tell me what has Allah imposed on me as a duty of prayer?"

"The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered: "The five obligatory prayers, unless you wish to volunteer something extra." The man said: "Tell me what has Allah imposed on me as a duty of fasting?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered: "The month of Ramadhan, unless you wish to volunteer something extra." The man asked: "Tell me, what Allah has imposed on me as a duty of Zakah?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered him and related to him the duties of Islam. The man then said: "By Him Who has honored you with the message of the truth, I am not going to volunteer anything more or less than what Allah has imposed on me as a duty."

"The Prophet, peace be upon him, then said: "The man will be prosperous, if he is true to his word." [Related by Al-Bukhari]. In another version also related by Al-Bukhari, the Prophet, peace be upon him, is quoted to have commented: "The man will be in heaven if he is true to his word." I do not think that there can be any clearer statement to show the difference between what is obligatory and what is recommended.

However, we must not underestimate the value of offering the Sunnah prayer, or anything that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has recommended to us. Everything

voluntary you offer will earn you a reward from Allah. The more you offer the greater your reward. Not only so, but when you do these recommended actions, you draw closer to Allah. This is clearly indicated in the sacred Hadith quoted above.

Needless to say, when you are trying to persuade someone to attend regularly to his prayers, you do not want to make the task seem to be difficult for him. You do not tell him that he has to offer 14 rak'ahs for Dhuhr and eight for Asr, seven for Maghrib, etc. You tell him that he needs to offer only 17 rak'ahs in five different settings. When he has acquired the habit of offering prayers regularly, you speak to him about adding the Sunnah. If you tell him at the beginning that he has to offer at least 42 rak'ahs every day, he might not respond. But when he realizes that the task is not that [much] difficult, he may be much more forthcoming.

### ***Salat: Offering Only Obligatory Prayers & the Time Range***

Could you please comment on the practices of people who are lax with their Sunnah prayers in conjunction with their obligatory ones. Some people offer only two rak'ahs of Sunnah with the obligatory two rak'ahs of Friday prayer. What I have learned is that one should offer a total of 17 rak'ahs. Other people are in the habit of delaying Isha prayer till after midnight, due to laziness or attending to business. Others rarely wake up for Fajr prayer.

The importance of praying Sunnah, or voluntary prayer, can be appreciated when we look carefully at this authentic Qudsi Hadith in which the Prophet, peace be upon him, is quoted to have said: "Allah, the Almighty says: Whoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his ear with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks. Were he to ask something of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it." [Related by Al-Bukhari]. What "supererogatory works" means mentioned in this Hadith is any voluntary action, which is added over and above the religious duties Allah has imposed. This relates particularly to prayers, since the Hadith uses in Arabic the same word [Nafil] we use to refer to voluntary prayers.

However, what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has recommended or encouraged us to do, by way of offering voluntary worship, remains voluntary. It is not obligatory. Hence, it is not for anyone to demand it of others. Allah will question us on the Day of Judgement about any obligatory prayer we deliberately miss. But He will not question us about Sunnah we do not do. He will reward us for the Sunnah we do, but He does not punish anyone for omitting any voluntary action [though we may be reproached for not following the recommended practice of the Prophet, peace be upon him]. When a man told the Prophet, peace be upon him, that he was not prepared to add anything to what Allah has made a binding duty on him, the Prophet, peace be upon him, commented: "[The man] will prosper if he fulfills what he says."

Allah has given us a time range for each prayer. It is far more preferable to offer Isha prayer before midnight, but if one delays it after that, it is acceptable. Some people prefer to delay Isha in order to conclude their day's activity with a prayer. While it is more preferable to offer Isha prayer with the congregation at the beginning of its time, the thought of concluding one's day with it is [also] fine.

Making a habit of missing Fajr prayer is certainly very serious. One has to take every precaution in order to offer it on time. For this reason, it is better to go to bed early and make sure of waking up to offer Fajr before sunrise. If occasionally one

oversleeps he should pray Fajr immediately on waking up. When a prayer is deliberately missed, it cannot be offered because its time has lapsed. Only when it is missed through oversleep or loss of consciousness, can it be offered when consciousness is regained. If one has not prayed for several years, one should repent, seek Allah's forgiveness, resolve not to miss any single prayer again and offer as much in Sunnah as possible.

***Salat: On Number Of Rak'ahs — etc.***

Could you please explain how many rak'ahs of Fardh, Sunnah and Nafil should be offered in our prayers, and in which order. Why do we read aloud in some prayers and silently in others? Why people in congregation say Ameen aloud here and silently in Pakistan?

The very phraseology of the first question is wrong. When we speak of Sunnah and Nafil, we are speaking of voluntary prayer, which we offer by choice, not obligation. Thus, we do not have to offer it. The only obligatory prayers are those that we call Fardh.

There are 2 rak'ahs in Fajr or dawn prayer, 4 each in Zuhr and Asr, or noon and mid-afternoon prayers, 3 in Maghrib, or sunset, and 4 in Isha or night prayer. That makes 17 rak'ahs daily in five prayers.

Sunnah, which is a voluntary prayer the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to offer regularly, adds 2 rak'ahs before Fajr, 4 before Zuhr and 2 after it, and 2 each after Maghrib and Isha, which makes up 12 rak'ahs.

In addition Witr, which is the last prayer of the day, is normally 3 rak'ahs. People speak of Nafil, which is voluntary but less regularly offered. These vary according to schools of thought, but we may mention 2 or 4 rak'ahs before Asr, and 2 each before Maghrib and Isha.

We offer our prayers according to the way the Prophet, peace be upon him, offered them. He said: "Pray as you have seen me pray." He read the Qur'an aloud in the two rak'ahs of Fajr, and in the first two of Maghrib and Isha, and we follow his example. Sometimes he did certain things in more than one way in order to indicate their acceptability. His companions reported what they noticed him doing in most cases. The reports differ according to what the person reporting noticed more frequently. Hence, it is acceptable to say Ameen aloud or silently, according to different schools of thought. In Saudi Arabia most people follow the Hanbali school of thought, while in Pakistan the Hanafi School is the predominant one.

***Salat: Postnatal Discharge***

When does a woman who has given birth to a child resume her prayers? I read that the maximum period of postnatal discharge is 40 days, but I also read in a different book that it is 60 days. Please explain.

A woman is exempt from prayer and fasting during the period when she has postnatal discharge, following the birth of her baby. However, she needs to compensate for fasting, but not for prayer. There is no minimum limit to the postnatal period. It ends when the discharge is ended. If it stops after a couple of days, then the woman concerned should offer her prayers normally. As for its maximum limit, it is 40 days. This is based on a Hadith reported by Umm Salamah, the Prophet's wife, who is quoted as saying: "During the Prophet's lifetime, a new mother observed a period of 40 days." [Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Al-Tirmithi, Abu Dawood and Ibn Majah].

Al-Tirmithi comments by saying: “All scholars among the Prophet’s companions, the Tabieen and in following generations agree that a newly delivered mother stops praying for 40 days, unless she stops bleeding before then. In this case, she takes a bath and resumes her prayer. If she continues to discharge blood after 40 days, most scholars say that she prays nevertheless.”

Some scholars say that the maximum period is 60 days, arguing that the maximum menstrual period is 15 days, and since postnatal discharge is normally equivalent to four menstruations then the maximum for a new mother is 60 days. This, however, does not fit with the Hadith quoted above, which is highly authentic.

### ***Salat: Practices Unfamiliar To Some Regions***

During my stay in Saudi Arabia, I learnt some practices in prayer which are not used in my home country. People say that my prayer is invalid as a result. Please comment.

The details provided by my reader are really amazing. He mentions that people object to him when he says after Rukoo, or bowing and praising God, ***"rabbana wa laka al-hamd hamdan katheeran tayyiban Mubarakan feeh***, which means, "Our Lord, all praise belongs to you: plentiful, pure and blessed praise. They say that he should confine himself to the first four words of this phrase and add nothing, because it invalidates his prayer! It is amazing because as the Prophet, peace be upon him, raised his head from Rukoo, and said sami, Allah liman hamidah, which means, "May God answer the prayer of anyone who praises Him, he heard someone say the very words used above. When he finished his prayer, he inquired about the person who said it, and when he identified himself, the Prophet, peace be upon him, told him that 70 angels received it to put it to God. This was a clear indication of not merely approval but encouragement as well.

Besides, what is happening here? The imam indicates his movement from the bowing position to standing up, saying a phrase in the form of supplication to God to grant the prayer of anyone who praises Him. As the congregation stands up, they praise God by saying the first four words. However, if one adds something of the nature of praising God, one makes no wrong. As the Prophet, peace be upon him, approved those words, they became a Sunnah to follow. Moreover, if one adds any supplication here, it is appropriate time for doing so, because of what the imam says.

When people object to what he is doing, it is simply because it is not familiar to them. It is only normal that people should criticize what they find unfamiliar, particularly in worship. Hence, my reader may continue with what he has learnt, but he should avoid controversy.

### ***Salat: Prayer Mats***

1. I have an ordinary prayer mat with the picture of Ka'abah on it. I usually do not mind which direction I put the mat as long as I myself face the Qiblah. My friends object to my “careless” attitude. Please comment.

2. Some people pray at any place such as footpath, a courtyard or an open field. Some do not even use a prayer mat or any sheet of cloth or paper, although these places may not be all that clean. How far is this acceptable?

Your attitude is correct. People have prayer mats in order to keep them clean. Otherwise, we may pray on any cloth or carpet, or indeed without either. This means that we can pray on hard floor or on the bare ground or on grass or sand or anywhere. The place where we pray, however, must be free from any impurity.



As for prayer mats, which carry the picture of the Ka'abah, they are all right and it does not matter how we place them. Sometimes, we need to put a prayer mat in a vertical line with the direction of the Ka'abah to allow two or more people to place their foreheads on it where they pray. That is perfectly acceptable. It is the person who is praying that should face the Ka'abah.

[However, if a prayer mat is spread out for others, the direction of the picture of Ka'abah is normally taken to show the direction of Ka'abah and comes handy in such situations.]

2. Enumerating the privileges Allah has granted him over other prophets and messengers, Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, included the following: "The whole earth has been made to me [and to my nation] a place of worship and a source of purification." This is a reference to the fact that a Muslim may pray anywhere provided that the place is free of impurity. It also refers to the fact that purification is achieved through dry ablution. Therefore, it is perfectly permissible to offer prayers in the sort of places you have mentioned, provided that we make sure that there is no impurity where we pray. It is perfectly acceptable that we offer prayers on the pavement, by the side of the road, in a field or a garden or anywhere else. No prayer mat is necessary, except in as far as it is cleaner to use one. From the religious point of view, a prayer mat has no significance.

### ***Salat: Prostration Or Sujood After the Prayer***

After finishing my prayer and before leaving the mosque, I do a prostration during which I pray Allah for mercy and other things. Some people object. Please comment.

Such a prostration, or sujood, is neither necessary nor recommended. We do a prostration of gratitude to Allah when we hear some good news. We also prostrate ourselves at the time when we read or hear certain verses of the Qur'an which mention prostration in submission to Allah. [We also prostrate as compensation for an omission during prayers] Apart from this, no separate or individual prostration is recommended.

### ***Salat: Purity Of Clothes & Semen***

If semen had fallen on one's clothes and one has not washed it, is one's prayer valid?

Semen is considered by scholars to have no impurity, because God states that He has honored mankind. It is not possible that with such honor, He would create them from a material that is impure. This means that if semen falls on one's clothes, it does not affect the validity of one's prayers.

However, some schools of Fiqh say that it should be rubbed off if it has dried, or washed off if it is still wet. Ayesha, the Prophet's wife, says: "I used to rub semen off the Prophet's clothes."

### ***Salat: Purity Of Clothes***

As a doctor, I often have to attend cases of childbirth when it is sometimes very difficult to avoid some drops of the fluid discharged by the patient falling on my clothes. When it is prayer time, can I still offer my prayers wearing the same clothes, since I cannot go home to change?

I would have thought that a doctor attend childbirth normally wears a hospital gown over own clothes. As such it is on that special gown that such drops fall. Therefore, it

is sufficient for you to take the gown off and offer prayers in your ordinary clothes. It may be that occasionally a drop of two may fall on the lower part of your trousers which is not covered by the gown. Since this is unavoidable, then my advice to you is to keep a clean pair of trousers in your office or in your personal locker in the doctors' room.

If it is easy at the time of prayer to change trousers, then you would offer your prayers in the clean pair. If that is impractical in your special circumstances in the hospital, then it is hoped that Allah will accept your prayer as valid if you offer your prayers on time in your working clothes, apart from the top gown.

### ***Salat: Qiblah — the Correct Direction Of***

It has been discovered in our country that the direction of the Qiblah in many mosques was incorrect by a few degrees. An expert made it clear to people that they must amend their direction. Some people are confused and still maintain the old direction, while others have stopped coming to the mosque. [A mosque is built in that direction with the management and imam continuing the practice of leading prayer in the old direction.] Some argue that a difference of a few degrees did not matter much! Please comment.

If this man who has declared the need to amend the direction of your mosque is truly an expert in this particular area and he is well known in your community as being a man of honesty and integrity, then you must follow his advice. People need not worry about their past prayers. Those prayers are correct and valid, since the people had done their best to demarcate the direction of the Qiblah [and then if there is a difference of a few degrees it will not matter as it was done with best of intentions; without knowledge of being in the wrong]. I am amazed that people should worry about amending the direction, if they are sure that the man's knowledge is sound. It is their duty to make sure that everything related to their prayer is done correctly. The old direction is not sacrosanct. The proper direction is the correct one, which is most probably the new one, if the man is really an expert in this field.

I will give you an example. If you are offering prayer in a place where the direction of the Qiblah is not marked and you could not determine it in any way, you need only try with whatever means you have at your disposal to determine correct direction. If you cannot then you start your prayer facing the direction you think may be correct. If during your prayer someone familiar with the place enters the room and finds you facing the wrong direction, he should tell you how to amend your direction, suggesting that you turn so many degrees to your right or to your left. You should follow his instructions immediately without stopping your prayers, even if he tells you to turn 180 degrees, i.e. facing the opposite direction, you should do so and continue your prayer, not repeating any part of it. Although this may happen just before you have finished, your prayer is correct and valid. If you do not respond to his instructions, then your prayer becomes invalid. Your original direction was chosen when you did not know which way to face. Once information has been received, you should act on it.

### ***Salat: Qiblah — Why Jerusalem & Then Makkah***

1. A Christian friend of mine argues that the city of Jerusalem is to be preferred to Makkah, even by Muslims for two reasons: the fact that it was the first Qiblah (direction of prayer) and that it was the place from where the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, ascended to heaven. In reply I mentioned several points including the fact that the Ka'abah in Makkah was the first sanctuary ever to be dedicated to Allah and that Allah has

guaranteed to protect Makkah against His enemies. Moreover, it was at the Ka'abah that the angel Gabriel taught the Prophet, peace be upon him, how to offer his prayers. May I ask, however, why were the Muslims required at first to pray toward Jerusalem? Is there any historical background to that? May I also ask: Who decided the direction of prayer when the Prophet, peace be upon him, was first commanded to pray? Please comment.

2. Before the conquest of Makkah, Muslims used to pray toward Jerusalem and the Jews toward the Ka'abah. Why did not Muslims start this earlier?

1. As you realize, Jerusalem was for quite a long time center of the divine faith as it witnessed the efforts of Prophet Ibrahim and his descendants to establish Allah's message as the constitution which people were required to follow. However, it was at Makkah that Allah had commanded Prophet Ibrahim to build the first temple to be dedicated to Allah's worship. Abraham's grandson, Prophet Jacob, was the one to build the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The preference between the two cities should not be of any great concern to us, because it is Allah alone who decides whether a certain place has any special value. It is He who has chosen that those who believe in Him must face the Ka'abah in Makkah when they pray. It is He who has decided to reward His servants for each prayer they offer in Haram in Makkah what He normally gives a reward for one hundred thousand prayers. Nevertheless, the Prophet, peace be upon him, says, "The sanctity of a believer is far greater in Allah's sight than the sanctity of the Ka'abah itself."

It was Allah who decided that the Muslims should first turn toward Jerusalem when they pray. He later changed that direction and commanded them to pray towards the Ka'abah. The reason for that was the fact that the Arabs, in their days of ignorance when they were worshipping idols, attached great importance to the sanctity of the Ka'abah. To them, it was a symbol of national pride. By removing that attachment temporarily from the minds of the Muslims, Allah wanted them to dedicate themselves toward Him. There must be no confusion in their minds that their submission is to Allah alone and that they would hold as valid only that which He tells them to be valid. Therefore, they prayed toward Jerusalem, knowing that 'that' was Allah's will and that they had to abide by His orders. When they had demonstrated their total dedication and that they did not have any lingering national preferences or loyalties, He put them back on the track that He had chosen for them. They now faced the Ka'abah, knowing that it was Allah's orders to do so. That gesture had no historical or national overtones. To them, now the Ka'abah was the house Ibrahim built, not the one held sacred for centuries by the Arabs. It was the symbol of faith in the Oneness of Allah, not the symbol of historical sanctity. This is a very important factor and it was achieved through the decision by Allah to order Muslims to turn in their prayer away from the Ka'abah toward Jerusalem, until their hearts had been purged of any national or Tribal loyalty.

2. Your statement about the change in the direction Muslims face in prayer is inaccurate. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, received orders from Allah that he and all Muslims should pray in a particular fashion, he was told to face Jerusalem when he prayed. The Prophet, peace be upon him, obeyed this order as did all Muslims. The Jews always faced Jerusalem in their prayer. They did not turn toward the Ka'abah in their prayer at all. Seventeen months after the Prophet, peace be upon him, had settled in Madinah, he was commanded by Allah to change the direction he faced in the prayer so as to turn toward the Ka'abah whenever he prays. Again, he complied with Allah's order. Wherever Muslims are, they are required to turn towards the Ka'abah when they pray. It should be remembered that the Ka'abah is the first house ever to be dedicated to the worship of Allah alone.

It was built by the prophets Ibrahim and Ismail on the express orders of Allah who defined for them the spot where the Ka'abah should be built. Ever since its building, the Ka'abah has remained a place of worship.

### ***Salat: Qunoot — the Supplication In Prayers***

In my home country, people read the supplication known as Qunoot in every Fajr prayer, and if the Imam omits to read it, he will offer two prostrations at the end of his prayers in compensation for it. A friend told me that this is a bid'ah or innovation which must not be done in Fajr prayers only. Please advise.

The Qunoot is a supplication that is said normally after rising from the position of Rukoo' in the last rak'ah of an obligatory or recommended prayer. It has two or three standard forms, to which other supplications may be added. Schools of Islamic Fiqh have different rules about the Qunoot with regard to its timing and form. Their differences are based on what they learned from earlier scholars and the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who reported how they prayed with the Prophet, peace be upon him. We must remember that we learned the form of prayer from the Prophet, peace be upon him, who advised his companions and all Muslims to "pray as you have seen me pray." This is a very important Hadith that sets the form of prayer for all time. The Prophet, peace be upon him, varied his prayers to indicate that different methods in doing certain parts of the prayer are permissible, acceptable or recommended. We cannot imagine that every one of his companions offered all prayers with the Prophet, peace be upon him, at all times. This is impossible. People attended prayers in the mosque with the Prophet, peace be upon him, as their circumstances allowed. Hence some of them learned certain things which others did not. This accounts for the differences they reported. Moreover, it accounts for the different rules we find in schools of Fiqh because each took the reports of the Prophet's companions who were close to him.

When such differences are in matters of detail, they have no effect on the validity of prayers. They simply indicate that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did certain aspects of his prayers differently at different times. Take, for example, the practice of putting the right hand over the left hand when standing up in prayer before Rukoo'. Neither the Maliki school nor the Shiite Ja'afri school upholds this. Both prefer that one's arms remain placed in their normal positions on the opposite sides of one's body. This means that Muslims in most African countries, as well as the Shiites in the Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and elsewhere follows this practice today, while other Muslims place their hands on their abdomen, with the right hand on top of the left hand. Can anyone suggest that either practice is a bid'ah or innovation? If they do, then they do not know what they are talking about.

The same is the case with the Qunoot. We know that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did the Qunoot at different times. We also know that when the Muslim community faced a calamity, he read the Qunoot in all five prayers. At one time, he maintained this for a whole month, and he included in his supplication a prayer for certain persons and a prayer against certain others, mentioning both groups by name. This is known as Qunoot Al-Nawazil.

The Shaf'ie school of Fiqh recommends saying the Qunoot in the second rak'ah of Fajr or dawn prayer, while the Hanafi school recommends it before Rukoo' in the last rak'ah of Witr. The Hanbali school recommends it in Witr also but after Rukoo'. The form chosen by the Hanafi school is different from that of the other two. All these are acceptable. When you pray with an Imam, do as he does. If he says the Qunoot then you do likewise, and if he leaves it out, you leave it out too. Your prayer is perfectly valid in either case. You will either be doing a Sunnah or omitting it. If anyone suggests that what you do is a Bid'ah you may tell him that he needs to study better.

### ***Salat: Recitation In the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Raka'ah Of Sunnah Prayer***

In a four-rak'ah Sunnah prayer, can we recite more than Surah Al-Fatihah in the third or fourth rak'ah?

Yes. There is no limit to what you can read, but Surah Al-Fatihah is enough.

### ***Salat: Reward For Prayers In Haram & Haram Area***

What is the ruling regarding offering prayers in one of the small mosques close to Haram? Does the person get the same reward as he receives when he or she prays in the Haram? If someone is getting late for a prayer, is it better to rush to the Haram or just pray in one of those small mosques.

If we recall the Hadith about the extra reward for prayers, it speaks of three mosques: Al-Aqsa, the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah and the Haram in Makkah. A prayer in the first is rewarded as highly as 500 prayers, while in the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, it earns the reward of 1000 prayers. A prayer in the Haram is credited with a reward equal to that given for one hundred thousand prayers. This is then a special reward for worship offered in particular mosques. Had it been the Haram area that the Prophet, peace be upon him mentioned, then it would have applied to other mosques in Makkah, and indeed to any place in the city, since it is all within the Haram area. To sum up, the special reward is for prayer offered in the Haram, not its area. As such, prayer in other mosques in Makkah receive just the normal reward for prayer.

However, if one is late, it is better to offer his prayer in any mosque, rather than run toward the Haram. Running to the mosque is discouraged by the Prophet, peace be upon him. One can easily finish his prayer and go to the Haram for Tawaf.

### ***Salat: Role Of A Mutawwi'***

Some of those who are known as Mutawwi' treat people roughly. We were once attending to a car breakdown and we stopped to pray individually. A few minutes later one of them came along and insisted that we offer the same prayer again with him as an imam. On another occasion, the imam in our nearby mosque finished the prayer quickly, reading only short Surahs. As we left the mosque and were walking along the pavement, a Mutawwi' came along and forced us to join the prayer in another mosque which had not yet finished. He would not accept that we have already prayed. By the way, what is the status of this second prayer?

You have highlighted a definite problem. The task assigned to the Mutawwi' is to encourage people's compliance with God's orders and to discourage them from violating His teachings. But they should do so in a proper way that wins people over, not leaves them feeling hurt or unwilling to cooperate. In both cases you mentioned the man concerned should have accepted what you said. If you had prayed, then he cannot order you to pray again.

This you may decide to do, if you wish, in your own time. When each of the two men insisted that you repeat your prayer he was giving a clear indication that he did not believe your statement.

He did not have any indication to suspect you. As he asks you to pray again he goes well beyond his limit. He is no longer enjoining what is right. He is simply imposing his authority, which is not what he is required to do. Indeed, his action is counterproductive as he leaves you with an aggrieved feeling.

When you repeat a prayer for any reason, the first one counts as the obligatory one and the second a Nafil, or voluntary prayer.

***Salat: Seek Strength In —***

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent

***“Believers, seek strength in patience and prayer. Allah is with those who are patient.”***

[the Cow, “Al-Baqarah”: 2: 153] Commentary by Sayyid Qutb — Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi.

In this verse, we have the first directive to this unique nation, which assumes the role of a witness against mankind. This first directive is to seek help through patience and perseverance as well as prayer in order to be able to bear the heavy burden of the great role assigned to it. It tells this nation to be ready to offer the sacrifice necessitated by this role, including martyrs, the suffering of shortages in wealth, people and crops, experiencing fear and hunger and suffering the troubles of undertaking a campaign of jihad to establish the proper society and implement Allah's law. Patience is also required so that the hearts of people turn only toward Allah and are dedicated absolutely to Him. Nothing is sought in return except Allah's pleasure, His mercy and guidance. That is great reward indeed for any believer who appreciates its value.

Patience and perseverance are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an. Allah knows well that a great effort is needed to ensure that the believers maintain their proper way in the face of all temptations and motivations to abandon it. This requires them to be always on the alert, ready to give whatever sacrifice is required of them. For this they need to be patient. They need patience in order to do the good works required of all believers, and to abstain from sin, to fight those who are hostile to Allah, to defeat their designs, to bear with fortitude when victory seems to be delayed. They always need patience and perseverance as their objective seems to be very far, falsehood seems to be very strong, help seems to be scarce. They need patience in order to face those who are deviant, erring, harsh and persistent in their rejection of the truth.

When the period of suffering seems to be too long, strength seems to be sapping, patience may be soon exhausted unless strength is renewed. Hence, prayer is coupled with patience in the Qur'anic directive. Prayer is the ever-flowing spring, which renews the believers' energy and gives them new strength. They are then able to persevere for as long as it takes to achieve their goals. Prayer also adds to that perseverance, contentment, confidence and reassurance.

When man, weak as he is, faces a task which seems beyond his limited resources, when he faces the powers of evil, when he finds the resistance to temptations and incentives offered to him too difficult, when resistance to tyranny and corruption seems beyond him, he certainly needs to have a direct link with the greatest power of all. When the goal seems too far and life seems too short, man looks around and despair starts to creep in as he realizes that when what he has achieved is very little while the sun of his life starts its decline and will be soon setting. Despair is most inevitable then as he sees evil boasting its strength while good remains weak and confined, and there seems to be no ray of hope, no landmarks on the way.

In that case, the value of prayer is great indeed. Prayer is the direct link between man who is certain to die and the Power, which is everlasting. It is the appointed time for the confined nature of man to come to the ever-flowing spring. It holds the key to the endless treasure, which has more than anyone needs. It is the gate through which man escapes from his limited confines on earth to the limitless expanse of the Universe. It is the source of spiritual strength and tender compassion. It provides the

gentle touch, which comforts the tired heart. For this reason, whenever the Prophet, peace be upon him, experienced some hardship, or whenever he had to make a momentous decision, he prayed much in order to make his contact with Allah more prolonged.

The Islamic way of life is one based on worship, which has secret qualities. Of these qualities are the facts that worship provides sustenance for the traveler, strengthens the spirit and purifies the heart. With every obligation we find that worship is the key with which our hearts can happily appreciate the need for that obligation and its benefits. On assigning the great task of the messenger to Muhammad, peace be upon him, Allah said to him: O you wrapped up in your mantle, stand up in prayer at night except for a small portion of it; half of it, or a little less, or a little more, and recite the Qur'an in a slow and distinct manner. We are about to address to you words of surpassing gravity. [731;1-6] The preparation for receiving such words of surpassing gravity, for the hard task and the great role of Allah's messenger, was simply night worship and recitation of the Qur'an. It is worship, which opens man's heart, strengthens his relation with Allah, and makes matters seem easy, brings light into man's world and provides limitless strength, confidence and reassurance.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Allah directs the believers here to be patient and to persevere and to resort to prayers as they face their difficult tasks.

The comment which follows this directive is: Allah is with those who are patient. He supports, strengthens and comforts them. He does not abandon them to their own limited devices and weak strength. He provides them with new strength when they feel that the way is still very long and their objective remains very far. Allah starts this verse with that address which is always welcome to them: Believers. He concludes it with remarkable encouragement: Allah is with those who are patient.

There are numerous traditions and pronouncements of the Prophet, peace be upon him which heighten the value of patience and perseverance. We will give one or two examples which are relevant to the purpose of this Qur'anic verse, namely, the preparation of the Muslim community to play its role and fulfill its task.

Khatab ibn Al-Aratt, a companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, reports: "We complained of our situation to Allah's messenger, peace be upon him, when he was reclining in the shade of the Ka'abah. We said: Would you care to seek Allah's help for us? Would you care to pray for us? He said: There were communities of believers before your time when a man was arrested. A hole was dug for him in the ground and he was placed in it. A saw was then brought forward and placed on his head and he was sawn in two halves. Others were tortured with combs made of iron with which their flesh was scraped. That torture, however, did not turn them away from their faith. I swear by Allah that Allah will grant supremacy to this religion until the single traveler would be able to travel from Sanaa to Hadramout fearing no one except Allah, and the wolf for his sheep. You are only impatient."

Ibn Massoud, a companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "I could see Allah's messenger, peace be upon him, in the same position as one of the earlier Prophets, peace be upon them all, who was beaten up by his people until he bled. He wiped the blood off his face and prayed in these words: My Lord, forgive my people, for they do not know the truth." [Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Yahya ibn Waththab quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, on the authority of one of his companions as saying: "A Muslim who mixes up with people and suffers with maltreatment is better than the one who does not mix up with them, nor suffers their abuse." [Related by At-Tirmithi].

### ***Salat: Short Prayers Or Long Ones***

Some people offer their prayers short, reciting only a short Surah or a small number of Qur'anic verses, so that they can offer more rak'ahs in voluntary prayers. Others prefer to read longer passages of the Qur'an and they offer less in voluntary prayers, but perhaps spend the same time or even longer. Which method is preferable? Similarly, a person like myself whose mother tongue is not Arabic can say the glorification of Allah less times than an Arab doing one's prostration. Does a person who says more glorification earn more reward, although we may be in the same congregational prayer?

Scholars have expressed two different views with regard to the best situation a human being may be in: prostration during prayer, or standing up and reciting the Qur'an in prayer. In prostration, one expresses with the clearest possible gesture one's submission to Allah and recognition of His greatness. At the same time, he is glorifying Him as his Lord, the Most Supreme. On the other hand, when you stand up on prayer, reciting the Qur'an, you are in worship, reciting Allah's own words. When we try to compare both situations, the comparison is difficult to evaluate. Whichever one you choose is equally valid. My own personal preference is for a longer recitation of the Qur'an in the standing up position.

Perhaps one should not dwell over much on these details. If you are engaged in worship, then Allah will reward you according to your concentration and the time you spend in prayer. There is little to choose between a person who spends half an hour offering voluntary prayers, and doing only two rak'ahs and another who does ten rak'ahs over the same period. When the choice is obvious in Ramadhan when people offer taraweeh prayer, with some of them offering 8 rak'ahs over a period of, say, 30 minutes, while others offer 20 rak'ahs over a period of 20 minutes. The latter can hardly concentrate on their prayer, as they make it so short. They have hardly any time to glorify Allah during their prostration when they rise up again. This is a hasty prayer, which runs against the recommendations of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

When you glorify Allah 3 or 4 times, because of the difficulty in pronunciation you may have as a non-Arabic speaking person, you are rewarded for your effort, and your reward may not be at all less than a person who says such a glorification 10 times over the same period. Allah knows the intention of everyone and He judges actions by intentions. This is clearly stated by the Prophet, peace be upon him, who says; "Actions are but by intentions. Every man shall have but that which he has intended."

### ***Salat: Shortening — At Job When Only Weekends Spent At Home***

1. My job assignment is such that I have to travel to a base about a 100 kilometer every Monday from home to attend to my job there and return home every Saturday evening only to return on Monday morning. This is a posting that may continue for at least next six months and may continue further. How do I offer my prayers? Do I shorten them while I am away from home?

2. I have recently moved to Makkah where I found a new job. My family, which includes my parents, brother, and sister still live in Jeddah. I go to see them on weekends and holidays. When I do, I pray normally, but when I am in Makkah I pray the shortened prayers, as I consider myself on travel. Someone advised me that it should be the other way round, and that I should pray the normal length in Makkah and shorten prayer when I go to Jeddah. Please advise which is the correct practice?



1. As you know you will be staying for such length of time, when you arrive at your other place, you are actually intending to settle. You are in the same position as a resident. So you pray your prayers normally, shortening none of them. You have the concession of shortening and combining prayer on the day of travel, until you settle down at your destination. But once you are settled, you are a resident.

The case would have been different if you did not know the length of your stay. Suppose you expect to finish your business in a week or two. In this case, you are considered as a traveler. Even when the two weeks are over and you find yourself obliged to extend your stay by another one or two weeks, then you continue in the same status as a traveler. Even if this continues for several months or a year, but you are always unsure of how long you are staying. You are simply attending to some business, which could finish in a few days or a few weeks, you are in the status of a traveler, until you go back home, or you change your plans and settle in the place where you happen to be.

2. When you have taken up your job, you must have settled in properly, renting a place to live in and buying few things to make your stay comfortable. Suppose in a year's time someone asks you: Where do you live? You are bound to answer that you live in Makkah, although your family lives in Jeddah. You may not even add the last part about the rest of your family. Since you are traveling only on weekends to see your family, then certainly you are a resident of Makkah. Hence, you should pray normally in Makkah and when you leave it, you are on travel.

It is not logical that you spend five or six days a week in a place and have employment and accommodation there and you still consider that you are a traveler, simply because your family lives elsewhere. In this situation, there is no doubt that you are a resident of Makkah. This means that you pray normally when you are there, and only when you travel from Makkah, you are a traveler.

### ***Salat: Shortening — Daily Travel***

1. Our water desalination plant is about 140 km from Jeddah on the Gizan Road. More than half of its staff comes daily from Jeddah. People have expressed different viewpoints on whether to shorten their prayers when they are at the plant and whether to combine Zuhr and Asr together. Please explain.

2. Many of our colleagues travel from Jeddah to their workplace at a distance of 85 km or more. Some travel daily, while others travel weekly. Some are natives of Jeddah, while others are foreigners, who have their accommodation at Jeddah but their families are abroad. Who of these may have the concession of shortening of their prayers?

1. Although fast cars could cover the distance between Jeddah and this place in little over an hour, still the distance is a bona-fide travel which means that the concessions given to travelers apply to people who travel there from Jeddah, whether daily or occasionally.

When we consider a concession given by God, we must remember that this is something that He has granted in order to make things easier for people when certain elements or factors apply to them.

Going from Jeddah to this desalination plant at Shoaiba qualifies as travel even by our modern standards and fast means of transport. A daily trip is no less valid for the exercise of a concession than a weekly or a monthly one. If we take the distance, then it is longer by at least 50 km than the distance scholars have mentioned as the

minimum amount of travel. However, some scholars are of the view that the distance is immaterial, but the actual travel is the thing that counts.

They say that any trip that people consider as travel qualifies for the exercise of the relative concessions. Before the introduction of the modern means of transport, a trip of 20 or 25 km qualified as travel, if it was between two villages or two towns. Covering a similar distance may not be considered as travel if it involves going from one end of the city to another. This opinion has considerable validity.

Any person who travels daily from Jeddah to this desalination plant is considered a traveler. He may exercise all the concessions that travelers have. With regard to prayer, one concession that all schools of thought approve is the shortening of every obligatory prayer consisting of four rak'ahs to two rak'ahs only. The concession of combining the two prayers of Zuhr and Asr or the two evening ones of Maghrib and Isha is also approved by most schools of thought. Some say that it is applicable when needed, while others say that it applies all the time [during travel]. Whichever view you take will have its valid evidence.

2. I understand that the foreign workers involved come to work on one or two year contracts. They are given their accommodation in Jeddah and they travel to their workplace. As such they are treated as residents in Jeddah. Where they come from does not matter, because when they pray in Jeddah, they have to pray as residents, completing 4 Rak'ah prayers in four Rak'ah Salat.

When they go to work, these people may avail of the concession to shorten prayers, which God has granted to travelers, even if they are Traveling every day. Those who travel every week should consider whether they could consider the workplace as their place of residence or they are residents in Jeddah.

If they think their travel to Jeddah every weekend as a recreational trip, or a privilege they receive from the Company, then their place of residence is the same as their place of work, and they shorten their prayers when they travel to Jeddah. No one may shorten their prayers at both places, looking at themselves as resident of their home countries and travelers while they are fulfilling their employment contracts. [Suppose someone were to ask them where they live, their answer will be Jeddah or the other place of residence in the Kingdom. That place is the place of their residence for the purposes of offering prayers.]

### ***Salat: Shortening — Frequent Travel***

A man travels twice a week to Riyadh from Al-Kharj, where his family lives. In which city should he shorten his prayers, considering that he stays only two days a week with his family. What should he do when he prays in a mosque considering that he must shorten prayers during travel?

The man should decide which of the two places he considers his hometown where he should pray normally. He then shortens his prayers when he travels to the other town. On face value, we say that his hometown is where his wife and children live. Although he stays with them only two days a week, he considers himself traveling when he goes to the other place, unless he feels that this is his home and his family are staying in Al-Kharj temporarily, or for a specific reason.

If he is praying in a mosque in Riyadh, he follows the imam, completing his prayers like the imam. He cannot pray with the imam two rak'ahs and finish his prayers, abandoning the congregation. It is not a sin for a traveler to offer his prayers the full length, as you indicate. He certainly should avail of himself the concession given by God for travelers, because God loves that His concessions are implemented in the same way as hard duties.

***Salat: Shortening — How Long To Use the Concession?***

When I go home on a month's vacation, I shorten my prayers throughout this period. I have read all the Hadiths concerning this concession, in all six anthologies of authentic Hadiths, and nowhere do I find a limit of 15 or 20 days. My relatives criticize me, saying that scholars must have some basis for their limiting of the concession to a specific number of days. Please explain.

There are two questions to be considered here. The first is how long can one be a traveler if one is staying in one city or village? Secondly, where is one not a traveler?

Concerning the first point, we can say that if a person is traveling on a long journey which takes him to several places and he does not spend in any place more than a few days, or a couple of weeks, then he is a traveler throughout his journey, even if it takes several months or years, as long as he does not return to his hometown, where he has a home or a wife and children, or other family members with whom he normally lives. When he returns home, he is no longer a traveler, even if he is staying for one day or less, before he resumes his travels. Similarly, if one is in the same city for an indefinite period, where he has some business that he wants to complete and then return home, he is considered a traveler throughout, provided that his business should normally take a short period. This means that this case does not apply, say, to a student who travels to a foreign country for study. Such a student spends at least nine months where his college is, even though he may take some trips, or go home during the mid-year break. It applies to a person whose business should take one or two weeks. If he has not finished after the initial period and he has to extend his stay, time after time, not knowing when exactly he will finish, he is a traveler.

On the other hand, a person who is going home on his annual vacation, where he knows in advance that he will stay for a month, cannot be considered a traveler throughout his vacation, according to the overwhelming majority of scholars. When he arrives, his intention is to stay for this period, which is a period of settlement, not traveling. Hence, the travel concession does not apply to him.

On the other hand, if he intends to stay in his hometown for a week or two before traveling to another city where he will be with other relatives, and then again travel back to a third city, or to the first one, he is a traveler. I suppose the difference is clear. As you see, when you look at Hadiths on a particular topic, you need guidance on what elements to consider.

***Salat: Shortening — Travel From Makkah To Jeddah***

If a resident of Makkah travels to Jeddah to visit some relatives, should he shorten his prayer as a traveler?

Scholars differ as to what constitutes travel that permits shortening 4-rak'ah prayers to two. Many measure it by distance, saying that the travel should be at least 85 km in distance. This means that Jeddah is just inside the area that does not permit shortening prayers.

The other view considers what people deem to be travel without looking at actual distance. Thus if you go from one town to another and, prior to the introduction of the modern means of transport, people used to consider such a trip to be travel then it is so. In this case, travel between Makkah and Jeddah entitles a person to avail himself of all the concessions God has given to travelers. Thus, he prays the shorter version. If he finds himself with a group of residents and they want to offer congregational prayer, he joins them, but he will then offer his prayer in full.

### ***Salat: Shortening — What Constitutes Travel?***

I travel to work a distance of about 50 miles, staying at my place of work from Monday to Friday and go back for the weekend. May I ask whether this distance counts as travel that permits shortening my prayer? Do I treat my stay at work as travel that gives me the concessions associated with Traveling?

Scholars mention a certain distance for travel that justifies using the concessions God has given us in prayer and fasting. The distance varies a little, but the figure quoted in most cases is 80 km, with some people adding or taking away a few kilometers. But the view, which is more valid in this regard, does not rely on distance, but on social custom. It is what people consider being travel, rather than the distance or the time it takes to cover that distance. Today, if you live on the outskirts of Jeddah, in the direction of Makkah, you can reach Makkah by car in less time than you can reach the other end of Jeddah. Yet if you go to Makkah you are deemed to be a traveler, while if you go to the other side of Jeddah, you are not. If you take a flight to Madinah, you arrive there in less time than it needs for either of the two journeys mentioned, although the distance is much longer. Yet while no one suggests that going from one end of Jeddah to the other constitutes travel, and a strict person may argue that the Jeddah-Makkah trip does not either, no one disputes that the Madinah trip is true travel. Yet it may be the most comfortable of the three journeys.

Thus, it is not so much the distance, but the general acceptance of society of what constitutes travel. Before the advent of the age of fast transport, a journey to another town at 25 kilometers distance was universally considered to constitute travel. Today, this would be a short trip that justifies neither shortening prayer nor breaking one's fast. Therefore, the reader is the best to know whether his trip to his place of work constitutes travel or not.

If it does, there remains the question of the regularity of the travel, and where he is considered to be a traveler and where he is resident. The answer to this question is where he normally considers himself to be at home. If at the place he spends the weekends he has a home, where his wife and children live, then this is where he resides, and his trips to work are travel. So, he shortens his prayers when he travels to work. On the other hand, if he simply spends his weekends in the city because of the variety it offers, staying with friends, rather than in his own home, then he is a traveler when he is in the city and a resident where he works. He should look at the situation and make his own decision.

### ***Salat: Shortening Of Trousers***

One of my mates at work, who used to be our imam in prayer, advised me to cut my trousers short because the Prophet, peace be upon him, said so in a Hadith. I expressed to him my feeling that there could be a misinterpretation because there were no trousers worn by people at that time. Besides, my trousers were the normal lengths. If people cut their trousers short, they will look very awkward. I also told him that trousers do not disturb me in work or prayer. Please comment.

This is an area that has been subject to much misunderstanding. The Prophet, peace be upon him, certainly spoke about men's clothing and their length, but in all the Hadiths we have, he clearly objects to people who wear their robes long "in arrogance, or as a sign of conceit". What we understand from these Hadiths and the practice at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, is that most people had their robes down to well below the knee, or midway between the knee and the ankle.

However, some people used to show off their privileged position by wearing their robes long, covering their ankle. Hence, the Prophet, peace be upon him, spoke repeatedly against this, considering it a gesture of arrogance, and warned against it in very clear terms.

Unfortunately some people in our times overlook the Prophet's reference to the motives of those people, and consider that the mere covering of one's ankles to be wrong.

This calls into question the way we look at the Prophet's statements in order to deduce rulings. Was the Prophet, peace be upon him, referring to the very action of wearing long clothes, or to the gesture of arrogance behind it? If we say it is to the mere covering of the ankles, then why did he consistently refer to arrogance as motive? If he was warning against showing arrogance in the way we dress, then we need to remember that 'gestures and impressions' are not absolute matters. Rather, they are subject to social conditions.

In our present time when trousers are worn by the majority of men throughout the world, covering the body from the waistline to below the ankles, the thought of arrogance does not occur at all. Therefore, wearing trousers in the normal way and the normal length is perfectly permissible, both in prayer and in other situations.

### ***Salat: Sunnah Before Obligatory Zuhr***

Many people offer only 2 rak'ahs of Sunnah before Zuhr prayer, and 2 after it. Few are those who offer the recommended 4 and many do not offer the 2 rak'ahs of greeting to the mosque. Please comment.

When we speak of Sunnah prayer, we are actually speaking of voluntary prayers. If it is voluntary, then one cannot ask any person why he did not volunteer more. It is entirely up to him. A person who offers more voluntary prayers stands to earn greater reward. The recommended prayer before Zuhr is 4 rak'ahs, which are offered in two lots of 2 rak'ahs each. If a person offers only 2 rak'ahs, that is good, and if he offers 4, that is even better. As for the prayer known as greeting to the mosque, it is offered on entry into any mosque other than the Ka'abah, where the greeting is the tawaf. However, this prayer is integrated with any obligatory or voluntary prayer one intends to offer shortly after getting into the mosque.

Thus, if you go to the mosque to offer Zuhr prayer and you start with 2 rak'ahs of Sunnah, the greeting to the mosque is integrated with this Sunnah. If you find the congregational prayer has started, you must join it, and your prayer includes the mosque greeting if you intend it so.

### ***Salat: Sunnah/Voluntary Prayers Before Maghrib***

1. In my home country, the Philippines, people do not offer two rak'ahs of Sunnah before they start the congregational prayer of Maghrib, which is the practice in Saudi Arabia. Why is this difference, and how do we correct this practice?

2. After the Athan of Maghrib, some people offer two voluntary rak'ahs inside the mosque, before the obligatory prayer. Other people say that it is forbidden to pray in between the obligatory prayers of Asr and Maghrib. Please explain.

3. Is voluntary prayer permitted before Maghrib? How about the prayer known as greeting to the mosque, if we enter a mosque at a Maghrib time?

1. This is just another example of the differences between schools of Fiqh, or Islamic jurisprudence, on matters of detail. In the school of Fiqh that predominates in your country, which I expect to be the Hanafi school, the recognized view is that Maghrib should be offered within a few minutes of its becoming due. Other schools allow longer time, although they stress the importance of offering it early in its time range. They also recommend offering two rak'ahs of Sunnah before the obligatory prayer.

There is no need to re-educate the people in your community so as to change their practice. Had their practice involved some deviation from the recognized Islamic principles, some action would have been needed. But as the case is not so, nothing need to be done. You may explain that in Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim countries, people have a different practice, but your explanation should only seek to make them aware that other methods are also acceptable in Islam.

2. It is not correct to say that prayer is forbidden between the obligatory prayers of Asr and Maghrib. Indeed, prayer is not forbidden at any time. But it is discouraged to offer voluntary prayer at certain times. These include the period from completing the obligatory prayer of Asr until when Maghrib falls due. And also from the time one has finished the obligatory prayer of Fajr until the sun has risen well into the sky, i.e. about half an hour after sunrise. It is also discouraged to pray at the time when the sun is rising or setting or at the moment of midday when it is highest into the sky. The reason for this last restriction is that Islamic worship should not be confused with sun worship.

The other two restrictions are a matter of regulation. However, scholars have two different approaches to this restriction. Some of them are of the view that the original state of affairs is that prayer is permissible at any time. A particular reason makes it discouraged in these specific times, so the restriction applies in all situations. It cannot be waived. The other approach is that the restriction is the initial state of affairs. This means that when you have prayed Fajr or Asr, there is a restriction on voluntary prayer. Therefore, if a new development takes place, such as entering a mosque, doing tawaf, reading a Qur'anic verse which includes a prostration, or sujood, then the new development takes precedence. This means that if you have offered your Asr prayer and then went to Makkah for tawaf, completing it before Maghrib is due, you may offer the two voluntary rak'ahs known as the Sunnah of tawaf. If you go to any mosque some time before Maghrib and you have already offered your Asr prayer, you may offer two rak'ahs of greeting to the mosque. Both approaches are equally sound, and whichever you may choose, you are well advised.

According to some schools of thought, two voluntary rak'ahs are recommended before the obligatory prayer of Maghrib. Also, if you go to the mosque at the time when the Athan is called, you may begin with two voluntary rak'ahs of greeting to the mosque. That is perfectly appropriate.

3. To offer a voluntary prayer at the time when the sun is setting is discouraged. But Maghrib does not fall due until the sun has set. Therefore, there is no objection to offering voluntary prayer after Maghrib falls due. Indeed, it is recommended to offer two rak'ahs voluntarily before one offers the obligatory prayer at Maghrib.

If you go into a mosque at Maghrib time, you offer these two rak'ahs and combine them with the greeting to the mosque. You are given the reward for four rak'ahs although you offer only two. Some schools of thought do not mention these two rak'ahs as recommended. They are of the type of voluntary prayer, which is known as "not moakkedah".

This means that the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to offer these two rak'ahs before Maghrib only occasionally.

### ***Salat: Supplication During Ruku' Or Sujood***

1. I realize that reading the Qur'an during Ruku' or sujood in prayer is not right. May I ask whether in these situations we can say a supplication that is mentioned in the Qur'an?

2. Is it appropriate to pray for oneself during a formal prayer, say, when we prostrate ourselves, or when we bow in Ruku'? Which is the best time for supplication, or Dua'?

1. In prayer, we have to follow the Prophet's, peace be upon him, example, as he gives us this very clear instruction: "Pray as you have seen me pray." While the Qur'an is the highest form of Zikr, or mentioning God's name and glorifying Him, in prayer we read the Qur'an at the time and the position the Prophet, peace be upon him, indicated for its reading. This is the position of standing up at the beginning of each Rak'ah.

In the situations you have mentioned, i.e. Ruku' or bowing, and sujood or prostration, we glorify God in the form the Prophet, peace be upon him, indicated. It is permissible also to add a supplication in these positions, and this could be of the ones included in the Qur'an, but it should be intended as a supplication.

2. Some scholars take a restrictive view, saying that supplication, or Dua, other than what the Prophet, peace be upon him, used in prayer, should be limited to the final part in Tashahhud, just before ending prayers. Their view is based on the Hadith that defines prayers as "glorification of God, extolling His praise and reading the Qur'an." Other scholars take a more general view, considering supplication to be an essential part of worship. These consider that every part of the normal prayer, such as Ruku' and prostration, as well as the standing up position after Ruku', to be good times for supplication.

This latter view is perhaps more accurate, particularly when we consider that when we stand up after Ruku', the imam says Sami' Allah-u liman hamidah, which means, "may God answer the prayers of a person who is grateful to Him." The congregation says immediately: "All praise is due to God." Thus, they recognize His blessings and express their gratitude for them. This means that they are included in the first supplication by the imam, requesting God to answer their supplication. This means, in effect, a request that God answers their prayers. It is, then, time to say such prayers.

### ***Salat: Supplication In Own Language During Salat***

1. Is it permissible to pray to God in our own language during obligatory prayers, particularly when we prostrate ourselves?

2. Many of us speak little Arabic. Is it permissible to use one's mother tongue in saying our supplication during various stages of prayer? A friend of mine says that all supplications during prayer must be in Arabic. I feel that the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions used Arabic because it was their mother tongue. Please comment. If a person does not speak Arabic at all, but has learned the meaning of the Qur'an in his language, can he use such translation in his prayer?

1. Many scholars are of the view that during prayer, particularly obligatory prayers, we should confine ourselves to the supplication the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to say. This is understandable because the Prophet's supplication is concise and encompasses every good thing, both in this life and in the life to come. Of course, all this supplication is in Arabic and if one learns a few of these and repeats them, that would ensure great blessings for him in his life. Supplication for ordinary

matters is preferable at the end of the prayer, just before one finishes it with Salam. Again there are forms of supplication for this position.

After the prayer, one may make any supplication in any language. This is perfectly appropriate, because supplication preceded by an act of worship is sure to be answered. Formal prayers should be in Arabic because this is the way the Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed. Besides, in formal prayers we read from the Qur'an, and the Qur'an is in Arabic.

2, All scholars agree that anyone who offers prayers must read the Al-Fatihah and the Qur'an in Arabic. It is not possible to use translation, as I have explained on several occasions. If a person does not know the Fatihah, but knows another passage of the Qur'an, he is required to say in each rak'ah a passage of similar length to the Fatihah. If he does not know any part of the Qur'an in Arabic, he must learn. If he fears that he would miss his prayers before he could learn, he should glorify Allah, using the well known formula: Subhan Allah, Alhamdulillah, La ilaha illa Allah, Allahu Akbar, la hawla wala qowwata illa billah. If a person cannot learn all these five phrases, he learns what he can of them and repeats them.

This is the case of a man who could not learn any verse of the Qur'an; the Prophet, peace be upon him, taught him a few simple phrases in Arabic to repeat them in his prayers. He did not tell him to glorify Allah in silence.

Therefore, when you offer your prayer, you should say the Qur'an in Arabic and also any glorification or supplication. When you have finished your prayers, you can say any supplication in your language. Supplication in prayer can concentrate on what you have learned to say in Arabic. If you learn one sentence, to appeal to Allah to admit you into heaven and spare you any punishment in the hereafter that is more than sufficient. You can include everything else in your supplication after prayer in your language.

It is not true that the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions used Arabic because it was their mother tongue. The Prophet, peace be upon him, used Arabic in prayer because he had to read the Qur'an in prayer and the Qur'an, Allah's words, is in Arabic. Any translation of it is not the Qur'an, but an explanation of its meaning. That translator may have to change the order of the original text in order to fit his text with the grammar into which he is translating. No one can change the order of the Qur'anic words. Had Allah wanted the Prophet, peace be upon him, to offer his prayers in any other language, He would have told him so and would have made it easy for him to learn that language. But Allah wants us to use His Book in our prayer. As it is well known to everyone, His Book has been revealed in Arabic.

### ***Salat: Supplication Prolonged***

Is it advisable to make a prolonged supplication [after completing Tashahhud and Durood i.e.] just before concluding an obligatory or voluntary prayer?

The short answer is that a prolonged supplication is not advisable, particularly if it becomes disproportionate to the other parts of the prayer. Some people are in the habit of making their supplications very long, particularly in the Qunoot in the Witr prayer, especially in Ramadhan. This is certainly not advisable because the Prophet, peace be upon him, is not known to have ever made such a prolonged supplication in prayers at any time. Indeed, once Lady Ayesha, his wife, asked him what she should say in her supplication on the night of power, [i.e. Lailat Al-Qadr] if she were certain of the night. As you realize, supplication on that night is certain to be answered. The Prophet, peace be upon him, taught her only one short supplication which says: "My Lord, You are much-forgiving, and You love forgiveness, so forgive



me." If that is the Prophet's advice for the night of power, then certainly it applies to other occasions. What some people do in supplication during prayer, of making their Qunoot or other supplication very long is contrary to the Prophet's guidance, particularly in congregational prayer.

Having said that, I would like to point out that when one has finished his Tashahhud [and Durood] which is the penultimate task in prayer, and just before one finishes his prayer, a short supplication is recommended. One should choose some of the most important supplications the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us, or, preferably, he should choose what he is most in need of whether it relates to matters of this life or the hereafter. But it is far preferable to make such supplications short.

### ***Salat: Surah After the Surah Al-Fatihah***

Is it sufficient to read only the Fatihah in voluntary prayers?

What is obligatory to read in any rak'ah in prayer is Surah entitled the Opening or Al-Fatihah. If one reads another Surah or some verses of the Qur'an as well, he earns more reward for his reading. If he limits himself to reading Al-Fatihah, his prayer is valid and complete.

### ***Salat: Tahajjud — Especially On Fridays***

A group of people meet every Friday night in the mosque to recite the Qur'an, offer night worship and stay until the dawn prayer. When they have offered the dawn prayer, they depart. Is their practice recommended?

No, their practice is certainly not recommended. In fact it runs contrary to the Prophet's teachings. Abu Hurairah quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "Do not single out the night of Friday for special night worship." [Related by Muslim].

This is a clear Hadith, which shows that the practice of these people is the very thing the Prophet, peace be upon him, advised against. We need to remember that Friday counts as a day of Eid, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, has made it clear that it should not be singled out for voluntary fasting, unless one wishes to fast a day before it or a day after it. In the same way, Friday night may not be singled out for special prayer or Tahajjud. Moreover, staying in the mosque for a whole day is recommended in the last ten days of Ramadhan, but not on other days, unless it is something done once in a while.

### ***Salat: Tahajjud — Highly Rewarding But ...***

***Commentary By Adil Salahi — Arab News***

Every statement by the Prophet, peace be upon him, has its value, because the Prophet, peace be upon him, taught only what is good and beneficial to mankind. Some Hadiths tackle private matters, while others are concerned with social or community affairs. Some relate to concerns of this world, while others speak of religious aspects. Whatever the Prophet, peace be upon him, says should be taken as a pointer to what is best in its particular area, except when the Hadith speaks of something that belongs purely to questions of this world. In this latter case, a statement by the Prophet, peace be upon him, expresses a personal opinion which is liable to error like any opinion by any human being. Where a Hadith has some religious relevance, then it is always right, good and beneficial.

Let us consider this Hadith which speaks of the Prophet, peace be upon him, visiting his daughter Fatimah and her husband Ali one night when they were asleep. He said to them: "Would you not pray?" Ali said: "Messenger of God! Our souls are in God's hand. When he wills us to be awake we will be." The Prophet, peace be upon him,

departed without saying anything. Ali adds: "I then heard him as he went away, striking his thigh and saying, "man is, above all else, always given to contention." [Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Al-Nasa'ie and Ahmad].

The first thing to note about this Hadith is that the Prophet, peace be upon him, went to wake up his daughter and son-in-law, who was also his cousin, so that they would do some night worship [Tahajjud], which is voluntary. By so doing, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was keen that these two people, whom he loved particularly well, should avail themselves of the great benefit that is certain to attend those who offer voluntary night worship. Scholars of Hadith take the Prophet's words as he woke them up as an expression of encouragement that carries an element of love. This is only to be expected when the Prophet, peace be upon him, addressed his young daughter and her husband.

Ali's response only mentions a fact made clear by Islam. In the Qur'an we read:

***"God takes away people's souls upon their death, and the souls of those who are not dead during their sleep."*** [The Troops — "Az-Zumar" 39: 42]

It is clear that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not like Ali's response, but Ali only wanted to apologize for his sleep. It should be remembered that he had just been awoken, and at such a time a person may not be very attentive. Had Ali been fully awake, then most probably his reply would have been different, because he would have immediately realized that the Prophet, peace be upon him, was only encouraging him to do something that was certain to bring him immense reward.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, was, nevertheless, amazed at Ali's rejoinder, and his amazement is reflected in his gesture and quotation from the Qur'an as he went away. Had he been offended, he would not have hesitated to tell Ali that his reply was not acceptable. But the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not do that. He merely went away, feeling amazed. His statement about man being given to argumentation is a quotation from the Qur'an.

Another point about this Hadith is seen in its chain of transmission. It is reported by Ali's grandson who was named after him and given the title Zain Al-Abideen, or the jewel of worshippers. Ali Zain Al-Abideen learnt it from his father, Al-Hussain, the Prophet's grandson, who heard it from his father, Ali ibn Abu Talib. It is one of the most authentic and reliable chains of transmission. It also speaks volumes of the honesty and integrity of all these people who did not wish to suppress this incident which carries an element of the Prophet's disapproval of Ali's words. Ali himself related the story, and his son and grandson also reported it so that other Muslims would benefit by it. We do not find any of them trying to suppress this Hadith which tells of the Prophet's disapproval.

### ***Salat: Tahajjud — Its Timings & the Number Of Rak'ahs***

Could you please give clear ideas about night prayer and its timings, maximum and minimum number of rak'ahs and the method of offering them.

Night worship, or 'Tahajjud', is a voluntary prayer which may be offered at any time during the night, after one has offered the obligatory prayer of Isha', and before offering dawn prayer, or Fajr. However, the latter part of the night is preferable for this prayer. It can be offered any night, and one may pray short or long rak'ahs, as one wishes. If he is praying in congregation, it is recommended to the imam to make sure that everyone in the congregation is willing to have long rak'ahs, before he starts. If one is offering night worship, or Tahajjud, he is recommended to finish it with Witr. The minimum number of rak'ah of Tahajjud are two, excluding Witr, and

there is no maximum. However, it is authentically reported that the maximum number of rak'ahs the Prophet, peace be upon him, offered on any one night was eleven, including Witr. It is suggested that the maximum he offered was thirteen.

One may recite the Qur'an loudly or may read it privately in Tahajjud. It is preferable to recite loudly if he is alone or if he is in congregation, or if there are people near him who would like to listen to, or may benefit by his recitation. On the other hand, if there is someone close to him who is doing his own night worship, or someone who is asleep and may be disturbed, then it is preferable to read the Qur'an privately.

### ***Salat: Tahajjud — Reciting Aloud In***

Should one recite the Qur'an aloud in night worship, or Tahajjud? How many Rak'ahs in this prayer, and how is it performed?

Night worship, or Tahajjud, may be offered with the Qur'an being recited aloud, if a worshipper is offering it alone or if there are people near him who would like to listen to, or may benefit by his recitation. If he is in a congregation, then the Imam will read the Qur'an aloud, as it is the case in Taraweeh.

In fact Taraweeh is of this type of prayer, but it is offered in Ramadhan only. The form of Tahajjud, is the same as Taraweeh.

It is offered normally in pairs; two Rak'ahs at a time and one may read a long passage of the Qur'an if one wishes to do so. If a group is praying together in congregation, then the Imam must observe the requirement of making his prayers short in order that no one in the congregation finds it hard.

### ***Salat: Tahajjud & Taraweeh Rak'ahs***

I have read in a book that in Ramadhan, the prayer known as taraweeh and the Tahajjud are one and the same thing. The author also says that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not offer more than 11 rak'ahs of night worship on any night. How far is this true?

Taraweeh is a name given to night worship in Ramadhan. The name generally used for such worship is Tahajjud which includes prayer and the recitation of the Qur'an. It is appropriate; then, to say that taraweeh is Tahajjud in Ramadhan.

It is authentically reported that Prophet, peace be upon him, did not offer on any night more than 11 or 13 rak'ahs. If we take the higher figure, we should remember that the Prophet, peace be upon him, started his night worship with two short rak'ahs. However, Lady Ayesha explains that when the Prophet, peace be upon him, offered his night worship, he started with four rak'ahs. She says: "You need not ask about their length and perfection." He then offered another four rak'ahs and she uses the same expression to describe them. He then offered three.

On the other hand, there is no restriction on the number of rak'ahs a person may offer in night worship. People in Madinah in the early days of Islam used to offer taraweeh in 36 rak'ahs which meant that with Witr they prayed either 39 or 41 rak'ahs. What this boils down to is that one may offer night worship as one pleases. You may offer as many rak'ahs as you wish, and you may, if you like, offer a small number of rak'ahs and make them long. You may also offer only a few rak'ahs even two if you wish, without making them long. It all depends on your choice and how you feel that night.

### ***Salat: Taraweeh & Following It On Television***

Now that Saudi satellite channels broadcast taraweeh prayer from the Haram in Makkah, is it permissible for me to join such prayer at home in India? The spiritual satisfaction I feel if I do so is priceless. It is as if I am with the congregation in the Haram itself. If this is not valid, can I pray in the local mosque normally, and then join the television taraweeh just to capture the spiritual feeling?

Following or joining a congregational prayer in one's home as it is shown on television or broadcast on radio is not valid. This ruling applies even to people in Makkah who may feel that in Ramadhan or in the pilgrimage season they may be doing a favor for their brethren coming from distant countries, if they would pray at home to reduce the crowding at the Haram. The reason is very clear and simple. If people were to do so, they would soon make this a habit and stay at home for all prayers, since they can join it in their own home, watching television.

Moreover, if this is to become a normal habit, it could easily be extended and given a wider application. People everywhere would do the same in their own hometowns and cities, offering Friday prayer at home, rather than going to the local mosque, simply because they feel this to be more convenient. Over the years people could extend this further and start fasting according to the times applicable in Makkah. They would argue that Islam started there and if they follow the Makkah timetable they would be fulfilling their duty of fasting in its original form. All this is wrong.

People should offer their worship in their locality, with the local congregation and according to the local times. [If we are to follow the congregation in Makkah, how would it work, for instance, somewhere in the U.S. where the time difference may be 7 hours or more. Will there be different set of rules for them?]

What you could do is just watch the prayer with concentration on the Qur'an being recited and the worship offered. You could also supplicate and glorify God when the congregation is in their prostration or other functions. [This will earn you reward for attentively listening to the Qur'an, and] this should give you nearly the same spiritual satisfaction.

### ***Salat: Taraweeh At Home & Reading From the Qur'an***

Could you please let me know whether it is permissible to offer Taraweeh prayers at home, individually, or it must be offered in congregation in the mosque. Is it permissible to hold a copy of the Qur'an, and read from it in Taraweeh prayer? What is the minimum number of rak'ahs in Taraweeh?

It is perfectly appropriate for anyone to offer Taraweeh prayer, which is the name used for night worship in Ramadhan, at home, individually or in a group. In fact, it is better to offer voluntary prayers at home, leaving the mosque for obligatory prayers. If one prays at home, alone or with one's wife and children, one does well. There is no harm in that.

Some people may not be able to join the congregation because they are working or have something to attend to. So, they may pray at home when they can. Others may wish to read long passages of the Qur'an in taraweeh, which means that they have to pray at home. All this is acceptable. It is also all right to read from one's copy of the Qur'an in voluntary prayer, including Taraweeh, but not in obligatory prayers. The minimum number of rak'ahs in Taraweeh is two.

### ***Salat: Tasbeeh & Dhuha Prayers***

1. Could you please explain the importance and details of Tasbeeh and Dhuha prayers.

2. The prayer known as Tasbeeh is widely practiced in India, but not so here, although it is mentioned in a Hadith related by Abu Dawood, Ibn Majah and others. Why do Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Al-Tirmithi not mention it?

1. Dhuha prayer is a voluntary prayer, which may be offered at any time starting about half an hour after sunrise until shortly before noon. It is 2-8 Raka'ahs which are normally short. It may be offered any day, on regular or sporadic basis. Recitation in this prayer is normally private. It is certainly encouraged for anyone who can offer it, because it comes at a time when people are normally busy with their business. If one can take a short break to offer a couple of Raka'ahs, it does him well. If circumstances do not allow, then one may do it on weekends. Tasbeeh prayer is a night prayer, offered sometime before dawn. It is 2 Raka'ahs with long glorification of God in certain parts of each Raka'ah. There is only one Hadith, which mentions this type of prayer, and it is not really authentic. In fact, Imam Ahmad, the founder of the Hanbali school of thought, who was one of the top scholars of Hadith and Fiqh, finds no basis for this prayer and does not encourage it. Still, if one wants to offer it, no blame attaches to him.

2. If some Hadith scholars mention a particular Hadith, it is because they consider it of a reasonable degree of authenticity. Since Al-Bukhari and most Hadith scholars do not mention the Hadith concerning the Tasbeeh prayer, this indicates that they did not consider it to be reasonably authentic. The Hadith in question is rated as poor on authenticity, or *Zaeef*, which means that it cannot be the basis of confirmed rulings. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who is a scholar of the highest caliber in both Hadith and Fiqh, feels that there is no sufficient ground to suggest that this prayer is Sunnah.

### ***Salat: Tasbeeh & Hajah Prayers?***

Are the prayers known as Tasbeeh, and Hajah a Sunnah or innovation? Is it true that the time for evening Thikr begins after Asr prayer?

Tasbeeh prayer does not have a strong basis in the Sunnah, while the prayer known as Al-Hajah has such a basis. It means prayer for the fulfillment of a specific need. There is no special form for this prayer, or a particular supplication.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Whoever performs the ablution, i.e. wudhu, well and then prays two rak'ahs, attending well to them, will have his request granted by God, either immediately or deferred." [Related by Ahmad] This is an authentic Hadith, which means that we can pray and request God whatever we want feeling sure that we will get it. However, God may decide to defer it in order to give us something better.

The time of Evening Thikr, or glorification and supplication, starts after Asr prayer, but its range extends until well into the night.

### ***Salat: Tattoos — Do They Invalidate Prayers?***

Having had a tattoo on his hand early in life, a man learned lately that it is not permissible in Islam. He wonders whether his prayers and the pilgrimage he has offered are valid.

Having a tattoo on one's body is forbidden. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has cursed this action and spoke in clear terms of its prohibition. However, we see some

Muslims with tattoos on their hands or other parts of their bodies. It may be that such a person had his tattoo done without being aware of its prohibition, or that at the time when he had it he paid little heed to Islamic rules.

The problem is that a tattoo is permanent. Once it is done, removing it requires a lengthy operation of skin grafting. Such a person does not need to go through this in order to remove the tattoo. What he is required to do is to genuinely repent of having had it, resolving not to have anything of the sort in future. He should seek God's forgiveness.

His prayer and pilgrimage are certainly valid. It has to be remembered that genuine repentance of any sin erases it completely. Although in the case of the tattoo, the effect remains on one's body, the fact that the person concerned has repented means that no further action is required.

### ***Salat: Thanksgiving the Right Way — Prostrate In Gratitude***

You have mentioned in the past that there is no prayer of thanksgiving in Islam, but one prostration is the method of thanking God for a happy event. Could you please give us some evidence supporting that from the Qur'an or the Sunnah.

A single prostration, or Sajdah, is recommended when a person receives some happy news or when some evil is averted. It is reported that "When the Prophet, peace be upon him, received something pleasant or was given some happy news, he would prostrate himself in gratitude to God." [Related by Abu Dawood, At-Tirmithi and Ibn Majah.]

Abdurrahman ibn Auf, the Prophet's companion, reports that one day he followed the Prophet, peace be upon him, until he saw he prostrated himself. "His prostration was very long, until I feared that he might have died. I went in to find out, and he lifted his head and said, "What is the matter, Abdurrahman?" I told him what I feared. He said: "Gabriel came and conveyed to me that God has promised to bless anyone who prays Him to bless me, and will give peace to anyone who asks Him to grant me peace. I prostrated myself in gratitude to God for His grace." [Related by Ahmad and Al-Hakim who says that this is the most authentic Hadith he knows on the subject of thanksgiving.]

The prostration of thanks, or Sajdah al-Shukr, was practiced also by the Prophet's companions. There are reports of many of them offering it on different occasions. The best known report is that of Ka'ab ibn Malik when he was given the happy news of God's forgiveness of his offense of not joining the Prophet, peace be upon him, on the expedition to Tabuk.

### ***Salat: Time Range For Prayers***

In one of your answers you said that only Asr prayer should be offered during Asr time. May I ask you whether it is permissible to pray Zuhr prayer during Asr time if one misses the first one?

My words that you quote were part of explaining the fact that prayer in Islam is a time-related duty. I was emphasizing the fact that prayers must be offered in their own time, and that when the time allowed for a certain prayer has lapsed, that prayer could not be offered. But I made clear that there is a case of combining two prayers, when certain circumstances require that. The prayers that may be combined are Zuhr with Asr, and Maghrib with Isha. There can be no other combination, i.e. we cannot combine Asr with Maghrib, or indeed with any prayer other than Zuhr.

Combining prayer is a concession given in two situations. The first is general, which is travel. A person who is on travel may offer each two prayers together at the same time, during the time range of either one of them. Thus, he may offer Zuhr and Asr at the beginning of the time of the first, i.e. Zuhr, and offer the other two at the end of Isha time, or indeed at any moment in between the beginning of the first and the end of the second.

The other situation is a special one, which must be used only when needed. It is granted as a concession to meet people's needs. So, when a person is in a situation when he fears that he will not be able to offer the two prayers separately at their respective times, he combines them, offering one after the other. Thus, if a woman wants to go shopping or to attend some function and she realizes that she may not be able to return before the lapse of the time for Asr, she may pray Asr with Zuhr at the time of Zuhr before she leaves home. If her absence will be longer, she may delay Maghrib and offer it before Isha when she arrives back. This concession must be used only when there is a genuine need, and it should not become a habit.

### ***Salat: Times When the Prayer Is Discouraged***

1. I understand that prayer is discouraged at sunrise and sunset. If the time of sunset is approaching and one has not prayed Asr, should he pray it anyway, or wait until after sunset? May I also ask about the prayer known as Ash-Shabina: is it the same as Tahajjud?

2. When reading the Qur'an, there are verses which require that a prostration, or sujood, should be performed. But could this be done at the times when prayers are not allowed? Could you explain when are these times?

1. There are times when prayer is discouraged, or Makrooh; but this relates to Sunnah or voluntary prayer, not to obligatory ones. The times when prayer is discouraged are as follows. 1] After a person has prayed Fajr until the sun has risen well into the sky. 2] After a person has prayed Asr until the sun has set. 3] At the points of sunrise, sunset and when the sun is at its top point at noon.

The point is that because some communities worshipped the sun, Islam is keen that our Salat is not confused with the timing of the sun, its rise, height or setting. Hence, no voluntary prayer is recommended after the obligatory prayers of Fajr and Asr. Once these obligatory prayers have been offered, no voluntary prayer should be offered until the sun has completed its particular stage.

The point the reader raises about a person who has not yet done his Asr obligatory prayer when sunset is near at hand does not apply.

Although the time is one of discouragement of prayer, obligatory prayer takes precedence. That person should pray as soon as possible, before the sun has set.

I do not know any prayer by this name, Ash-Shabina. It may be a non-Arabic word referring to the prayers offered in some mosques deep into the night in Ramadhan. If so, this is Tahajjud.

2. There are certain periods when voluntary prayer is discouraged. It is wrong to say that it is not allowed. When we speak of something being discouraged, we mean that it is better left out. These periods are:

1 After one has prayed Fajr, or dawn prayer, until the sun has risen well into the sky, i.e. about 25 minutes after sunrise;

2 After one has prayed Asr, or mid-afternoon prayer until sunset; and

3 When the sun is at its highest point in the sky, i.e. a few minutes before Zuhr, or noon prayer becomes due.

This is due to the fact that certain communities worshipped the sun. Therefore, Islam discourages prayer at these times so that Islamic worship is not mistakenly thought to have anything to do with the movement of the sun.

What applies to voluntary prayers also applies to prostration and the 14 verses where it is recommended. If you are reading the Qur'an, at these times and you come across such a point, it is preferable not to do your prostration, because of the restriction. Besides, doing the prostration is a Sunnah, anyway.

### ***Salat: Translated Qur'an In Prayer?***

I have noticed that many of our people back home formulate some misconceptions about Islamic worship, and this is largely due to their inability to understand Arabic, although they are able to read the Arabic script. I feel that if they could read the Qur'an, translated into their own language during prayer, when concentration is at its highest, then they would be better informed. Is this permissible?

The Prophet, peace be upon him, describes Islamic prayer as consisting of only "God's remembrance, glorification and reading the Qur'an." The Qur'an is the book revealed to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, through the angel Gabriel in God's own words. It has been preserved intact, and it will continue to be preserved because God has guaranteed that it will remain in its original form for the rest of time. It is the Qur'an, which we must use in prayer.

It is true that the large majority of Muslims do not speak Arabic. Even among the Arab people, many are those, whose level of education does not help them to understand the Qur'an properly. But this does not make a case for substituting God's own word with a paraphrase of its meaning.

When you look at any translation, you realize that it is the rendering by the translator, in his or her own words, of the meaning of the original text. Now the translator may make mistakes in understanding the text, or the text itself may admit more than one meaning. This could result in a rather confused or erroneous rendering.

When it comes to a religious text, the translator could have some preconceived ideas, which make him interpret certain texts in a certain way, but this could be mistaken. But even if we have a translation, which is free of error, it remains the language of the translator, expressing his own understanding of God's word. This is always inadequate as an expression of God's meaning. How can we use it in prayer? Besides, if you look at English translations of the Qur'an, you find that there are scores of them, and they all differ.

Which one would you take? If English speaking Muslims were free to choose, each would be choosing the translation that he found in a bookshop. They will be using different texts in their prayer. Is this acceptable?

Yet I appreciate the problem you have expressed. The answer is not in allowing prayer in different languages and dialects. It is in raising the standard of education, particularly religious learning among Muslims throughout the world. This is a task that should be addressed by communities, governments, families and individuals.



### ***Salat: Travel & Prayer On Board***

Could you please clarify what the relevant Qur'anic verse that permits shortening 4-rak'ah prayers during travel says about being in fear of the designs of unbelievers. May I ask whether it is permissible to offer prayers in one's seat when travelling by coach or plane?

The element of fearing the unbelievers as a condition for shortening prayers during travel is waived. A highly authentic Hadith mentions that Omar asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, about it, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, said to him: "It is a kindly gift God has granted you; so accept God's gift." [Related by all six]. There are many Hadiths that confirm this. Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim says: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to shorten every 4-rak'ah prayer from the moment he started his travel until he returned to Madinah. It has never been authentically reported that he completed a single 4-rak'ah prayer during travel. Needless to say, there was no risk of conflict on several of his travels.

Praying on one's seat in a plane or coach is certainly permissible if one is offering a voluntary prayer. As for the obligatory one, it is permissible on the plane if you board your flight before the prayer is due and you fear that you will miss it if you leave it until you arrive. It is not acceptable on the coach, because it is always possible to stop a coach for a few minutes to pray, and coaches do not travel too many hours at a time.

### ***Salat: Travel Affecting Prayers***

1. If my flight starts before dawn prayer is called and continues till after sunrise, how do I pray Fajr.
2. As I am traveling to India, I believe that I will not be able to offer prayers during the journey. Please explain whether I can offer prayers before take off. If, for instance, my flight is at 2 p.m., can I offer Asr and Maghrib prayers at the same time as Dhuhr? Do I shorten these prayers as well?
3. Is it obligatory to shorten ones prayers during travel?

1. In this case of travel, you offer your Fajr prayer when it is due, while you are on board. Obviously, you cannot find enough space to offer your prayer in the normal way, without obstructing the passage of other passengers and the plane crew. Nor is it possible for you to determine the direction of the Qiblah. Therefore, you pray in the seat bending your head for bowing [i.e. Rukoo'] and bending a little more for prostration [i.e. sujood]. For standing up or seated positions, you remain seated. The Prophet, peace be upon him, offered Sunnah prayer when he was traveling, while he was on the back of his camel. He did not change the direction the camel was going. Nor did he try to rise and sit. He remained in the riding position, bending for Rukoo' and sujood.

What you have to be careful about is the time when Fajr becomes due. The times in the air are different from those on land. You will find that the sun rises much earlier and dawn falls later than usual. Therefore, you should be alert to these time changes.

Perhaps it is wiser to have ablution before you board the plane. It is very difficult and inconvenient to have ablution using the wash basin in the toilet on the plane. However, if you cannot keep your ablution until Fajr is due, you should use the facility of wiping over your socks, as this is permissible if you have put them on after you had ablution.

2. Shortening prayers is a concession given to travelers after they have started their journey. In other words, if you live in Riyadh and you are traveling from it, you can

start shortening your prayers once you are out of the city. If you are traveling by plane, it is when the plane has taken off that you can start reducing your prayers. If it is only Dhuhr, Asr and Isha that can be shortened from 4 to 2 rak'ahs. Maghrib and Fajr remain as they are.

When traveling, we are allowed to combine prayers, but the combination applies only to joining Asr with Dhuhr, or joining Maghrib with Isha. Fajr cannot be joined to any other prayer. It is permissible to join each two of these prayers at any point in their time range. So, you can bring Asr forward to the time of Dhuhr or leave Dhuhr to the time of Asr. The same applies to Maghrib and Isha. That gives us a long time gap, which is sufficient for any journey. However, if you are traveling by plane and you have taken off, say, just before Dhuhr time, and your first stop will be after Maghrib has fallen due at your destination, then you offer your prayers on the plane, in your seat. You do the bowing and prostration with your head and body as far as you can. Obviously it is not possible to block the passage in between the seats for your prayers. As I say, when you pray on the plane you reduce your prayers to 2 rak'ahs each, except for Maghrib which remains at three rak'ahs.

3. A traveler is strongly recommended to shorten his Dhuhr, Asr and Isha prayers to two rak'ahs each, because this is in line with what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us. We do it not because prayers become a burden during travel; they do not. We do it praising Allah for the concession as an exercise of strength, not weakness. This is the proper attitude.

### ***Salat: Travel On Long Haul Flights***

How should I offer my prayers if I am taking a flight at 4.30 in the afternoon, and will not reach my destination until 4 a.m. the following morning?

This is simple. You should offer Asr prayer together with Zuhr before you leave home, praying each in four Raka'ahs. If your flight includes a stopover on the way, you offer Maghrib and Isha at the airport where you stop, either in the airport building if you get down, or on the plane if you do not.

If the flight is a direct one, without a stopover, you offer the two prayers in flight, while seated in your seat. You offer three Raka'ahs for Maghrib and two for Isha. You should also pray Witr. The same applies to Fajr.

If you arrive in time for prayer, you offer it on arrival. If you fear that you will miss it, you offer it on the plane, during your journey.

### ***Salat: Use Of Miswak Before & After Prayers***

Some people use their miswak before and after prayer. Should this not be at the time of performing ablutions?

The proper time for using the miswak to brush one's teeth is during the performance of ablution, or wudhu, when one rinses one's mouth. People use it before prayers because they misunderstand a Hadith, which says: "Had it not been for the fear of making things difficult for my community, I would have ordered that they brush their teeth for every prayer." Another version of this Hadith replaces the word "prayer" with the word "ablution".

This explains the Prophet's purpose, because it is the logical, cleaner and more hygienic way to rinse one's mouth after brushing one's teeth. This can be done only when one is performing ablution. The use of miswak as one stands to pray does not provide the chance to rinse one's mouth or wash his miswak.

***Salat: Various Situations***

If one has just started praying a Sunnah prayer, and the congregational obligatory prayer is called, should he continue his Sunnah, or terminate it to join the congregation?

If one has missed the Sunnah offered normally before Zuhr and joined the congregation, should one pray that Sunnah after the obligatory prayer? Could this be done with regard to the Sunnah before Fajr?

It is well known that prayer at the time of midday is forbidden; yet people do it on Friday.

If you have missed two rak'ahs with the imam and you stand up to complete your prayer after the imam has finished, should you treat these as your initial rak'ahs?

Scholars differ on whether such a worshipper should interrupt his prayer in order to join the congregation, or he should finish his voluntary prayer quickly and then join the congregation. Both views are valid. The basis for both rulings is the Hadith that says: "When the congregation is called, i.e. iqamah, the only valid prayer is the obligatory one." Those who say that the worshipper should terminate his voluntary prayer take this Hadith at face value and consider that the calling of the obligatory prayer renders the voluntary one invalid. Those who take the other view understand the Hadith as meaning that one cannot initiate any prayer other than the obligatory one with the imam. A person who has already started a voluntary prayer is already engaged in prayer and he should not interrupt it.

If one comes into the mosque and finds that the obligatory Zuhr prayer has started or about to start, he should join the congregation. The voluntary prayer before Zuhr is thus missed. One does not offer this prayer after the obligatory prayer, because its time has lapsed. One may offer any number of voluntary rak'ahs after Zuhr, but it would not be the one he missed.

With regard to Fajr prayer, the situation is different. This Sunnah is offered after one completes the obligatory prayer either because the congregation has already started or because sunrise is close at hand and he fears that if he were to offer the Sunnah first he will miss the obligatory prayer. In these cases, he may offer the missed Sunnah either shortly after the obligatory prayer, or he waits until the sun has risen well into the sky.

Prayer when the sun is at its highest point in the sky, i.e. at midday, is discouraged, but not forbidden. The reason is that we should not appear as though we are glorifying the sun or praying to it.

Once the sun starts to move down, i.e. a few minutes later, we may pray as usual. The people who offer their prayer on Friday after the Athan is called are doing well, because the sun would have already started on its way down from its highest point.

Different scholars have different views on the rak'ahs you offer after the imam has finished in order to complete your prayer, because you joined the congregation late. Those who say that the rak'ahs you pray with the imam are counted according to the imam's prayer require that you offer the earlier rak'ahs when the imam has finished. This means that if you offer with the imam two out of four rak'ahs, these two are your third and fourth.

The ones you have to compensate are your first and second, and this is how you offer them. Other scholars consider your prayer as starting with your first. Therefore, what

you pray after the imam has finished are your third and fourth. Whichever option you follow, your prayers will Insha'Allah remain valid.

### ***Salat: Voluntary Prayers & Illness***

Someone has been offering voluntary prayers, such as Tahajjud and extra Nafil, particularly on Fridays. Recently he has been diagnosed to have hernia. Should he continue or limit himself to the normal prayers only?

It is highly unlikely that prayers could have brought about this condition, because the prayer movements are not strenuous. When someone has a complaint and finds some movement which is required in prayer strenuous, he may do only what he can do of it without undue strain. So it is unlikely that the condition is due to his voluntary prayers.

Perhaps this man should ask his doctor about the causes of his condition. On the other hand, voluntary worship should be undertaken when one is comfortable with it. Therefore, I cannot advise this person to reduce his voluntary worship, but he should perhaps spread it more easily. He can also vary it so as to include recitation of the Qur'an, fasting, etc. instead of limiting himself to prayers only, particularly if in his condition he finds prayer strenuous.

### ***Salat: When One Cannot Control Passing Of Urine Or Stool***

If a person is so ill that he cannot control his discharge of urine and stools, how can he offer his prayers?

If the person is aware of the situation and can attend to his needs, he should clean himself for prayer, and he can combine Zuhr and Asr together, and Maghrib and Isha together, to ease his difficulty. However, the illness you have mentioned could be managed if proper medical attention is given.

In a different situation, where no improvement is likely and the elderly person has lost most of his normal senses, to the extent that he is largely unaware of what goes on around him, prayer may not be required of him. However, the case should be considered on its own.

### ***Salat: When Praying Is Physically Hard***

My mother suffers from an illness that makes it painful for her to bend her knees. Can she use a chair and a table when she prays instead of bending to prostrate herself?

Indeed, she may use whatever tool and position enables her to pray in comfort. What is important is not to neglect or abandon prayer. That is not permissible for anyone who is conscious and aware of what he or she says. But when a person is in pain taking a particular position, that position is dispensed with. Thus, if one cannot stand up, one prays seated, or lying down, as may be one's most comfortable position. A person who cannot bend his knees to do the prostration, may signal that with bending only his head for either Rukoo' or sujood or both.

The important thing to realize is that such a person does whatever he or she can do comfortably and signals what they cannot do with whatever movement of body or head they may be able to do comfortably. Suppose a person is too ill to move any part of his body, he prays lying down, signaling his movements with his eyes only, if that is all that he can move without pain.

### ***Salat: With Closed Eyes***

I am in habit of closing my eyes when I pray, because this helps me concentrate better on my prayers. However, I was told that this is discouraged by the Prophet, peace be upon him, as it was a practice by the Jews. Is it correct?

It is true that closing one's eyes during prayer is discouraged. The reason for that, however, is not that you have been told of as the need of Muslims to do everything different what the Jews do. There is more down-to-earth reason for that. It is simply the need of the worshipper to be aware of what may take place or may come across close to him when he is engaged in prayer. If a person is offering his prayer in a field or in an open place and a dangerous insect approaches [even non-dangerous insect is undesirable], he will not notice it if he is praying with his eyes closed. Perhaps you are aware that it is permissible for a person engaged in prayer to kill a snake or a scorpion if it comes near him, without interrupting his prayer, regardless of what movement he may have to make in so doing. If he were to pray with his eyes closed, he may be bitten or stung by any such creature without being able to defend himself. It is for the same reason that offering prayer at night in an unlit room is also discouraged.

[Added: In Surah Al-Falaq [Day break], we seek protection of Allah "***from the evils of darkness when it is intense.***" [113: 3] Praying in darkness is, therefore, seriously discouraged.] However, if one is sure of his safety [Added: but how can anyone be, when an act has been discouraged] and he finds that it helps him concentrate on prayer to close his eyes, he may do so. We are strongly recommended, however, not to be in the habit of closing our eyes while praying.

### ***Salat: With Hope That Wishes Are Fulfilled***

We wonder at times whether our prayers will ever be answered. We may face a problem, endure an illness, contend with difficulty or suffer an injustice. We take whatever measures available to us to overcome the problem, correct the injustice or get proper medical treatment. But that may not be sufficient. We realize that we need help which often cannot be given by any human being. That help could come only from Allah. Hence, we turn to Him with our supplication, hoping that our wishes are soon fulfilled. At times, we experience the fulfillment of our prayers coming straightaway. Often we feel it slow-coming. This makes us wonder whether Allah has accepted our prayer and will grant us what we have requested of Him. Hence the question is asked: What is the factor which guarantees that prayers are answered?

There is a simple formula. A person who puts a request to Allah should first of all be sincere in his attitude. He should purify himself physically and mentally which means that he should repent of his sins. It is unthinkable that a person indulges in sin and at the same time requests Allah to grant his wishes, some of which are purely materialistic. He simply does not show any regrets that he has exceeded the limits set by Allah. How does such a person expect Allah will answer his prayers, when he does not expect the same treatment by his fellow human beings. If he has offended someone, he knows that he cannot ask that person a favor. Yet, he expects favors from Allah when he persists in offending Him! The first pre-requisite for answering our supplication by Allah is repentance and seeking Allah's forgiveness. This repentance should be sincere, not a mere verbal statement, which we repeat like parrots without putting any thought into it.

The second requirement is that one should not be hasty. We should not precipitate Allah's actions. He answers our prayers in His own good time, but always in the way and at the time, which is best for us. Indeed, we must not entertain any thought that our prayers may not be answered. Abu Hurairah quotes Allah's Messenger as saying: "The supplication of any one of you is answered as long as he is not hasty, saying: I have prayed Allah and my prayers were not answered." [Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and others].

In this Hadith the Prophet, peace be upon him, advises us against giving up or thinking that our prayers may remain unanswered. A person may get disenchanted and stop praying Allah. If he does this, his attitude is interpreted as one who considers his supplication as a favor or he may imply that he has done enough supplication to warrant being answered. This suggests, by inference that he considers Allah's favors are not forthcoming, while he should realize that Allah can answer any supplication and can easily grant every single one of His servants all that he or she asks for.

### ***Salat: With Shoes On***

1. My father reported that he saw some soldiers entering a mosque and offering their prayers without taking off their shoes. Like him, I am disturbed to hear of this. Please comment.

2. I saw some people, sportsmen and soldiers, offering their prayers in mosque without taking off their shoes. Is it permissible?

1. This is disturbing because we are used to take off our shoes when we go into a mosque, or use a prayer mat. The fact is that there is nothing wrong with wearing our shoes when praying, provided that we are sure that no impurity has fallen on them. At the Prophet's time, his companions offered their prayers wearing their shoes. This was not merely at the time of war, or in travel. If it is more convenient, there is nothing wrong with it.

Having said that, I should add that it is a duty to keep the mosque clean. In these days when mosques are covered with clean carpets, it is not right to go over these carpets with one's shoes. It is right to take off our shoes so that we do not disturb other worshippers or bring dirt into the mosque. But if we envisage a situation where military personnel are wearing shoes that are inconvenient to take off, and they offer their prayer at a place in the mosque where they stand to one side, using a rug while their shoes are on the bare ground, this is perfectly acceptable.

2. Yes, it is. The only condition is that which applies to whatever we wear when we pray, namely, that it has not been contaminated with impurity. This means that if you are certain that you have not stepped over an impurity, you may offer your prayers wearing your shoes.

The other point of importance when you do this in a mosque is to make sure that you do not bring any dirt into the mosque. You have to maintain the mosque clean.

### ***Salat: Without Understanding the Words***

When I pray, I read the Qur'an and repeat words of prayer in Arabic which I do not understand. Is there any benefit in that?

Yes, indeed. There is a great deal of benefit, which comes your way. To start with, you discharge your duty of praying as Allah has commanded you. That, on its own, earns you great reward from Allah. Secondly, there is the general benefit, which accrues to everyone who attends regularly to his prayers, mainly, that prayers serve as a constant reminder to him against doing anything which incurs Allah's displeasure. In other words, he is constantly reminded, by his prayers, to be good.

There is also the feeling that you are reading Allah's own words as He has revealed them to His last messenger. Moreover, by maintaining this proper form of prayers, you feel that you belong to the Islamic community, which groups together people of different races, languages, colors and nationalities. They all use the same form of prayers when they address their Lord.

Do I detect an implicit question of whether prayers can be conducted in one's mother tongue. The answer is a very simple one: we have to worship Allah as He wants us to worship Him. He has desired us to offer our obligatory worship in His own words. He has given us His words in Arabic. Any translation is the work of the translator. He uses his words as he thinks they convey the meaning of Allah's words best. The difference between using Allah's own words and those of any translator is great indeed. As for ordinary supplication [i.e. Dua'] one can use one's own words for that purpose at all times other than when one offers formal prayers.

As for understanding what one is saying in one's prayers, anyone can learn the meaning of a few Surahs, which he uses in his prayers more frequently. He can then increase his understanding of other parts of the Qur'an.

### ***Salat: Witr — Its Importance***

Could you please explain whether the Witr prayer is considered Sunnah or Nafil.

The Witr is the last prayer of the day. It is offered in minimum of one rak'ah and a maximum of 11, but most people offer it in 3 rak'ahs, either together in one bout or separately in 2 and 1 rak'ah. Schools of Fiqh differ as to the classification of this prayer, but they agree that it is the most important non-obligatory prayer of the day. The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to pray it even when he traveled. It was his habit not to pray the Sunnah prayers when traveling with the exception of the two rak'ahs before dawn or Fajr prayer, and the Witr which follows Isha prayer. Therefore, it is the most confirmed of Sunnah prayers.

One school of Fiqh considers it as Wajib, which is a degree in between Sunnah, which is voluntary or recommended, and Fardh, which is obligatory. However, the Witr is certainly not obligatory.

### ***Salat: Witr — Offering Only One Rak'ah For Witr***

I normally offer the obligatory prayer of Isha and follow it with only one rak'ah of Witr. Is this appropriate? May I also ask whether a Hanafi person like myself may follow other schools of thought in certain matters only, not because it happens to be more convenient but because it sounds more logical and appealing?

Let me tell you first that if you offer your Witr in one rak'ah only then you are not Hanafi, because the Hanafi school of thought does not approve of one rak'ah in any prayer. In Witr the Hanafi school requires that the three rak'ahs are offered jointly, not separated in two and one, as other schools of thought advise.

However, we can say that the Witr, according to many scholars may be offered in a minimum of one and a maximum of eleven rak'ahs.

Nevertheless, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal was asked this question and he advised the questioner that he was not in favor of one-rak'ah Witr. He made it clear that it was much more preferable to start with two and finish with one to complete three rak'ahs for Witr. It remains possible for a worshipper to reduce the Witr to its minimum

when he is very tired and sleepy. In normal circumstances, it is much more preferable to offer Witr in at least three rak'ahs. There is no rigid requirement to stick to any particular school of thought. That does not normally happen in real life. [This has been discussed at length in earlier volumes.]

### ***Salat: Women Covering Head During Prayer***

Why do women have to cover their heads during prayer, recitation of the Qur'an or listening to it?

It is important to understand that there is a part of the body of every human being, which must be covered so that others may not see it. That part of the body of a man extends, according to most scholars, from waistline down to his knees. Some scholars are of the view that this part which we call in Islamic terminology "Awrah" is limited to a man's private parts.

The supporting evidence of the scholars of this view is certainly strong. All scholars agree that Awrah of a woman includes all her body with the exception of her face and the lower parts of her arms, from the wrists downwards.

When they offer their prayers, both men and women must cover all their Awrah. When a woman is with other women only, her Awrah is the same as of a man with other men, i.e. from the waistline to the knees. With her close relatives whom she may not marry, such as her brother, father or nephew, a woman may wear a normal dress, which reveals her head, her neck and her arms. If a woman wants to read the Qur'an and she is alone or with other women, it is not obligatory for her to cover her head.

### ***Salat: Women Perform Differently From Men***

I have noticed some sections pressing that women should pray differently from men, such as they must not bow with their backs straight, rather they should bend less than men, and that they should put their elbows on the floor in prostration. Please comment.

There are no differences in what is required in prayer for men and women, except that a woman is advised to keep herself together, in the sense that she keeps her hands and arms close to her body throughout her prayers. The Hadith that teaches us how to pray, addresses us all, men and women. In this Hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Pray as you have seen me pray." This means that the same form of prayer is applicable to both men and women.

People who make different requirements must rely on evidence from the Hadith. If there is no such difference, then the same rules apply. Thus, when a woman bows in Rukoo, she should have body forming a right angle with her legs. And when she prostrates herself, she does not place her chest, elbows, stomach or belly on the ground. If she does, then she is doing the prostration improperly. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "I have been commanded to prostrate myself on seven sets of bones: the forehead, hands, knees and toes." These are the ones to touch the ground in prostration. Otherwise, we would not be prostrating ourselves, we would be doing something else when we are commanded to prostrate ourselves. One little point to add: the nose is also placed on the ground to make sure that the forehead is on the ground.

What these women do is wrong, because what is required of women in prayer is only to put themselves together, without leaving gaps or take up a wide area. For example, when a man in prostration, or sujood, puts his hands on the ground, his elbow does



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not touch his body at any point. It leaves a gap, but a woman should not leave that gap. Otherwise, prostration is the same for men and women.

### ***Salat: Women's Makeup***

Some of the substances which a woman uses as part of her makeup, such as perfume, hair spray, anti-deodorants and facial and body powder may contain alcohol. What should she do, if she wants to offer her prayer? Some women pray wearing their full make up, including lipstick. How far is this correct.

What seems to be the point at issue in the first part of your question is the fact that alcohol may be an ingredient of the substances used. It is well known that intoxicants, all of which are alcoholic drinks, are described as impure. The question is whether such impurity is imparted to other substances in which alcohol is an ingredient.

To answer, I would like to point out that the weightier opinion is that the impurity of alcohol is not physical. In other words, if alcohol is dropped on someone's clothes and then it dries up, the person concerned need not wash his clothes to remove the impurity. He may use them in prayer without having to wash them first.

Hence, if a man or a woman uses perfume or after-shave or anti-deodorant spray or any similar substance which includes alcohol, they need not worry about offering their prayer in the normal way just on account of having used such substances.

In matter of using makeup, Islamic rulings appear to take account of the fact that women need to use such substances more than men. For example, it is not possible for a man to offer prayers, if he has used saffron over any part of his body. There is no such restriction on women. A man, however, may use saffron over his clothes and offer his prayers. The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to do that, because saffron gives clothes a better appearance.

If a woman wants to go to the mosque to offer her prayers, she may not go wearing perfume, unless its smell has disappeared. This restriction is not made on account of the substance of perfume itself, but on the basis of the fact that its smell may attract attention to her. As you realize, when a Muslim woman goes out, she must dress in a way, which does not attract passers by. If she is praying at home alone or with a group of Muslim women, she may offer her prayer without removing her makeup first. If she removes some of her makeup, which stands out as particularly noticeable, such as lipstick, this is preferable according to some scholars.

### ***Salat: Women's Praying Method***

Could you please let me know what differences there are between the prayers of a man and a woman.

Muslim men and women are required to offer five obligatory prayers everyday in the same way and with the same requirements. There are a few differences between men and women and how they carry themselves in the Muslim community. For example, a man is required to cover the area of his body between his navel and his knees. While a woman must cover all her body with the exception of her face and the lower part of her hands. A woman is exempt from prayer during her menstruation period and during her postnatal period. In congregational prayer, men form their lines ahead of the lines of women. If a group of women is offering congregational prayer on its own, anyone of them may lead the prayer, but the lady imam stands in the middle of the row, while a man imam stands on his own about a meter ahead of the congregation.

### ***Sarah: Wife Of Prophet Ibrahim & Her Normal Jealousy***

It is said that Sarah, the wife of the Prophet Ibrahim, was unhappy when his other wife had given birth to his first son, Ismail. She asked him to banish her and that was the cause for Abraham taking both wife and child to the barren valley of Makkah where he left them. Was Sarah actually so jealous?

The report about Sarah, Abraham's wife, is correct to the best of our knowledge. Sarah was susceptible to all the feelings and emotions of ordinary women. Hence, it is not surprising that she should feel jealous when her husband was given a child by his second wife, while she, an old woman, had no children. As Ibrahim showed great care and tenderness toward both mother and baby, Sarah must have felt that she was reduced to a secondary position. Hence her demand that both be taken away.

It was God who commanded Ibrahim to take his wife and child to the valley of Makkah and leave them there. That was for a definite purpose of His, and He does what He wishes.

### ***Satan: How Close Is the Devil?***

I was given to understand that God has given so much power to Satan that he runs in the veins of people. Could you please clarify this?

God has certainly given power to Satan, which enables him to try to seduce people away from the path of God. With his cunning, he makes use of all sorts of attractions and temptations to lure people by holding before them the prospect of immediate enjoyment and pleasure with total disregard to what God has forbidden and what He has made lawful. As the creation of man and assigning to him the task of the building of the earth was the occasion on which Satan committed his grave sin by disobeying God, Satan has sworn to do his utmost to seduce mankind into committing sins and disobeying God so that they would share in his suffering on the Day of Judgement. To achieve this, Satan tries all methods and imposes his arguments on man to drag him to what incurs God's displeasure.

To warn us against the schemes and designs of Satan, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has described to us Satan's efforts and his closeness to us in many ways. One of these is his saying that he "almost runs in the veins of people." This must not be taken literally. It is merely a physical description of a mental fact. It is no more than a drawing depicting an abstract notion. This method is well known in all languages. God describes His closeness to man in the Qur'an, by saying that He is nearer to the blood veins in his neck. Again this must not be taken literally. It simply helps us understand that God is so close to us that we can never hide ourselves from His watchful eyes.

That Satan has so much power is true. What is also true is that man can have far greater power. This he can acquire through faith. A person with firm belief in God and in the Day of Judgement is always able to defeat Satan and triumph over Satan's cunning if the fear of God is uppermost in his mind. He will fare even better if he fortifies his faith with a good and continuous study of the faith of Islam. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "A single scholar is much harder for Satan to defeat than a thousand worshippers."

Moreover, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us a method by which we can chase Satan away from our lives. That method is voluntary fasting. When we fast, we are always conscious that our abstention from eating and drinking is made for God's sake. At that time, we cannot forget God. If we remember that we can obey Satan only when we forget God, then we can appreciate why fasting is of great value to us in our

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battle with Satan. Fasting helps us remain conscious of God and our consciousness drives Satan away.

### ***Satan: Powers Of the Devil***

Could you please give your view on the mysteries like "the Bermuda Triangle" where ships and airplanes are said to have disappeared without a trace. Who is responsible for such actions? They cannot be of Allah's doing, but could they be the work of the devil or space creatures?

I do not know much about the Bermuda Triangle. Nor should a Muslim be over-concerned with its history. What we should know is that events that take place in the universe are subject to the law of cause and effect. If a ship is lost in the sea, there must be a reason for its sinking. It cannot just disappear and leave no trace. If it is true that ships are being lost in a certain area, then a study of the sea currents in that area could reveal the cause.

It is not right to attribute such happenings to "the devil". Allah has not given the devil such powers. What the devil does is to persuade people to follow a pattern of behavior, which takes them away from the fold of the faithful. When they listen to him, they bring on themselves misery in this life and in the life to come. But the devil cannot interfere with the laws of nature, which Allah has sent into operation. Otherwise, the devil would appear to be a force competing with the power of Allah. That is not possible.

Nor can we explain such happenings as the work of space creatures. We have not seen any such creature approach our planet. Apart from science fiction, there is no evidence whatsoever that invaders from other planets or stars represent a danger to human life on earth. While we do not deny the possibility of existence of creatures or civilizations in other planets or galaxies, we better not attribute anything that takes place on earth to them until the time comes, if at all, when we have hard evidence of the existence and their interference with our planet.

### ***Satan: Too Weak For the Believers To Fear***

Both Satan and his allies are too weak to be feared by any believer who relies on his Lord and has His support. The only power to be feared is the One, which can truly cause harm and benefit. That is Allah's power, feared by those who believe in Allah. By fearing Him alone, they are the most powerful of all people. No other force can stand up to them.

### ***Scholars: All Of Them Are Highly Esteemed***

It is said that the school of Imam Abu Hanifah is the one to be preferred, because he met some of the Prophet's companions and many of their successors who could have supported his views with their abundant knowledge. It is also said that one may not switch from one school of thought to another. Please comment

If we carry this argument to its logical conclusion, then we should disregard the view of all scholars who were born after Imam Abu Hanifah and stick to his opinions. Since he developed a complete system of Islamic life, and he has those advantages, then who needs another view? Let us then forget about scholars in all subsequent periods, and let us close the faculties of Islamic studies in Muslim countries, and concentrate on teaching the Hanafi school of thought. But then we meet an unexpected obstacle: What about the scholars who lived before Abu Hanifah and who were even more knowledgeable about Islam than he was? We may include here the

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three caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar and Ali, as well as Abdullah ibn Omar and Abdullah ibn Abbas. Each one of them was an even better scholar than Abu Hanifah and they all lived earlier than him. Carry the argument a little further and you will see yourself forced to disregard all scholars and their scholarship and concentrate on the Qur'an and the Hadith, taking both directly from the Prophet, peace be upon him. Whether your understanding of these is correct or not is beside the point, since you are aiming at being close to the Prophet, peace be upon him.

The whole argument is shallow. The scholars and their schools of thought have enriched Islamic study and worked out clear methodology or construction and deducting of rulings on all matters. Their methodologies and their priorities may differ, and that is one of the factors that led to the differences among them, but all of them are highly esteemed and their contributions are of immense value.

The other point is also absurd. There is no such restriction. Besides who determines a person's school of thought? It is something you inherit from your father, or you take it from your local community? There is no requirement to follow a particular school of thought, or to limit the schools of thought to four.

In Islamic history there were scholars who were by no means less eminent than the founders of the four schools of thought. They lived at the same time, or later. We sometimes take the view of a later scholar and prefer his view to one, which may be found in all four schools of thought. There is nothing wrong with that. What is important is that our choice should be built on understanding and weighing up the evidence supporting any point of view.

### ***Scholars: Criticism Of Contemporary Muslim Scholars***

Some people criticize contemporary Muslims writers and scholars, such as Abul Aala Maudoodi and Sayyid Qutb. I have seen a book full of criticism of the former, equating him with Ayatullah Khomeini in preaching the same thoughts. Unfortunately some people repeat such criticism without making sure that what they say is true. Can you please throw some light on the validity of such criticism.

That great scholars should be criticized and be severely treated by people in different walks of life is nothing new. Let me tell you that Al-Bukhari himself was criticized by one of his contemporaries who issued orders that Al-Bukhari must never be allowed to attend his circle. It is only natural for scholars of the caliber of Maudoodi and Sayyid Qutb, who have had great influence on many young Muslims, doing a great service to Islam and Muslims, to be criticized by people in different quarters.

Both were harshly treated by politicians simply because they have shown that Islam was as much relevant in social and political life as it was in the mosque. Politicians instigated other scholars, particularly those who were happy to receive their favors, to launch attacks on them. On the other hand, some scholars were genuine in their disagreement with either writer.

This is again normal, because in Islam there are different viewpoints and methods of understanding. It is perfectly legitimate for a scholar to criticize another, provided he is sincere, aiming at explaining the truth, as he believes it, and refrains from personal or abusive attacks. When a person writes contemptuously of a scholar like Maudoodi or Sayyid Qutb, then he moves away from Islamic values.

When faced with such a situation, the best thing is to request the critic to provide evidence.

It is not right for anyone to say that this or that scholar has written such a fierce attack on Maudoodi or Qutb. The one who wrote is answerable for his writing, but anyone who repeats it without verification is accountable before God for repeating it without proper knowledge. It is absolutely untrue to say that Maudoodi had the same thoughts in common with Khomeini, because they belonged to totally different scholarly traditions. Nor is it true to claim that Maudoodi denied God's attributes. You need only to read his commentary on the Qur'an, to realize the falsehood of such a claim.

Sayyid Qutb has come for criticism more on account of how people tried to implement his ideas in a highly misguided way than for his ideas themselves. Some scholars have accused him of things, which they could not substantiate. His book, "In the Shade of the Qur'an" has done a great service, bringing out the meaning of the Qur'an in a highly powerful and easy to understand language, always moving away from controversy in order to help readers understand the Qur'an, pure and simple.

### ***Scholars: Needless Interference By Religious Scholars***

Most of those who have a religious standing have only scanty knowledge of politics, economy, business, science, industry, law, defense, etc. Why do they, then, want to interfere in each and everything? Their interference creates a hindrance to the advancement of the Muslim nations. Should they not confine themselves to the mosque and religious matters?

It is too simplistic, indeed naive, to think that the mosque is the only domain of religion, particularly when the mosque is viewed as a mere place of worship. Nor are religious matters confined to personal and family concerns such as marriage, divorce and parenthood. The domain of religion is life itself and the role of man in life. Hence, everything that affects human life and the progress of human beings is of interest to religion and religious people.

It should be remembered that the Islamic faith, and indeed those religions preached by God's messengers, were revealed from on high. This revelation is meant to be a guidance to mankind to enable it to lead a happy life and to ensure that civilization is built on the right basis. When you consider the social ills that plague the most advanced nations of today, you realize that these nations are suffering from these ills because modern civilization has concentrated on material progress and abandoned the spiritual side of human existence.

When a scholar of religion looks at any aspect of life, he is not interfering in something that does not concern him. Indeed every aspect of life is his concern. God has provided guidance for us in His last message conveyed by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him which enables us to set such aspects as you have mentioned, including politics, economics, business, industry, law, defense, on a sound basis which will promote human progress and ensure human happiness. Yet God has not made His guidance in these matters too detailed to make it rigid. He has laid down certain principles, which serve as a framework within which we have the freedom to choose the system that is most appropriate for us. These principles must be maintained, and the framework respected. Within them, we have a flexible system that can be adapted to any human situation and any degree of advancement that human beings may achieve.

But you have a point if you are referring to those religious scholars who give rulings about matters without studying them thoroughly. I know that this takes place. What I have to say about it is that it is unbecoming of a scholar to issue a ruling based on what former scholars who lived centuries ago have said, without looking thoroughly at the problem in hand. If he is not conversant with a particular field or branch of

study, he should have the moral courage to say, "I do not know." But when you say that these matters do not concern religious scholars, you are the one who is in the wrong.

### ***Scholars: Pursuit Of Knowledge & Worship***

Could you please explain why is the pursuit of knowledge preferred to worship? A Hadith is quoted which states that "seeking knowledge" for one hour is better than praying for 70 years." I find this highly confusing.

I am afraid I could not trace it in any of the authentic collections. There are similar statements like the one, which suggests that "a glance at the face of a learned scholar is better than worship for sixty years, including fasting and night worship." This is absolutely untrue. What I can quote you in this respect is an authentic Hadith, which states: "A well-versed scholar of Fiqah is a stronger opponent to Satan than one thousand worshippers." You will appreciate the great difference between this authentic Hadith and the other statements.

Moreover, this Hadith is well to the point. A scholar who knows the principles of Islam and who understands its message and believes in it can always foil the attempts of Satan to seduce him. In his opposition to Satan, he is stronger than a thousand worshippers who simply offer their worship without supporting it with the knowledge that will keep them always on the right track.

### ***Scholars: Reformer For Each Century — Is There One?***

Some people quote a Hadith, which suggests that every 100 years Allah sends someone to renew Islam for the Muslim nation. They support this claim with a list of such reformers including Omar ibn Abdulaziz for the first century and Imam Al-Shaf'ie for the second, etc. May I ask who was the reformer for the fourteenth century? Please comment.

The Hadith you have quoted is correct. However, it does not mean that the person referred to will bring anything new in Islam. He will simply call on Muslims to adhere to the faith of Islam in its purest form. He would call on people to correct their beliefs and practices so as to bring them in line with the pure form of Islam preached by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

It is generally agreed that Omar ibn Abdulaziz was the first such reformer. His influence on the Muslim State was enormous because he eradicated all practices which crept into the government and which could not be sanctioned by Islam. Imam Al-Shaf'ie is generally agreed to have been the reformer for the second century. He brought Islamic scholarship to complete reliance on Hadith in preference to intellectual thought. There were trends which favored such intellectual approaches in Islamic scholarship but Imam Al-Shaf'ie put the work of scholars back on its proper course, namely, deduction of rulings only on the basis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

As for the reformers of following centuries, people tend to select some people who had positive influence on the Muslim nation or Islamic thought. However, there is no single list of such reformers, which is completely agreed upon. May I suggest that it is not important to determine who was a reformer and who was not? The religion of Islam is taken from the Prophet, and we simply do not take the view or rulings or thought of any particular scholar as totally correct. Indeed the statement of Imam Malik is particularly relevant in this connection. He refers to scholars and people of lesser standing and says: "You may take some of the view of any person and leave out some, with the exception of the Prophet, the teachings of whom you should take in full."

### ***Scholars: Sufis & Degrees Of Their Knowledge***

May I know what is meant by "tareeqah", "ma'rifah" and "haqeeqah". Some people suggest that in addition to normal and statutory prayers, there are other prayers, which bring a person in closer communication with Allah. The practice, according to them, was taught by the Prophet, peace be upon him, to his cousin Ali, who imparted the knowledge to certain selected persons and the tradition has been kept among those who make an effort to maintain it with diligence. They neither desire the life of this world nor that of the life to come, except the company of Allah Himself and the Prophet. It is said that they experience amazing things and do hear the reply of their salutation to the Prophet. Please comment.

The word tareeqah means "way or method", while "ma'rifah" means "knowledge" and "haqeeqah" means "truth". Those who follow some Sufi trends make much of these terms and try to establish a division between them and the ordinary acts of worship which are applicable to all of us. They claim that the ultimate goal is to arrive at the truth, through the proper knowledge of Allah, which is attainable, only by following the correct method of worshipping Allah and remembering Him. While this is acceptable in absolute terms, it is certainly far from acceptable when taken within the framework of the practices of Sufism.

Let us examine what you have mentioned about "secret" teachings imparted by the Prophet, peace be upon him, to his cousin Ali. If this has been done by the Prophet, peace be upon him, on instructions from Allah, it means that Allah has selected a section of His servants for a special favor which He has chosen not to grant to others. Far be it from Allah, the Most Just, to make such an arbitrary distinction. The fact is that Allah has created us all with the same susceptibility to accepting the faith, regardless of our origin, race, or education. When the message of the truth, i.e. submission to Allah is put to us, we can all respond to it and accept it without hesitation, once we free ourselves of the shackles of our circumstances or position or desires or any other type of pressure. It is needless to say that an intellectual person who has received good education is able to understand the message of Islam much better than one who has not been so privileged. But the two may have an equal strength of faith. We should not forget that Allah puts all to account on the Day of Judgement and He gives us the same type of reward for our good deeds, while we may incur the same type of punishment for our sins. It follows, considering Allah's absolute justice, that we should have the same susceptibility to accepting the message of the truth if we have to face the same reckoning. In view of the foregoing, it simply does not fit with Allah's justice that he gives secret knowledge to a section of the people, no matter who may be in that section.

Moreover the Prophet, peace be upon him, has been required to convey Allah's message to mankind. Allah describes the Prophet, peace be upon him, who has been "sent as a mercy to all worlds." The Prophet, peace be upon him, fulfilled his task in a most exemplary way, requesting his companions and all Muslims to impart the knowledge he has given them to the rest of mankind. Allah has guaranteed that the message of Islam will remain preserved for all time so that it remains accessible to people. To suggest that the Prophet, peace be upon him, advised or taught any particular knowledge to his cousin in a secret manner is most objectionable because it means that he has favored a certain group of people or a certain individual with important knowledge which he withheld from others. Far be it from the last messenger of Allah to do so. Why should he? And why should there be any group of people who is more favored than the rest of us? That certainly does not fit with the Divine Justice.

The truth is that Allah has revealed Islam as a message to all mankind. It is addressed to every single one of us and Allah tells us in the Qur'an that implementing Islam is the sure and only way to get the maximum reward in the hereafter, namely, admission into heaven. Allah says in the Qur'an:

***"Whosoever obeys Allah and the messenger shall be those on whom Allah has bestowed His grace of Prophets, saints, martyrs and righteous people. Good company are these indeed,"*** [Woman — "An-Nis'a" 4: 69].

As is clear from this verse, the highest company to which any person can aspire is to join prophets and righteous people in heaven. For this reason, every good believer prays Allah all the time to grant him the greatest privilege of all, namely admission into heaven. These people suggest that there are two grades of reward. The first is that of heaven and the other is something superior. They claim this to be communion or company with Allah and the Prophet, peace be upon him. But when the Prophet, peace be upon him, speaks of the highest grade which may be achieved by anyone, he says "Whoever brings up well two girls until they have grown up shall be my companion in heaven." This Hadith tells us that the Prophet, peace be upon him, shall be in heaven. How will these people want to go any higher? What support do they have for their aspiration? Where do they get their information from?

They claim to hear the answer to the greetings they offer to the Prophet, peace be upon him. What nonsense. Where does it come from? How can they recognize whose voice it is? This is simply an exercise in self-delusion. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has not told us about anything like this. Therefore, we cannot accept it from anyone. What the Prophet, peace be upon him, has not told us about is simply untrue. Therefore, the claims of these people are certainly untrue.

I realize that some people will tell me that there is a Hadith, which says that, the Prophet, peace be upon him, answers the greetings of all people. Yes, there is such a Hadith and this is a special privilege Allah has granted to the Prophet, peace be upon him. But the Hadith does not tell us that we hear him answer these greetings, nor does the Hadith tell us how the answer is given. It is simply a matter of the spirit, the knowledge of which Allah has chosen to keep for Himself. Therefore, we do not try to determine how it is done, because we cannot have any certain knowledge about it. It is sufficient for us to know that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has been granted the privilege of answering our greetings.

### ***Scholars: Sufis & Their Claims About Their Methods***

When I went home a couple of years ago, I was introduced by my relatives to a Sufi teacher and I learned the methods of their Thikr and how the teacher guides them so that they achieve what they call kashf and they may see the founder of their method who had died more than four hundred years ago, or they might even see the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself. I later studied Hadith and the life of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions, but I could not find anything about all that is taught by this method and its teachers. When I mentioned this to my relatives, they told me that I still needed more guidance, and that my limited knowledge prevented my true appreciation of the importance of what they do and what the Sheikh does for them. However, I am still confused. Could you please explain what Thikr really means and whether it is a separate worship, like prayer and fasting? What does the Qur'an and the Hadith say about its types and which of them did the Prophet, peace be upon him, do? Is Sufism part of Islamic teachings? Does it stand out like the Qur'an, Hadith or Fiqh? Is this way of doing Thikr correct, or is it an innovation?



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Could you also explain about kashf and whether it is true that some people are able to speak to the spirits of prophets, saints or other people in order to find out things?

The word Thikr means the 'remembrance of God.' Every Muslim should always be conscious of God. To achieve that it is necessary that he remembers God in all situations. Such remembrance can be verbal or in private. However, because it is in the nature of human beings that when more than one sense takes part in any action, it is more engraved in one's memory and subconscious, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has recommended us to do the Thikr as often as we can, in practically all situations. It is in this light that we should look at the recommendation to glorify God and praise Him after every prayer when we may say 'Subhan-Allah [limitless is God in His glory], Al-Hamdulillah [praise be to God] and Allahu Akbar [God is great] 33 times after every obligatory prayer and before going to sleep. On each occasion we add the declaration that there is no deity save God to make up 100 phrases of Thikr.

There is no particular method of saying this, or indeed of doing any form of Thikr. Why is one needed anyway? It is a question of remembering God's name and being conscious of Him so that we may avoid bad deeds and do only what brings us nearer to Him, and what will enable us to earn greater reward. Having said that, I should add that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us that the best form of Thikr is that done in private, or when one is alone. This obviously avoids showing off, which is the mark of most of what Sufi methods, in their great variety do. Besides, look at the advantage of remembering God in private, when you know that only He sees and hears you. You are then most sincere in your approach, and you recognize the benefit within yourself. You do not need to be with others in order to remember God. Indeed it is most important to remember Him when alone, because that is the time when evil thoughts may have the better of you.

Moreover, the best form of Thikr is reading the Qur'an which is God's revealed word. What is needed for that is to learn the Qur'an properly through a teacher. That does not require sessions of the type Sufi methods organize. Another form of this is the supplication to God, including the supplication when you request God to grant you something that belongs to this world, such as passing an examination, getting a suitable job, etc. This is Thikr because the fact that you turn to God and request Him to fulfill that-which means that you remember Him as the One who can help you in all situations.

If you read a portion of the Qur'an every day, glorify God and praise Him after your obligatory prayers, attend to these and add some voluntary prayers, and you turn to God with your supplication, then you achieve the position of those whom God describes as 'men and women who remember God often.' This is what the Prophet, peace be upon him, taught his companions and all his followers. This is then the method to achieve it.

Taking up your next point, I say categorically that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not know anything about the future except what God might have told him. He declared repeatedly that he knew what God had chosen to reveal to him. He had no way of knowing what would happen tomorrow or in the next hour. No amount of Thikr, prayer, supplication or other forms of worship would give anyone such knowledge. Indeed anyone who claims to know the future is a liar, including astrologers; fortune-tellers, clairvoyants, and any person who tries to impress a group of followers, even though he may give himself an appearance of great piety. How could he make such a claim when God has chosen not to give such knowledge to anyone? As for the prophets being alive, we know that every soul shall die and all prophets had died, with the exception of Jesus who had been raised to heaven by God. It is said,

however, that Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is in a transitional stage of life which is different from our own and from the life Hereafter.

No Sufism, or mysticism, is part of Islamic teachings. It cannot be placed in any position of comparison with the Qur'an, Hadith or Fiqh, i.e. the study of Islamic law. The founders of Sufi methods do not make such a claim for it.

They only say that they have particular method of purifying the soul from the temptation of this world. To the overwhelming majority of Muslim scholars that can only be achieved by following example set by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. He has taught no mystic or Sufi practices. Moreover, much of what the Sufis do has no sanction by the Prophet, peace be upon him which means that these practices are innovations. However, I cannot give you a general verdict, which applies to everything they do. Every practice should be examined on its own merits. What is in line with the Prophet's teachings may be accepted and what is not should be rejected as innovation.

What Sufis describe as *kashf* cannot be accepted. In its linguistic sense, the word means 'uncovering.' So, what they mean is that by diligent worship and their form of *Thikr* one may achieve a position where the curtains are raised to uncover knowledge, which is denied to other people. Let me tell you that the type of knowledge they speak of was not given to the Prophet, peace be upon him, the most perfect of believers who never entertained any evil thought and the most diligent worshiper who dedicated all his worship to God in the purest form and fashion. How could such knowledge be given then to an ordinary human being who, try as he may, will not achieve any degree close to that of the Prophet? Moreover, their claim to talk or see the spirits of former teachers as well as that of the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself is utter nonsense. It contradicts the Qur'an itself, which instructs the Prophet, peace be upon him, to disdain any knowledge of the spirit.

Now these people claim to be able, through some means, which they have identified, to get to speak to the spirit of people who had died a long [or even short] time ago. Wherefrom and how they have acquired such knowledge? From the Prophet, peace be upon him, who has been commanded to declare that all knowledge of the spirit belonged to God alone? Or from God Himself? If so, then they are claiming to have revelations from God when no one may have such revelation after Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who is the last prophet and messenger. Or from some other source? In this case, they are making false claims, and indeed turning to things other than God for such information. That can only be described as associating partners with God and that in Islamic terminology means *shirk*. What every Muslim should do is to try to learn the Prophet's practices and follow his examples, because that is what we are accountable for on the Day of Judgement. God will not ask anyone why he did not follow this or that Sheikh or person [or imam]. He will ask him about following the Prophet, peace be upon him. There is much in Sufism that is contrary to what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught. Hence it is not acceptable to God.

### ***Scholars: Their Schools Of Thought***

Could you please let me know to which school of thought did Imam Al-Bukhari and the other five famous scholars of Hadith, as well as Imam Ibn Taimiyah and Imam Ibn Hajar belong?

The six scholars who made the six most authentic collections of Hadith lived early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. These were too close to the period when the four imams who established the four schools of thought lived. In fact, when Al-Bukhari completed his collection known as the *Sahih*, he showed it to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, because the latter was the top authority on Hadith, particularly its reporters. The schools of thought had

not yet been truly established as such. Each imam had his own methodology and students. A school of thought comes into being when the students of an imam become top scholars in their own right, following his methodology. They would pass on their knowledge to another generation of scholars who will continue that line. Over several generations a school of thought becomes well established.

In the early period of Islam, there were many scholars who rank at the same level as the founders of the schools of thought, but these did not establish their own schools because their students were not as numerous, or as highly recognized as those of Abu Hanifah, Malik, Al-Shaf'ie and Ahmad. Hence, their lines were not continued. The six scholars of Hadith, Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Al-Tirmithi, An-Nasa'ie and Ibn Majah studied under several prominent scholars of their time. They were able to distinguish evidence supporting each view. They followed what they felt to be close to the truth, not any particular school of thought.

Imam ibn Taimiyah is recognized as an imam who could have had his own school of thought. But he did not seek such a position, and he continued to consider himself belonging to the Hanbali school of thought. Imam ibn Hajar belonged to the Shaf'ie school of thought.

### ***Scholars: Walis, Their Status & Their Descendants***

A friend of mine, whose grandfather was one of the famous "Wali", or scholar, says that seven generations from that famous Wali are forgiven by Allah. Even if they commit some of the minor sins that are forbidden in Islam, they will not be questioned about them. What I would like to ask is whether this sort of thinking has any support in the Hadith or the Qur'an? Perhaps I should add that my friend claims that even if such children, down to seven generations, do not pray in the mosque with the congregation, their negligence is waived.

Let me first of all correct you on a small point, because such a correction will be of benefit in understanding the whole question. The term "Wali" does not mean a scholar. Indeed, it has nothing to do with scholarship. From the linguistic point of view, it means guardian, or patron. Stating that a marriage contract is invalid unless the bride's guardian is present, the Prophet, peace be upon him, uses the term "Wali" making his meaning clear. As it is used in the Qur'an in reference to people's attitude to God, a "Wali" of God is a person who is a firm believer and who works tirelessly in support of the cause of Islam. Hence, a Wali may be a soldier fighting for Islam or a community leader or an ordinary person or a scholar. The two conditions to make him a Wali are unwavering faith and unflinching work for the cause of Islam.

An important point to stress is that we may be able to identify a dedicated servant of Islam when he lives among us because his efforts will tell us about this dedication. When he dies we pray God to forgive him. We cannot put ourselves in a position of judgement to say that this person was a Wali of God or not. It is God alone who knows that because He alone knows people's intentions and objectives. He judges their work on the basis of His knowledge. We cannot assume to have such knowledge and, therefore, we cannot judge anyone.

I have mentioned that when we know such a dedicated servant of Islam, we pray for his forgiveness after his death. Our prayer will benefit him because God answers the prayer of a Muslim when he prays for his brother. In other words, the deceased person, regardless of his tireless efforts for the cause of Islam, needs prayer of other people to be sure that God forgives him. To imagine that his effort will bring forgiveness for his children and grandchildren down to the seventh generation is not only strange it is preposterous.

If this was true, then the first people to benefit by it would be the Prophet's own offspring, may be down to the seventieth generation, rather than the seventh. No one is more honored by God than the Prophet, peace be upon him. No one could be truer Wali than he was. But listen to what the Prophet, peace be upon him, says to his own daughter: "Fatimah, work for yourself, because I can avail you nothing against God." The Prophet's own daughter needed to work in order to earn, by her own work, God's pleasure and to be forgiven her sins and admitted into heaven. The fact that she was the daughter of the Prophet, peace be upon him, could not ensure her any forgiveness unless she worked for it. But the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not stop at that. He said the same thing to his uncle and his aunt and to all his immediate relatives. Moreover, he made it clear that if the closest of his relatives committed any punishable sins, he would not hesitate to enforce that punishment. Listen to him saying to his companions, "If Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, was guilty of stealing, I would cut off her hand."

But then we do not need to go far, in order to be absolutely certain that what your friend has said to you was absurd. God states in the Qur'an

***"That no soul shall bear the burden of another".*** [Creator — "Al-Fatir" 35: 18]

This means that on the Day of Judgement:

***"Whatever [wrong] any human being commits rests on him alone"*** [Cattle — "Al-Ana'am" 6: 164].

This means that if those children and grandchildren of a "Wali" commit any sin, its burden will rest upon them alone. They cannot be forgiven because of their father or grandfather. They are responsible for what they do and they will answer for their actions. Moreover, God states clearly in the Qur'an, that no human being will receive any credit except for what he or she has done. Consider the following four verses:

***"No one shall be made to bear another's burden; and nothing shall be credited to man except what he strives for. In time, the nature of all his striving will be shown [to him in its true light] whereupon he shall be rewarded for it with the fullest reward."*** [the Star — "An-Najm" 53: 38-41]

In the light of the foregoing, you can be absolutely certain that your friend's claims are false and no one can be forgiven on account of the good deeds done by his parents or grandparents.

What is even more preposterous is the fact that such people claim that they are not required to attend to certain Islamic duties. The practical meaning of such an absurd claim is that God divides His servants into sections, requiring certain duties of some of them and waiving these duties in respect of others. Anyone who makes such a claim needs to have his head examined. God is absolutely fair to all His creation. He has created them with the same degree of susceptibility to accepting the faith. He requires them to fulfill the same duties and He rewards them according to the same measure. No one is to be preferred or favored for any consideration than his own work.

### ***Scholars: Women Scholars Attained High Degree Of Scholarship***

I have been told that no woman is allowed to attain a high standard in Islamic learning so as to give rulings on matters that may be put to her. Is this true? If so, how can we account for the position of Ayesha, the Prophet's wife, who used to give rulings on different matters?

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Men and women are equal in God's sight. There are some differences of what God requires of them in worship, but these are minor and take care of differences in their make-up or responsibilities.

To say that a woman is not allowed to attain a high level of scholarship is to accuse Islam of discrimination, which it does not condone.

As you say, Ayesha was far more learned than many of the Prophet's companions, and practically more than anyone else in later generations.

In Islamic history there was a long tradition of women scholars who studied up to a very high degree. Many of them had their circles in which they taught whoever wished to read under them. Among their students were some men who attained a high standard. Several women, for example, taught Imam Ibn Hazm.

### ***Schools Of Thought: Basic Concept***

What Is The Concept Behind Having Four Imams And Four Schools Of Thought. What Is Their Status And Importance In Our Religion? Back Home, People Tend To Make A Great Deal Of Belonging To These Four Schools Of Thought. Sometimes Loudspeakers In These Mosques Are Misused. To Me, The Situation Is Very Confusing. It Is So Difficult To Decide Who Is Right And Who Is Wrong. Please Explain.

Each of the four scholars, who founded the schools of thought known after them, is simply a great scholar. He does not aspire to any higher position. None of them has added anything to the religion of Islam. None has a special status. None has made a claim to be followed. They are simply scholars of great eminence. They lived in the early period of Islam, with Imam Malik and Imam Abu Hanifah living toward the end of the first century and the first half of the second century, followed by Imam Al-Shafie who lived in the second half of the second century and passed away in the year 204 H., and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal being his contemporary and surviving him to live for some time.

A school of thought is all about method of construction and deduction of rulings and verdicts from Qur'anic and Hadith statements. Those four imams did not have the same frame of knowledge available to each one of them. They certainly learned the Qur'an properly, but their knowledge of Hadith differed and there were some differences in their approach to Hadith and how they deduced its meaning and applied it to practical situations. Each of them had students who became great scholars in their own right. This process was carried on, generation after generation. In each school of thought, you find scholars of great eminence who followed the same methods of construction and deduction, and applied them to problems and questions that arose in their own lifetimes. That gave each school of thought the sort of continuity, which ensured a large following.

I would like to make two points clear. The first is that there is nothing special about their number 'four'. There were many other eminent scholars, some of whom were contemporaries to those four. A most notable example was Imam Al-Laith ibn Sa'ad who lived in Egypt. He was a contemporary of Imam Malik, and many scholars consider him to have been even of higher merit than Malik. However, Imam Al-Laith did not establish a school of his own, because there were few, if any, of his students who could achieve a degree of prominence in their own right. But if we find a ruling given by Imam Al-Laith which is supported by firm evidence from the Qur'an or the Sunnah, then we may adopt it in the same way as we follow a ruling by any of the four imams. The second point is that in each of the four schools of thought we may find great scholars who differ on some specific questions with the founder of that school. There is no rigidity about following an imam in all questions and all matters.

We may find a later scholar in a particular school of thought giving a different opinion from that of the founder of that school, and we find his opinion to be better supported. Therefore, we take that view without hesitation.

A good example is the ruling given by Imam ibn Taimiyah, of the Hanbali school of thought, concerning divorce pronounced three times in the same session. He considers that as a single, revocable divorce, while Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the founder of that school, considers it as three divorces which means that it is irrevocable. The family law in several Muslim countries has adopted the ruling given by Imam ibn Taimiyah that indeed relies on very strong evidence from the Sunnah. It is not necessary that a Muslim should follow a single school of thought. Indeed, this does not happen in practice. The division caused in your home country, and indeed in other Muslim countries, is simply due to ignorance. Had any of these four imams been alive today, he would have fought it with all his might. They were the first to admit that they were liable to error, and indeed each of them has made mistakes. I can tell you something more. There is no need to follow any of the four schools of thought. Indeed, many Muslims do not. This is because they have enough knowledge of Islam to be able to weigh the evidence supporting the view of each school. They can choose always the view supported by stronger evidence, regardless of which school of thought advocates that opinion.

### ***Schools Of Thought: Controversial Issues & Rulings In Direct Conflict*** ***Commentary By Adil Salahi — Arab News***

Readers often come up with questions on which they have had widely different rulings, or they may cite different practices in different Muslim countries, or draw analogies that lead to confusion. They always want a clear-cut ruling on all these.

Ever since the Prophet's departure from this life, scholars had to look for rulings on issues that face the Muslim community. To do so they have to resort to the Qur'an and the Prophet's statements for guidance, because a ruling on any matter must primarily refer to these sources. Yet people's understanding of a particular statement may differ, particularly if the wording of the statement renders itself to more than one interpretation. Sometimes, we have more than one Hadith that are relevant to one issue, but they point in different directions due to the circumstances leading to each one. What is agreed by all scholars is that when we have a definitive statement, with a clear ruling that admits only one interpretation, then there can be no controversy and no room for a different ruling based on any other evidence.

Where the texts we have admit more than one interpretation, or where we do not have a definitive ruling, then we have to look at all the relevant statements in order to arrive at a suitable ruling. This process can be carried out in different ways by different scholars to arrive at different rulings. This is the process known as Ijtihad. Sometimes rulings arrived at through Ijtihad vary in grade, as in the case of a ruling saying that a certain action is discouraged, while the other says that it is forbidden. What is more, there is the possibility of issuing rulings that are in direct conflict. What are we to do in this case? The answer is that we have to try to choose the one that is supported by stronger evidence. Scholars normally do this and they have clear criteria to guide them in such endeavors. In the meantime, an ordinary person, should at least make clear that the view he is given is well supported by evidence from the Qur'an and the Hadith.

What we need to make clear is that prohibition is a serious matter. Therefore, the authority to forbid anything belongs only to God. This means that a verdict of prohibition must rely on a clear statement in the Qur'an or the authentic [explanation through] Sunnah. Without such evidence, no ruling of prohibition can be made. A correlative of this point is that some scholars tend to be too strict while others are

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moderate. It is always better to follow [rulings of] the moderate scholars, because these are closer to the drift of clear Qur'anic and Hadith statements.

### ***Schools of Thought: Dilemma On Whom To Follow***

1. How would an ordinary Muslim distinguish between the different schools of thought. What books should he read? Someone like myself is in a dilemma when divergent opinions are expressed on a particular matter. For example, people criticize a person who enters the mosque shortly before Maghrib and offers two rak'ahs in greeting to the mosque. An imam told me once that such prayer is to be offered regardless of the time one enters the mosque. How to sort out this confusion?

2. There are often different views given - each supported by scholars. which one to follow?

1. People often find the idea of different schools of thought with different opinions on the same question rather disturbing. But this is one of the aspects of the beauty of the religion of Islam. Let me tell my readers that we often find similar differences within the same school of thought. For example, if you are reading a book of the Hanbali school of thought, you often find a ruling and then the author, who would be a leading scholar of that school of thought, would say: "This view is agreed by scholars like [and he mentions a few of the leading scholars of all schools] and confirmed by one of the two reports attributed to Ahmad." He then mentions another view, which may be totally different, and he mentions the scholars supporting it and adds, "and confirmed by Ahmad." Ahmad is of course the well-known Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali school of thought.

Similarly we note that Imam El-Shaf'ie changed his rulings on many questions after he had settled in Egypt. His later rulings are known as the New Shaf'ie, as distinguished from the Old one. It goes without saying that the change of view did not occur haphazardly, but happened after El-Shaf'ie had settled in Egypt, found life and social and business relations were different in Egypt which gave him a new understanding of the Hadiths he had already known. Such a change is perfectly understandable, because the purpose of all-religious rulings and views is to serve the interest of the community.

Now which view should we take and on what basis? I have frequently said that the decision we arrive at must always be based on the evidence it relies upon. How to distinguish between the different views and their evidence? This is not easy, because it requires basic knowledge of how to compare and relate Hadiths and Qur'anic text. It is a matter for people who have studied such questions and are able to sift evidence and make a critical judgment of each piece of evidence. This is indeed a matter for people with reasonable standard of Islamic scholarship.

When you go to a scholar and put to him your question, he is bound to answer you on the basis of his study and perhaps follows the school of thought he knows best. It is like when you go to a doctor for treatment. Every doctor follows the method of treatment he learned and practiced. In a case which needs an antibiotic, a doctor who studied in the U.S. is more likely to prescribe the ones used in that country, while one who has studied in Britain will use the sort of antibiotic that is more commonly used in Britain. Similarly, most rulings given nowadays follow the school of thought the scholar concerned had studied.

So, what is a lay person to do? The answer is that his attitude should be the same as when he goes to a doctor who listens to his complaint, makes the diagnosis and prescribes the treatment. If the person has had the sort of education to understand the condition and the methods to treat it, he is likely to ask the doctor about the

details of his case. The doctor would be willing to explain to him the different ways to deal with his condition. He may tell him when to stop certain medicines and when to switch from one method to another. Similarly a scholar may be able to tell him the basis of each ruling and he may then decide which to follow.

If we take the two examples given by the second reader, we may tell him that there is no difference between schools of thought concerning the times when voluntary prayer is discouraged. However, scholars differ on which is the original state: the permissible or the discouragement of voluntary prayers at these time which are from the end of the obligatory Fajr prayer until the sun has risen well in the sky, and from the end of the Asr prayer until the sun has set. Those who say that the original state is that voluntary prayer is permissible at all times, then the particular condition of these times comes as a new situation to maintain that the discouragement applies in all circumstances. Thus if you happen to enter the mosque in these times, you do not offer the prayer known as the greeting to the mosque. On the other hand, there are scholars who argue that the discouragement to pray in these is the original state of affairs. Hence when a new situation applies, such as entering the mosque, or preparing to enter the state of consecration for Umrah or pilgrimage, etc. it modifies that state to make voluntary prayer permissible, or indeed recommended.

What is important to realize is that those who act on the advice of a scholar stand to earn reward, even if that advice is mistaken. The Prophet, peace be upon him, makes it clear that those who use scholarly discretion in order to arrive at a verdict concerning a particular matter will be rewarded even when the verdict they give is wrong. "Whoever makes a learned judgment and he is wrong will have a single reward, but he who is right in his learned judgment will have a double reward."

2. I am afraid I do not have a simple answer. The only way is to weight up the evidence supporting each view and choose the one which you consider to be more accurate. If you are unable to do that, because you lack the knowledge necessary for that exercise, then you can only choose on the basis what a scholar [upon your asking] has told. As long as you are certain that the scholar you are asking is knowledgeable and God-fearing, you commit no sin by implementing the ruling he gives you, even if it is totally mistaken.

### ***Schools Of Thought: Division Within the Community***

Back home people follow two schools of thought, Hanafi and Shaf'ie. More recently a group calling themselves Ahl al-Hadith has been arguing that certain matters which people do in prayer are not correct. This has resulted in bitter division, and people started to prevent these people from coming into the mosques. Thereupon, they have built their own mosque where they teach that the prayers of other people are not valid. Please comment.

This is an example of the sad situation into which Muslims have deteriorated for differences over matters of detail, which will not be subject for questioning by God on the Day of Judgement. The difference is over such small matters pertaining to position and place in prayer, covering one's head with a cap, etc. The only thing that is necessary to cover in prayer is the awrah which is the area between the navel and the knees for a man [according to most scholars], and the whole body of a woman with the exception of her face and hands. In many matters different situations are acceptable, because the Prophet, peace be upon him, might have done each one on a different occasion, or he might not have said anything when people accomplished certain duties in different forms.

When people insist that certain details must be done in a specific manner, then they must produce solid evidence that all other ways are incorrect. Unfortunately people do not approach the matter in the right way. If they have a report or a Hadith that the



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Prophet, peace be upon him, did something in a particular fashion, they want all Muslims to do it in the same way all the time, although the matter is not compulsory. If the Prophet, peace be upon him, wanted us to follow his example in this matter of detail, he would have said so. In the absence of specific instructions, the matter remains a Sunnah, or a recommended practice.

By definition then, this is a recommendation, which means that it is not an obligation. Why should people obligate others or pressure them into doing what is recommended, when it is not something God will ask us about? He will give an extra reward for doing the Prophet's recommendations, but He will not question anyone for failing to do so.

Having said that, I would like to add that creating divisions in the Muslim community is forbidden. If we know that doing something is likely to create such a division then we should steer away from it. Those who call themselves as Ahl al-Hadith, which means they follow the Prophet's guidance, should be most keen not to create divisions within a Muslim community.

### ***Schools Of Thought: Followed By the Scholars At Arab News***

Is it permissible for a person to follow any four schools of thought at any particular time?

It is important to be certain of one's grounds when one conducts his worship or his affairs. He must be sure of his source of information about what Islam requires of him. When you send a question to Arab News, you do not know which schools of thought supports the view which you are given. The religious editor takes it upon himself to give you the most suitable answer in your case, after weighing the evidence supporting each particular view scholars have recorded on the same question.

That means that you do not actually follow a particular school of thought all the time.

That applies to all of us. We either know which school of thought approves the view we are following or may not know it. The case of following a single school of thought throughout one's life is very rare.[Added: or at least not practical.]

### ***Schools Of Thought: Following the Four Imams***

Muslims learn at a very young age that there are four Imams whom we can follow in religious matters. However, some people here say that we must not follow these four imams, but we must follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Please comment.

It is true that we must follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The four Imams, and all scholars for that matter, agree that these two are the sources to be followed. Indeed, in all their efforts, the four Imams, and all scholars, have sought to make it easier for a Muslim to follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah. They simply explained what the Qur'an, and the Sunnah says about all sorts of problems, and gave guidance on how to implement them.

If someone, who insists on this view, troubles you, you can ask him: if a person is not in a position to understand the Qur'anic text or the Hadith statement properly, how would he know what the Qur'an and the Sunnah requires. He will say that he must refer to a scholar who would explain it to him. This is what the four Imams and other scholars, up to the present day did.

### ***Schools Of Thought: One View As Correct & All Others As Wrong?***

When some scholars give rulings or Fatwas, they do so according to the schools of thought they follow. They declare that all other views are invalid or wrong. But this creates confusion. I am concerned about the ruling on reading Surah Al-Fatihah, when there is no Hadith to suggest that it must be done in every rak'ah, and matters like lifting one's hands for supplication after an obligatory prayer.

It is only to be expected that a scholar will give a ruling according to what he knows and studies. It is normal that he will be better versed in his own school of thought, or Fiqh. But the fact is that most scholars do not stick to their own schools of Fiqh. Nor do they declare that all other views are wrong. They normally say that the ruling they give is the best they can see, but they are not infallible. They could be wrong and others can be right.

A scholar should always try to look at every question separately, taking all factors into account, and arriving at the ruling that suits the people concerned best. It is important to arrive at a solution to a problem that does not trouble the people concerned or cause them hardship. This must always be done in accordance with what is permissible in Islam. We cannot bend any rules or go against what God has legislated. But if a certain problem has a better solution under a school of Fiqh other than the one followed by the person asking about it, a scholar should give him that solution. There is little virtue in sticking to a particular school when people's interests are better served elsewhere. Moreover, a scholar should always consider the evidence supporting different views and opt for the one supported by the stronger evidence. This is something a layman cannot do, but it is the duty of the scholar to look into.

The guiding example on this question should be that of Imam Malik. When Caliph Haroon Al-Rasheed suggested to him that he, i.e. the caliph, should issue an order to all judges throughout the Muslim world to make Malik's book of Hadith and Fiqh, known as Al-Muwatta', their first reference, so that they will judge in accordance with it, Malik refused and counseled him against this step. Here is a scholar of the highest caliber, with a chance that his book would be made the source of rulings throughout the Muslim world, and he objects and counsels the caliph against it. Malik was looking at the interests of the Muslim community in general, not his own reputation or standing. He said to the caliph: "The Prophet's companions settled in different areas, and each of them had a knowledge different from that of the other. People learned from them. Now if you want to force all people to follow one branch of knowledge, this will lead to chaos."

As for reading Surah Al-Fatihah in prayer, the difference of views is well known. The three views are well documented and have valid evidence in support. So whatever people do will be, God willing, acceptable. There is no dispute that it should be read in every rak'ah, but the difference is whether the imam's reading is enough for the entire congregation, or it should be read by everyone joining in.

### ***Schools Of Thought: Position Of the Four Schools Of Thought***

Could you please explain the status of the four schools of thought and the reasons for the major differences between them? Is it obligatory for a Muslim to strictly follow one of these schools, or could one take up verdicts and rulings from schools other than his own? Is it obligatory to follow rulings based on Qiyas and Ijmaa'?

Islam spread into wide areas shortly after the Prophet's death. Life in these areas presented numerous situations, which had no ruling in the Qur'an, and the Sunnah

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to show the Muslims how to behave concerning them. Moreover, the passage of time presents new situations and problems, all of which need to be considered in the light of Islam, so as to determine the right Islamic-conduct concerning them. This means that scholars need to come up with answers to such questions on the basis of Islamic teachings outlined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Muslim scholars started to do so right from the early days of Islam. The Prophet's companions included a number of scholars who were able to deduce rulings on the basis of the Qur'an, and what they heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, saying in different situations. This established a tradition of construction and deduction, which allowed that a ruling is available to cater for all cases. Over a period of two or three generations, the process led to a movement toward schools of thought or schools of law in various areas. With the turn of the first century of the Islamic era, the founders of some of these schools were looking into all matters relevant to Islamic life in their generation. We find Imam Malik in Madinah and Imam Abu Hanifah in Iraq distinguished for their scholarship and having students from far and wide learning under them. A short while later, Imam El-Shafie and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal gained wide fame and reputation.

A school of thought is established through a process of several generations of scholars following the same lines of deduction and construction. These scholars will also be of high caliber, able to deduce new rulings for new situations.

They follow the same lines as their school and its founder.

In the history of Islam, there were numerous scholars of high caliber. They continued the tradition of diligent scholarship. At the time of the founders of the four schools, there were many others who were of equal and even better caliber, and they ruled on numerous questions, but there were not many scholars over several generations to follow in their tradition. That is why they did not become associated with independent schools of thought. Otherwise their views remain valid in the questions they considered. There is no virtue in having only four schools of thought. Indeed we have many more.

There is no ruling that one must follow a single school of thought. Indeed, very rarely anyone does that. A scholar who has studied these schools of thought will take rulings from each, according to suitability to different situations. If he is considering a question put to him, he will try to give the ruling, which is most suitable for the person concerned, with little regard to the person's own school of thought. That is because there is no obligation to follow any of them. For example, if a couple get married and the woman's father or guardian is not present. The woman acts for herself and consents to the marriage in front of witnesses. If the case is put to a scholar, he does not ask the couple which school of thought they follow. He will rule that the marriage is valid, in spite of the fact that three schools of thought do not approve of it. He will take the fourth school's view, which approves of it, because otherwise he would make the couple adulterers and their children illegitimate.

An ordinary person will not realize what rulings are made on the basis of Qiyas, or analogy, and Ijmaa, or unanimity of scholars. When he is told of a ruling that has been approved by scholars, he should implement it unless he has a legitimate objection to it on the basis of accurate knowledge of the Qur'an, and Sunnah.

### ***Schools Of Thought: Too Rigid About Schools Of Thought***

May I ask whether any one of the great scholars who had founded that he was founding his own school of thought? I have read in a book compiled in South Africa that if a person changes his school of thought, he is liable to a punishment by flogging or imprisonment. There is also a story about a

man who belonged to Ahl al-Hadith. This man proposed to marry a girl who belonged to the Hanafi school of thought. Her father made it a condition that the man change to his school of thought and the man agreed. When this case was put to a renowned Sheikh, he said after reflection that the marriage was valid, but when the man dies, his faith disappears because he had changed from what he believed to be the truth and accepted something different, for the sake of something to do with this world. It is also written in the same book that the concept of following an imam is an obligatory injunction, as the Qur'an says: "Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know." Please comment.

I will begin with posing a simple question. Suppose that a Muslim spends his life making a conscientious effort to observe Islamic teachings, uphold Islamic values and implements Islamic principles, yet when he dies he still has not even heard the names of the four imams who founded the four major schools of thought, will he go to heaven? If the answer is that he would not, then the person making that answer is adding to the fundamental Islamic beliefs a new one which neither the Prophet, peace be upon him, nor anyone of his companions ever heard. If the answer is that such a person will go to heaven, if God forgives him his sins, then the whole concept of obligation to follow one school of thought collapses, as indeed it should.

This does not detract from the great effort done by all four schools of thought. We, however, need to put the matter into perspective. When someone suggests that a person should be beaten or imprisoned for changing his school of thought, then he is introducing into Islam an obligation that neither the Prophet, peace be upon him, nor any of his companions nor their successors, i.e. Tabieen, ever mentioned. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Whoever introduces into this matter of ours something that does not belong to it, it will be rejected." Not only so, but also the four imams who founded these schools of thought never suggested that Muslims should follow them rigidly. You do not find any of them saying to his students that they have to follow everything he says. Indeed none of them suggested that he was founding a school of thought. All that they suggested was that they have explained Islam as they have learned and understood it. If people find their work right, then that is by God's grace, and if they had made mistakes, they prayed for God's forgiveness. Indeed every one of them made some mistakes, because infallibility is limited to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and that too only within the field of conveying God's message. So if someone after 10 years or 10 decades discovers that a ruling in a school of thought other than the one he follows is better supported than that of his school, should he keep to the wrong one? How absurd!

Reflect for a moment on the story of that father. The Sheikh says that the marriage is valid but the faith of the bridegroom has just vanished. How is the marriage valid when the man is no longer a believer? The Sheikh makes his basis for this ridiculous view that the man abandoned the truth, as he knew it. Well there is a principle that the truth is one. It cannot be in one thing and its opposite. Now suppose that when the man changed his school of thought he actually joined the one which has more of the truth, elucidated. Then that man is making a change for the better, but he is ruled to have deserted the faith because he abandoned what he believed to be the truth! So it does not matter that he would now be following the real truth. This is of no help. It is what he thought the truth to be that counts. Isn't that absurd? As for the verses quoted, it says:

***"We have only sent before you men to whom We gave revelations. Ask, then, the people of earlier revelations if you yourselves have no knowledge."*** [the Bee — "An-Nahl" 16:43]

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This is a verse addressed to the non-believers who used to deny God's message and said that God was too great to send His message through a human being. God makes it clear that it has always been the case that He sends human messengers to human beings. Since the non-believers among the Jews and the Christians were the ones with knowledge of such revelations, then God directs them to ask those people about the fact of His sending human messengers. If it is argued that this may have been the original meaning of the verse, but should be understood to have wider application, then a close look at its wording is sufficient to indicate that it has nothing to do with schools of thought and conforming to any one of them. It simply means that you need to ask a scholar regarding any matter you do not know. It does not say that the scholar you ask should belong to the school of thought you follow.

The best thing you should do with the book from which you have quoted these views is to throw it away, because it has no basis whatsoever. It belongs to the days when ignorance was widespread in the Muslim world. It encourages blind following.

The founders of the schools of thought would have done the same, because they are the first to tell you that blind following is not Islamic. Besides, in every school of thought there are different views, simply because a school of thought, by definition, is based on certain methodology of deduction and construction in order to arrive at rulings in all matters. Scholars use this methodology and sometimes they differ with their own teachers. There are several matters over which Imam ibn Taymiyya, a Hanbali scholar, disagreed with the view of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, but this disagreement does not make him non-Hanbali. It simply enriches the Hanbali School.

If you ask how is a lay man to know who is right, he says that although the truth is one, there is a range of what is right and acceptable to God. If you keep within that range, then you have nothing to fear. To do so, you need to know that the view you follow is well supported with evidence from the Qur'an and the Hadith.

### ***Schools Of Thought: Unacceptable Stand On***

It is said that since Imam Abu Hanifah was the earliest among all the founders of the four schools of thought, then his method is the one to be preferred, because he met some of the Prophet's companions and many of their successors who could have supported his views with their abundant knowledge. It is also said that one may not switch from one school of thought to another. Nor is it permissible to take one view from one school of thought and another from a different school. Please comment.

If we carry this argument to its logical conclusion, then we should disregard the view of all scholars who were born after Imam Abu Hanifah and stick to his opinions. Since he developed a complete system of Islamic life, and he has those advantages, then who needs another view? Let us then forget about scholars in all subsequent periods, and let us close the faculties of Islamic studies in Muslim countries, and concentrate on the Hanafi school of thought.

But then we meet an unexpected obstacle: What about the scholars who lived before Abu Hanifah and who were even more knowledgeable about Islam than he was? We may include here the three caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar and Ali, as well as Abdullah ibn Omar and Abdullah ibn Abbas.

Each one of these was an even better scholar than Abu Hanifah and they all lived earlier than him. Carry the argument a little further and you will see yourself forced to disregard all scholars and their scholarship and concentrate on the Qur'an and the Hadith, taking both directly from the Prophet, peace be upon him. Whether your

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understanding of these is correct or not is beside the point, since you are aiming at being close to the Prophet, peace be upon him.

The whole argument is shallow. The scholars and their schools of thought have enriched Islamic study and worked out clear methodology of construction and deduction of rulings on all matters.

Their methodologies and their priorities may differ, and that is one of the factors that led to the differences among them, but all of them are highly esteemed and their contributions are of immense value.

The other point is also absurd. There is no such restriction. Besides who determined a person's school of thought? Is it something you inherit from your father or you take from your local community? There is no requirement to follow a particular school of thought, or to limit the schools of thought to four only. In Islamic history, there were scholars who were by no means less eminent than the founders of the four schools of thought.

They lived at the same time, or later. We sometimes take the view of a later scholar and prefer his view to one, which may be found in all four schools of thought. There is nothing wrong with that. What is important is that our choice should be built on understanding and weighing up the evidence supporting any point of view.

### ***Schools Of Thought: Verily People Do Not Stick To Only One***

Every Muslim should follow the Prophet, peace be upon him, but is it also necessary that every Muslim should follow one of the four schools of thought? If the answer is in the affirmative, how do we account for this considering that these schools of thought were established much later than the Prophet?

The short answer to this question is that it is not necessary to follow any one of the four major schools of thought. Nor is it done in practice except by a few people.

If a person has enough knowledge of Islam and how rulings are deduced from texts of the Qur'an and the Hadith, he normally looks at every question separately, choosing the ruling which he feels to be weightier regardless of which school of thought subscribes to it. On the other hand, if he has only scanty knowledge of Fiqh, or Islamic jurisprudence, then he follows whatever ruling is given by a scholar in any particular matter. Take for example the readers of Arab News who write to me. They take my advice without questioning me regarding the school of thought, which advocates that particular opinion. It is true that some of them mention that they belong to a particular school of thought and request an opinion on its basis. I try to accommodate them as far as possible, but sometimes I prefer to give them the opinion, which is most suitable, or easiest to follow in their particular circumstances. Sometimes I give an advice on a serious question, which is contrary to what all four schools of thought say. For example, in the case of pronouncing divorce three times in one session. I lean towards the opinion of Imam Ibn Taimiyah, who is no less an imam than the founders of the four schools of thought. He states that such a divorce counts as a single, revocable divorce. You will appreciate the amount of misery that is avoided by following this ruling which is supported by strong evidence from Hadith and by a growing number of scholars and which has been incorporated in the family law of a number of Muslim Countries.

Only when a scholar has studied a particular school of thought thoroughly and when he subscribes to its methodology that we find a person strictly following that school of thought. He is of course entitled to his decision.

What we must not forget is that the schools of thought are simply methods of deduction of various rulings concerning the affairs of human life. They are all based on the teachings of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the practices of his companions and the opinions learned from scholars in the early period of Islam.

### ***Schools Of Thought: Wealth Unmatched — Or Confusion***

You have indicated on several occasions that it is not very important to follow any one school of thought. I find this view highly valid, and I support you on this. However, on many occasions you refer to these schools of thought in your answers and sometimes you mention their respective views. That creates confusion. Would it not be better to maintain the first line of discussion only?

In the Qur'an, God gives us a number of accounts of the history of earlier prophets with their people, and outlines the basic principles of their messages and how these differed according to the circumstances and conditions that prevailed in every community. However, the basic concept of the Oneness of God remains always predominant in all these messages. All Islamic scholars are in agreement that the divine law that applied to earlier communities applies to us, unless there is some modification which the Qur'an or the Prophet, peace be upon him, has made clear. Hence, when we listen to the Prophet Shuaib saying to his people: "Do not begrudge people their dues," this outlines a simple value, which we should implement in our lives. Moreover, it agrees with what the Prophet, peace be upon him, says about giving every person his or her dues of respect and esteem, in addition to giving them any thing that belongs to them by right.

In the history of Islamic scholarship there were numerous scholars of great distinction, but the most famous of these were the founders of the four schools of thought. I have explained on more than one occasion that what makes a school of thought is the fact that a scholar is succeeded by a number of his students who follow his methods and agree with his rulings. These become distinguished scholars in their own right. Each of them must, in time, make new rulings on matters that might have been raised at the time of their teachers. These are then followed by their own students, and one generation of scholars after another enrich the schools of thought. It also provides for differences of opinion within the school of thought itself. Thus we may find Abu Yousuf and Muhammad ibn Al-Hassan, the most distinguished students of Abu Hanifah, differing with him or with each other on certain points. We also find Ibn Abideen, for example, the most recent Hanafi scholar of general acclaim, modifying various rulings in order to allow for the changing circumstances of society.

All this has created a wealth of scholarship that is hardly matched by any other faith, even though these might have had longer history and larger following. This is something of importance and great benefit to us today, and also to future generations.

How important is it to follow a particular school of thought? The answer is simple: It is not important in as much as our accountability of the Day of Judgement is concerned. In other words, God will not ask anyone which school of thought he or she followed, or why he or she chose this or that school of thought.

However, the schools of thought are very important in understanding our faith and how Islamic law is to be applied. If every one of us says: I will refer to the Qur'an directly to find out what God wants and do it, then we will be like the patients in a hospital who go on strike, saying that they do not need the doctors working there. Instead, they will refer to the best-known medical books and find out how to cure themselves.

In point of fact, very few people follow the same school of thought in practice. These are scholars who study a particular school of thought and specialize in it. When a layman asks them about a particular question, they give the view of that school of thought and do not go beyond it. Otherwise, people do not follow a school of thought except in a limited way. When a person needs to find out the Islamic view on a particular matter, he asks a scholar who gives him his answer after questioning him about the details of the case.

The scholar should weigh the matter and refer different views in order to find out the one which best applies to the question in hand, or give his own ruling on the matter. In certain cases he may find the view of the Hanbali school of thought to be the most suitable, while in others the Shaf'ie school of thought seems to give the better answer to the question in hand. He gives his questioner the view, which he believes to be the one to please God most and to make things easier for the person or the people concerned. Thus the scholar is not following a particular school of thought, but he is not negating the usefulness of either. The layman also is not following the school of thought he thinks he should follow.

That does not detract him from the fact that they both are following Islam. Indeed it enhances it, because they both are following a broader view of Islamic life. The schools of thought continue to have their position of high esteem, as indeed the view of other scholars over the many generations of Islamic scholarship.

We are much better off for having them and being able to refer to all these scholars and benefit by their different methods of construction and deduction. May God enable this generation of scholars to enrich Islamic scholarship and provide an example to be followed by future generations.

### ***Schools of Thought: When & Why Were They Instituted***

When were the four schools of Islamic law instituted and what were the reasons for that?

If we date the four schools of Islamic law by their founders then we say that they all started in the second and early part of the third centuries of the Islamic era. Imam Abu Hanifah was the earliest of the four scholars. He was born in year 80 and died in 150. Imam Malik was born in 93 and died in 179, while Al-Shaf'ie was born in 150 and died in 204. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal was born in 164 and died in 241. May God bless them all.

None of these scholars started with the aim of establishing a school of his own. However, they distinguished themselves as scholars of the highest caliber. Each of them had a large number of students, many of whom later became eminent scholars in their own right. Sufficient it is to say in this regard that Imam Ahmad was a student of Al-Shaf'ie, while Al-Shaf'ie studied under Malik for 9 years and under Muhammad ibn Al-Hassan of the Hanafi school for three years.

These schools differ in their methodologies, which help them to arrive at verdicts to questions that are put to them.

### ***Sectarianism: Conflict & Fanaticism Amongst Muslims***

We see that all over the Islamic world two rival groups are always in conflict: One attracts highly educated people who believe in reason and logic, but care little for religion, while the other consists of largely uneducated people who hold fanatically to certain beliefs and try to impose them on others. How to remedy such a situation.



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There are definitely two groups with widely different attitudes to religion. These have been there since the very early days of human existence. The noble prophets and those who have followed them on the same route try to bring the message of faith home to people, hoping that they will respond positively to the call to believe in the Oneness of Allah. On the other hand, they are opposed by people who prefer to follow what they feel to be their interest, paying no regard to the divine guidance and caring little for the teachings of prophets. This has always been the case, and it will continue to be so, until the end of human life.

I do not agree with you at all when you say that the camp opposed to faith attracts mostly the highly educated who rely on reason and logic. It is true that some of those highly educated may turn their back on religion, but that is only because they either prefer not to study religion with the sort of seriousness they attach to other matters; or because they prefer to satisfy immediate pleasures; or because they feel that their position will be threatened by religion. They simply do not respond to the challenge of the divine message to use their reason and logic in evaluating the truth advanced by the divine faith.

There was a time when a higher proportion of educated people seemed to move away from religion, but if you look at the historical circumstances that led to this situation, you are bound to conclude that this was the result of the alien system of education that was devised by the colonial authorities in most Muslim countries. As you are aware, the colonial powers were able to impose their will over most of the Muslim world, after a long period of decline throughout the Muslim areas. But when that phase was over, and education moved toward being universal, more and more educated people found no difficulty in making a happy match between education and religion.

Indeed, it is the divine faith that calls on people to use their reason and logic, because when they do that, they can easily recognize the truth of the Oneness of God and the validity of the divine message. In the history of Islam, there was no time when a conflict took place between enlightened education and scientific findings on the one hand, and Islam on the other. Indeed, the two stand always hand in hand.

It is true that there are people who claim to be religious and try to impose their ideas on others. Such people have not learned Islam well. They do much damage to the cause of Islam. They are rarely aware of its fundamental principle to respect individual freedom. Islam advocates that freedom of thought, belief and expression is a basic right of all human beings. Fanaticism is alien to Islam and it will always remain so.

### ***Sectarianism: Describing One As Kafir***

In a discussion with a friend, I told him that a person who deliberately omits to offer obligatory prayers is considered a non-Muslim. I have heard from scholars that the criterion, which distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslims, is prayer. My friend argues that we cannot call anyone a 'Kafir'. Please explain.

A person who denies the obligation of prayer is certainly a non-believer, or 'Kafir'. We have no hesitation in describing him as such because he denies an essential point of our religion, which is commonly known to all. A person who omits to offer one prayer every now and then cannot be described as a non-believer or a 'Kafir', because he acknowledges the duty of prayer and he practices it. Its omission is certainly a sin of which he should repent properly. Such repentance cannot be described as proper unless it is accompanied by stopping the omission completely.

Your friend is correct in being careful with regard to who can be described as non-believer. He is not right, however, in saying that we cannot call a non-Muslim a 'Kafir', because the term 'Kafir' means a non-Muslim.

### ***Sectarianism: Division Among Muslims***

Qur'an, and Hadith injunctions are clear that Muslims must remain united. Yet a Hadith tell us that Muslims will be split into more than seventy groups, which are all in hell except one. Please comment.

It is true that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said about the division of people who claim to be Muslims. They are split into groups, some well known, while others are relatively obscure. Since their differences are over matters of faith, then it is only logical that only one is bound to follow the truth, contained in God's message. This is the clear message to which the Prophet, peace be upon him, points out when he mentions this division. He also mentions that people of earlier religions, particularly the Jews and the Christians, have also been split into too many groupings and sects.

When the Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked to define which group is the one that will escape hell and be admitted to heaven, his answer was very clear. He said: "That which follows what I and my companions follow." Hence, a strict adherence to what the Prophet, peace be upon him, will bring us in line with his companions who followed his instructions and teachings in an exemplary way. We have a clear and full record of what the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions practiced. We do not need to pursue any philosophical thought or any man-made creed or doctrine. We have to give practical evidence of the declaration we make when we state that we believe in Islam, namely the declaration: "***I bear witness that there is no deity other than God and I bear witness that Muhammad is His messenger.***"

What is the role of a messenger if not to bring a message? And if God has sent us a message, it only stands to reason that we should follow it.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, has given us the perfect example of following that message and his companions followed his guidance and gave us a full social example of that message in practice. When we declare that Muhammad is God's messenger, then we are committing ourselves to reject every thing that is in conflict with his guidance. Indeed that is the only way to lead to heaven. The Prophet, peace be upon him, tells the truth and his Hadith states the issues before us very clearly.

### ***Sectarianism: Labeling Some Sects As Non-Believers***

Since the Shias praise Ali all the time, rather than God and His messenger, and since they do not say the Athan as we do, can we consider them Muslims?

It is true that the Shias accord great respect to Ali, placing him above other companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in their esteem. But neither this, nor the additions they have in the Athan, or call to prayer, is reason to consider them nonbelievers.

How can anyone say so when they declare that they believe in the oneness of God and the message of His messenger, Muhammad, peace be on him.

### ***Sectarianism: Shiites & Sunnis***

What are the differences between the two sects Shias & Sunnis?

Linguistically speaking, the term Shi'a means followers or supporters. In a historical context, it means the supporters of Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Prophet's cousin, who

became the fourth ruler of the Muslim state. When he took over, there was a split between him and other groups of Muslims over the question of dealing with those who mounted the rebellion against his predecessor, Uthman ibn Affan. At this time, there was no such sect as Shi'a. However, after he was assassinated, his supporters wanted his son, Al Hassan, to take over. They maintained that succession should remain among his descendants. The Shi's continued to oppose the Umayyid and Abbasid governments for a very long time. This led to the provision of a religious backing to the political opposition. Hence, the rise of the Shiite school of thought which institutionalizes the role of the imam. Thus, we have the Jeffery or the Imaami school of thought which lists 12 imams whom the Shi'a venerate. The Zaidi school of thought, which is largely concentrated in Yemen, lists only 7 imams. The question of the role of the imam is the basic issue of difference between Shias and Sunnis.

The Term "Sunni" on the other hand, means from linguistic point of view a follower of a method. In an Islamic sense, the term Sunnah means the method shown by the Prophet, peace be upon him. Within our context, it refers to the majority of Muslims who gave allegiance to the Muslim state, starting with Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman, Ali and going through the Umayyids, the Abbasids, etc. They do not recognize the Shiite claim that Ali had a stronger claim to succeed the Prophet, peace be upon him, as the ruler of the Muslim state. They maintain that anyone has an equal claim provided that he meets the qualifications required for the post.

In our day and age, it is more important to stress points of agreement rather than points of disagreement, because what unites Muslims is much greater than what disunites them. With the enemies of Islam trying hard to sow the seeds of discord among us, we should try our best to render their attempts futile.

### ***Sectarianism: the Four Imams***

In chronological order are:

- Imam Malik ibn Anas lived in Madinah most of his life. His grandfather was a companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him.
- Imam Abu Hanifah was called Al-Nauman ibn Thabit. He was of Persian origin, but lived in Iraq.
- Imam El-Shaf'ie was born in Gaza and traveled when still a young boy to Madinah where he studied under Imam Malik. He also traveled to Iraq where he met the leading scholars of the Hanafi school of thought such as Imam Abu Yousuf. He then traveled to Egypt where he spent the last five years of his life.
- The Hanbali school of thought was founded by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who lived mostly in Baghdad. He was a close friend of Imam El Shaf'ie. Both learned from each other, although Imam Ahmad, the younger scholar, was keen to maintain this close relationship which lasted until El-Shaf'ie left Baghdad for Egypt.

### ***Sectarianism: Wahhabis — Nothing To Be Ashamed Of***

What is Wahhabis? Is it a sect or a school of thought? On my return to my hometown people labeled me Wahhabi simply because I say Ameen aloud when I am praying in congregation. Please comment.

There is nothing called Wahhabis. The term is often applied to Saudi people, but it means different things to different people. Linguistically speaking, it indicates a follower of Imam Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab, who was a distinguished reformer. He undertook great efforts and succeeded in returning people to the pure faith of Islam, discarding elements that are alien to it, such as superstitions about graves

and charms. He insisted on maintaining the purity of faith. He did not introduce any new Fiqh rules, but followed the Hanbali school of thought.

If people call you Wahhabi, it is either in jest or in ignorance of what the man achieved. There is nothing to be ashamed of in being a follower of Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab, because he followed the Prophet's own guidance.

### ***Sectarianism: Wahhabis — There Is No Such Thing As Wahhabi***

I am writing in regard to the movement known as Tabligh, which has been active in India over the years. They are also known as Wahhabis and sometime addressed as the number 24, although what this number signifies remains a mystery to me. They have their own mosques where they do not use microphones for prayer and they advocate many other things in the name of Islam. When I visited my home country recently, my father told me that they frequently visit him and that arguing with them is futile. He feels confused by some of the ideas they try to disseminate. May I say that in my parents' home, we never visit any shrine, attend death anniversaries, etc., but we give Fatihah and Niyaz and celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. When I told my family that I have stopped these practices as well, they started to call me Wahhabi and 24. Another hot issue is that they claim that saying Ya Rasoolullah is prohibited. May I request your explanation of all such matters & what is permissible and what is not?

I have never thought that the Tabligh and the Wahhabis movements could be ever confused or thought to form one group or movement. Their ideas and methods are wide apart. But perhaps this is part of the confusion that the reader's father has felt.

Tabligh is a movement dedicated to carry the message of Islam to the farthest corners of the world. Its members travel and speak to people about Islam. Many scholars have expressed disagreement with some of their methods, but they are certainly sincere people, who wish to serve Islam, even though they may be mistaken in some respects.

There is no such thing as Wahhabis movement, or doctrine, or group. The name is derived from a great reformer, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, who lived in Arabia over 200 years ago. He was a scholar of clear knowledge and strong determination. He devoted the efforts to purging the faith of the people from all elements that are alien to the pure Islamic faith, as preached by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and practiced by his companions. He launched an unwavering attack on superstitions and erroneous beliefs that crept into people's minds during a long period of ignorance that saw the majority of Muslim people illiterate. Because people initially resent being told that they have been following wrong ideas, they coin nicknames for those who tell them that. Hence the name 'Wahhabis' came into being. Perhaps it is also the reason for the appellation 24, which I have never heard before.

Let me say this to you: every thing advocated by Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab aimed to get people to return to the Islamic faith in its purest form. This applies to the celebrations people do at so-called shrines, which are no more than the graves of men who are thought to be saints. The whole idea of 'sainthood' is alien to Islamic teachings. It also applies to wearing charms, seeking mediation of dead people, celebrating various occasions, etc. The practice known in India [& Pakistan] as Fatihah is also an innovation that has no basis in Islam. I do not know what is meant by the expression 'Niyaz'. I cannot pass an opinion on it.

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One thing that he emphasizes is that we must never address our appeals or prayer to anyone other than God Himself. That applies to the Prophet, peace be upon him, as well. On the Day of Judgement the Prophet, peace be upon him, will be granted a special favor of interceding on behalf of his followers, but that is only then. As for life in this world, he cannot be of benefit to us, other than for having taught us the right faith and shown us how to follow it. But he cannot mediate with God now on our behalf. Hence to appeal to him, as people do when they say, Ya Rasoolullah, is a form of polytheism, making him a partner with God. He made no claim to such partnership and he would be the first to reject it. It is only to God that we should appeal. The word 'Ya' is a form of appeal or calling upon someone.

Having said that, it remains for me to say that some of the things that the reader mentions as practiced by those people may not be right.

Their refusal to use microphones is one such thing. A microphone and public address system is a machine, which may be used for the very good purpose of making the call to prayer. It is used in the Haram in Makkah and in the Prophet's mosque in Madinah.

The reader specifically asks about celebrating Shab-e-Bar'at, which I think is the middle night of the month of Sh'aban. If I am correct, then I tell him that there is nothing to suggest that the Prophet, peace be upon him, or his companions ever marked that night with any special action. Hence, to mark it or associate it with any great fortunes [or blessings] is an innovation.

### ***Sectarianism: Wahhabis & Sunnis***

In countries of the Indian Subcontinent, there are two groups of Muslims who call themselves Wahhabis and Sunnis. They are always engaged in vigorous arguments, which may sometimes lead to fighting. Nevertheless, their worship is very similar. Could you please explain the difference between the two?

No group actually calls itself Wahhabis. However, people may call some of those who express certain views as Wahhabis which is a name supposed to refer to the followers of Imam Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab who was a great reformer and scholar. He lived in Najd over 200 years ago and worked hard to eradicate all innovations from Islamic worship. Such innovations had crept into the practices of Muslim communities due to ignorance and long periods of decline undergone by Muslim communities. He maintained that the example of the Prophet, peace be upon him, i.e. the Sunnah should be followed diligently. There is no disagreement among scholars that this is required of every Muslim. It is unfortunate that some of the practices which Imam Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab spoke very strongly against still persist in some Muslim communities. These include such terrible practices as visiting the graves of supposedly saintly people and asking the dead to intervene with Allah on behalf of the visitor for any purpose. Such a practice Islam shuns, since it is a manifestation of associating partners with Allah.

Imam Muhammad ibn Abdulwahhab belonged to the Sunni Muslims who, by virtue of their name, should follow the Sunnah, or the example, set by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, with diligence. Hence, it is wrong to classify Muslims as Wahhabis and Sunnis, since the followers of Imam Abdulwahhab belong to the Sunni group of Muslims.

The vigorous arguments and fighting you have spoken of are certainly deplorable. This happens, nevertheless, because people are sometimes too rigid in their views. Those who insist on following the Sunnah of the Prophet, peace be upon him,

diligently should have the patience to teach their fellow Muslims, with respect and compassion, that some of their practices are unacceptable from the Muslim point of view. Had they done so, they would find better response by other Muslims.

### ***Sectarianism: What Unites & What Divides***

In our country different groups have their separate mosques according to their schools of thought. Strict followers of one school do not pray in a mosque, which belongs to a different school of thought. Can we join the prayer in any of these mosques or should we offer our separate prayers? I admit that if we arrive in the mosque and the congregation is already in progress then we have to join the congregation. But do we have to repeat our prayer if the Imam belonged to an unacceptable group? From another point of view, is it permissible that a person who commits innovation or “fisq” leads prayers?

I have written at length and repeatedly on the question of having different schools of thought. I explained that the very existence of such schools is a testimony to the richness of Islamic scholarship. I also explained that there are no differences among these schools of thought with regard to the principles of faith or the essentials of worship. What differences exist relate more to matters of detail.

It is indeed a matter of pride for us that over the centuries the existence of different schools of thought has not only enriched our scholarly heritage but has also been a factor enhancing the unity of the Muslim community. For generations after generations, Muslims prayed side by side without ever the thought of belonging to one school of thought rather than another having any bearing on their mutual relationship or their dealings with one another. That is not to overlook the fact that in certain period of history and in particular places we find rigid adherence to different schools of thought who advocate a total boycott of the followers of others.

But it does not take a great deal of research to determine that such trends existed in periods of backwardness, when scholarship lost its creative aspect and concentrated merely on imitation. The truth is the greater the understanding a person has of the principles of Islam and the scholarly methods employed by different Imams and scholars the greater his tolerance. It is only inward-looking, narrow minded and rigid students who advocate total adherence to a particular school and a rejection of every thing else. Such an attitude is alien to Islam. You can judge a period of history according to prevailing attitudes toward this particular issue. If tolerance prevails then it is a bright period in the history of Islam. If intolerance takes over, then it must be a period of backwardness. Perhaps the worst manifestation of rigidly and narrow-mindedness is the total refusal by the followers of one school of thought to join the followers of another in prayer. Let me say, straightaway, that this is against the practice and the teachings of the Imams who founded these schools of thought.

We read with interest that Imam Al-Shaf'ie, for example, offered his prayers according to the manner followed by the Hanafi school of thought when he prayed in the mosque of Imam Abu Hanifah in Baghdad. He did that out of respect to the great scholar who had preceded him. Those who refuse to join an imam who belongs to a different school of thought are not only rigid and narrow-minded; they are ignorant as well. Had they known what exactly differentiates one school from another, they would have realized that what unites them is much greater than what divides them. They would have known that they all worship in an acceptable manner. Hence they would not allow their differences to affect their unity.

To establish mosques for different schools of thought is a sad reflection on the state of Muslims nowadays. It shows that matters of very secondary details take precedence over fundamentals. Who can allege that God would not be pleased with a

worshiper who keeps his hands in prayer by his sides rather than put his right hand over his left one, joining them together over his navel or over his chest? Who can allege that the prayer of a person who offers the Witr in three joined Raka'ah will have his prayer accepted while one who offers it in two separate beginnings and ends will have it rejected? It is only such matters of detail that separate such schools. Nevertheless some ignorant people want us to believe that there is a real difference between them, which calls for the establishment of different mosques.

Having said that, may I ask how does a person know to which school of thought he belongs? The great majority of people do not have enough knowledge to distinguish one school of thought from another, either in the methods of deduction it follows or in the way it weighs up evidence in support of a particular ruling. Indeed they cannot distinguish their own school of thought and the basis of the rulings it gives in different matters. They only know few details of form and appearance and they tend to think that these are most important when only little significance is attached to them. They further think that by adhering so strictly to their schools of thought, they serve the cause of Islam better or they earn more reward from God. Indeed they do not. They earn God's displeasure by dividing the Muslim community. It is also sad that they receive encouragement from Imams whose knowledge of Islam is only scanty.

The questioner raises the point of what to do when we are coming to a mosque with a congregation having started. The answer is simply we join the prayer, without allowing the idea of which school of thought the Imam follows to cross of minds. Our prayer is valid and acceptable if we pay enough attention to it. But the questioner asks whether we should repeat our prayers if the Imam belongs to "an unacceptable group." Let me ask: "Who defines which group is unacceptable? And to whom it is unacceptable? I do not expect an answer and I accept none. What we should be concerned with is whether our prayer is acceptable to God. We do not pray to any person, and we do not subdivide Muslims into classes on the basis of which branch of Islamic scholarship they follow. That is a thought, which is repugnant to the Islamic sense. Let me say very clearly that if we repeat our prayers only because the Imam belongs to a school of thought with which we differ then we are making a judgement that our first prayer is unacceptable to and the prayers offered by the congregation is also unacceptable. To say this, or to imply it is to assume a position of judgement, which does not belong to us. That is very presumptuous indeed. We should remember that God accepts worship when it is devoted purely to Him. All schools of thought teach us how to make our prayer dedicated to God alone.

In recent days a new group has emerged which tries to reject all schools of thought claiming that following any of them is an innovation. This is again a terrible idea, which results in further disunity of the Muslim community. What makes matters even worse is that this new group gives disproportionate importance to certain matters of detail and define their relationship with others on the basis of these details and how they approach them. For example, wearing a beard, refraining from smoking, standing astride in prayer so as to ensure that our feet touch the feet of other people standing on our right and left, looking in one direction after we finish prayer so as not to shake hand with those who sit next to us and similar matters are given such importance. This gives an impression that unless these matters are handled exactly as this group says, a person stands to incur God's wrath and receive grievous suffering in the Hereafter. If you ask them what they have left to God's forgiveness, they look puzzled, as if you are talking in the ancient Greek language.

To these people and to those who follow rigidly their schools of thought, elevating them to status of separate religions, I say: This is not the way the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us, nor is it the way the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, practiced. He has taught us tolerance and they practiced the perfect standard of tolerance. Rigidity was alien to their nature.

I am worried by the way you have phrased the second part of your question equating innovation with “fisq”. Fisq means transgression. Innovation means to add or invent something, which is not there. The two are not synonymous. As far as a person who practices certain innovations is concerned the matter really depends on what sort of innovation he practices. If it is something related to the principles of faith, and he invents something new, then we have to look at that very carefully. He may be guilty of something, which takes him out of the fold of Islam altogether. Suppose that a person believes that one or more dead persons may be of benefit to him in this life or in the life to come. And he elevates such people to a degree, which makes people go to their graves in order to seek help from the deceased then that action is tantamount to disbelief in Islam altogether. If we know that the Imam has such beliefs then we better not join him in prayer because he may be a disbeliever.

On the other hand, if the invention or innovation relates to a matter of detail then that represents no more than a slip or a mistake or even committing something forbidden. Every one of us commits mistakes and is liable to commit even a grave sin. No one suggests that a person who has committed a sin and then repented could not lead a congregational prayer. If after committing something, which has declared to be forbidden, a person prays for forgiveness he is treated as if he has never committed that sin. How can we brand him as committing fisq? The point is that we do not judge people, no matter how far they go astray, if they declare that they genuinely believe in the Oneness of God and in the message of Muhammad, peace be upon him, and if he leads the prayer, we simply join him. Our prayer is valid and acceptable to God even though the Imam may have a few minutes earlier committed a grave sin or is about to commit another one a few minutes later. Having said that, I should perhaps add that a person who realizes that he has wronged himself by committing a grave sin should not come forward to lead the prayer. Even if he is the regular Imam in a mosque, he should perhaps invite someone else to lead the prayer to allow himself a chance of expressing his repentance and praying for God's forgiveness.

### ***Sins: Cardinal Or Some More Serious Than Others***

Could you please give some examples of cardinal sins in Islam. I had thought that actions could have only one of several rulings. Some people say that some sins are more serious than others. Could you please explain.

There are five verdicts, which could be pronounced on most things or actions. An action could be required [as a duty], recommended, allowed, discouraged or forbidden. It is possible that the same action could have any one of the five verdicts in different situations. Thus, telling a lie is normally forbidden, but it can be only discouraged if there is some benefit to gain by it, without causing anybody any harm as a result. It can be allowed in a family situation when it is calculated to avoid any problems in the family without cheating anyone. I will give you a clearer example: Take the case of a man who gives his parents regular financial help, but his wife always objects to that and creates problems for him when she knows that he has given them a generous contribution. If he has given them a sum of money which would cause her to be angry when she knows, and he mentions a much smaller amount in order to avoid family friction, then that is allowed. The point here is that he has dispensed with his money in a very good cause and the aim of his misinformation is simply to avoid friction in the family. His wife will come to no harm as a result of receiving the wrong information. That is acceptable.

On the other hand, telling a lie may be recommended or even required if there is a definite gain to be achieved, for the Muslim community. Suppose a Muslim is questioned about the position of the Muslim army in time of war and he fears that the information he would give might be useful to the enemy, he may be duty bound to



give false information in such situations. Certain sins are certainly much more serious than others. Associating partners with Allah is the most cardinal of sins. Adultery is more serious than fornication and theft incurs a much more severe punishment than drinking or gambling. Perjury is a very serious crime. Generally speaking, sins, which affect others, or the society at large, are more serious than personal actions.

### ***Sins: Daydreaming About Committing Offenses***

A person I know seems to have a hyperactive imagination, repeatedly fantasizing about committing crimes and offenses that are impossible for him to commit. Is such daydreaming a sin?

Allah forgives us what we may contemplate of offenses and crimes. He takes us to account only for what we commit. However, the person whose case you have mentioned should make an effort to stop his daydreaming. If he always thinks of committing such offenses, a day may come when he falls victim to his active imagination and commits the offenses in question.

### ***Sins: Everlasting Hell For Some Sins & Allah's Mercy***

During a discussion, a friend quoted a Hadith to the effect that all Muslims will eventually be admitted into heaven. Those who committed many sins in this life will atone for them by staying in hell for varying periods, according to the gravity of their sins, before they are eventually pardoned. Could you please comment on this in the light of the explicit Qur'anic statement that each person is responsible for his or her deeds and that certain crimes, such as deliberate murder, earn the perpetrator everlasting punishment in hell.

Perhaps the best point to start answering this question is to quote the Qur'anic verse which states:

***"Indeed, Allah does not forgive that divinity should be ascribed to anyone other than Him, but He forgives anything lesser than this to whom He wills."***  
[Woman — "An-Nis'a" 4: 116].

This verse is very specific on what may not be forgiven by Allah. When a person associates partners with Allah, whether he claims for them a higher or lower status than His, and whether he makes them Allah's children or companions, he commits the gravest sin of all. It is this sin which cannot be forgiven.

The verse quoted above is also clear on the point that all other sins may be forgiven, if Allah is pleased to forgive them. Forgiveness is one of Allah's attributes. It should be remembered that for this attribute to take effect sins need to be committed by human beings. As things stand in human life, there is no shortage of sins being committed everyday, everywhere. What we have to remember with regard to divine attributes is that they are limitless in scope. When we speak, for example, of divine mercy, we know that it is far greater than the mercy and compassion shown by human beings to one another, regardless of their mutual relationships. The Prophet, peace be upon him, gives us a guide to try to imagine how great Allah's mercy is. He says that Allah created mercy and divided it into one hundred parts. He kept 99 parts to himself and put the remaining one part in the world. It is by their shares of that one part that Allah's creations show mercy to one another. This includes, in the Prophet's own words, "Even an animal lifting her leg off the ground so that her offspring may not come to any harm." This Hadith gives us a feeling of the greatness of Allah's mercy. The same standard of greatness applies to His forgiveness. We must

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not forget that Allah describes Himself as the One who forgives in a variety of ways, mostly using the forms, which indicate total, great and often repeated forgiveness.

Having said that, I should add that it is the actions of any person which earn him reward from Allah by admission into heaven or earn him Allah's punishment in hell. The notion of "original sin" is totally alien to Islam. Moreover, a person is accountable only for his or her deeds. No one takes responsibility for the deeds of anyone else. Sins are not the same. There are some grave ones and light ones. Moreover, sins are divided into crimes against the rights of Allah and crimes against the rights of people. Certain sins have the dual aspect of being crimes against Allah and people.

When Allah is pleased to forgive a certain person some or all of his sins, He forgives him the sins of the first type, i.e. those which are crimes against His own rights. Sins of the second type, i.e. against the rights of other people, can only be forgiven if the aggrieved person forgoes his or her rights. If, however, Allah wishes to bestow His grace on a particular person who has committed sins of the second type, He takes it upon Himself to compensate the aggrieved person for what was done against him by adding to his good deeds until he is satisfied and willingly forgoes his own rights.

What happens on the Day of Judgement is that our actions are weighed against us. Our good deeds are put to one side. Our bad deeds are also put together. The two lots are balanced against each other. If the good deeds prove to be heavier or of greater value, then our bad deeds are erased and we are admitted into heaven. If the two are equal, Allah's mercy ensures that we are also forgiven. A person whose bad deeds are predominant will be condemned by his own deeds to suffer the punishment in hell, unless Allah decides to forgive him.

Islam adopts a very realistic view of man. It deals with man as he is, with all his susceptibilities, motives, intentions and liability to be influenced by temptation. It recognizes that even the most pious and God-fearing may slip and yield to temptation. Allah states in the Qur'an: ***"The God-fearing are those who, when they experience a thought of Satan they remember and they can see things as they are."*** This is a recognition of what even the most God-fearing of us may experience.

We also have the Hadith, which states: "He who says with sincerity there is no deity save Allah will be admitted into heaven." The Hadith does not merely refer to a verbal statement; it refers to an honest and most sincere acceptance of the Oneness of Allah. It is needless to say that such acceptance will inevitably have a strong bearing on that person's actions throughout his life.

Taken together, these principles prove that even good believers may commit mistakes and sins. On the Day of Judgement, these sins may be counted against them or may be forgiven. The fact remains, however, that a person who has sincerely believed in the Oneness of Allah during his life may have committed more sins than he did good deeds. Even when we take into consideration the fact that a good deed is rewarded by ten times its value, while a bad deed is punished only at its own value, a person may be still burdened with heavy sins for which he will be punished in hell. Will he stay there forever even when he actually believed in the Oneness of Allah and in the message of Muhammad? Peace be upon him.

The answer to this question is: No. We know that the Prophet, peace be upon him, will be granted the right to intercede on behalf of his followers whose sins outweigh their good deeds. Allah will grant his request by forgiving some of them what remains outstanding of their sins. With regard to the others, Allah will grant the Prophet's request by not condemning them to everlasting punishment. In other words, they will stay in hell for the purpose of compensating for their outstanding sins. Afterwards, He will forgive them and send them to heaven. In the Hadith which speaks of the Prophet's intercession with Allah on behalf of his followers we are told that there will

come a time when Allah asks: "Is there still in hell anyone who said 'there is no deity save Allah'?" It is needless to say that Allah does not ask this question in order to know the answer.

He knows it, but He asks this question as a reminder to his angels. The Hadith goes on to say that Allah orders that all those people are brought out of hell. The water of life is poured on them and they are restored to their original shapes. They are then sent to heaven.

The question here arises about the perpetrators of such sins which we are told in the Qur'an that they earn everlasting hell. These include, for example, the deliberate murder of a believer. Scholars agree that the term "everlasting" or similar terms used in respect of these sins do not mean perpetual punishment. It means a very long stay in hell.

Having said that, we should remember that it is a case with all of us that we commit more sins than good deeds. We should strive as hard as we can to stay away from sin, but our good deeds are normally of lesser value than our bad ones. For this reason, we should maintain an attitude of hope in Allah's forgiveness equal to our fear of His punishment. It is this equilibrium of hope and fear, which should motivate us to do more good. When death approaches, we should trust Allah's forgiveness.

We should never be complacent, thinking that the fact that we repeat "there is no deity save Allah" will eventually rescue us from hell. We should remember the Hadith, which tells us that on the Day of Judgement "the man who enjoyed the greatest happiness in this life will be made to suffer the punishment for the briefest split second, then he will be brought out again. Allah will ask him: "Have you ever experienced any happiness?" He will answer: By your might and majesty, my Lord, I have never experienced even the slightest measure of happiness." Similarly, the man who suffered the greatest misery in this world will be made to experience the happiness for the briefest split second before he is brought out and asked by Allah: "Have you experienced any misery whatsoever?" He will answer: "By your might and majesty, my Lord, I have never experienced the slightest misery." When we remember this, who wants to endure hell even for one day?

### ***Sins: Homosexuals***

I am told that homosexuals will not enter heaven even though they may be very religious otherwise. Is this true?

The way you have put your question is very strange indeed. How can a homosexual be religious when his practice flies in the face of all religious moral values? You know that adultery is a grave sin. Let me tell you that homosexuality is even worse. God has condemned the community known as Lot's people who were the first to practice homosexuality. He overturned their land when He decided to smite them for their sins so that they would be an example for future communities, warning them against transgressing the limits God has set for morality and conduct.

Yet when a homosexual genuinely repents and mends his ways, when he resolves not to go back to his evil practice and makes that resolve a reality, God may well forgive him. We are not the ones to say whom God will forgive and whom He will not. That is His own prerogative.

### ***Sins: Shirk — the Only Unforgivable Sin***

I attended a lecture in which the lecturer said if a person does not pray, he is not a Muslim, even though he may fast and do the pilgrimage. He also

said that such a person will not earn God's forgiveness. In the Qur'an, only shirk is unforgivable. Please comment.

You are right when you say that only shirk, or associating partners with God, is the only sin, which God will never forgive. He says in the Qur'an: "God will never forgive that partners are associated with Him, but He will forgive whomever He pleases anything less than that." Needless to say, neglecting prayers is a much lesser sin than association of partners with God.

A person who does not pray may either be just negligent or careless, or one who denies that God has imposed the duty of offering prayers on us [or believes that God is unfair in imposing such a duty.] In the first case, he believes in God and the message He sent to mankind through His messenger, Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, but carelessness leads him to neglect the duty of prayer. God may forgive such a person if he repents, attends to his prayers regularly and resolves not to neglect them again.

On the other hand, a person who denies the duty of prayer and says that God has not imposed this duty on us [or has doubts about His wisdom in imposing this duty] is considered a non-believer, because he denies a part of the faith of Islam that is essentially known to all people. A non-believer will not be forgiven because he lacks the main quality, which entitles him to receive God's mercy, namely, in believing in God. If such a person fasts and offers the pilgrimage but still denies the duty of prayer, he is still a non-believer. Your lecturer should have made the difference.

### ***Sins: Temptation For Seduction & Pressure Threatening Job***

A friend of mine back home has written to me about a problem he is facing. A woman who has a highly influential position has been pressing him to have an illegitimate relationship with her, threatening that his refusal will bring him considerable problems in his job. I have counseled him not to listen to her advances, especially as she is married and has children. How best to strengthen his attitude in refusing her?

The first thing which occurs to me is that what this woman is asking him to do something which represents a contravention of Islamic teachings. In other words, she is pressuring him to get involved with her in something, which constitutes disobedience to Allah. If he yields to her temptation or to her threats, then he is obeying her and disobeying Allah. Islam lays down a basic rule, which states: "No creature may be obeyed in what constitutes disobedience to Allah." This principle negates any authority she may have over him which means that if she is his superior at work, he may act on her instructions with regard to the execution of his job but not in establishing a relationship beyond their official duties. Therefore, the choice that your friend faces is one between following his faith and following this woman. If he weighs up the consequences, then he will be able to resist her advances.

This man should reflect on what the Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us about the great reward Allah has in store for a person who resists such temptation. The Prophet, peace be upon him, mentions seven types of people who he says will enjoy the shelter of Allah on the Day of Judgement when there is no shelter to be sought other than that of Allah. These include "a man tempted by a woman of influence and wealth but he answers, I fear Allah."

There is, therefore, a powerful answer, which should strengthen your friend in his resolve not to respond to this woman. He should remember that yielding to her temptation will incur Allah's displeasure while resisting her will ensure a great reward.

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Your friend may be worried about what this woman may do to him, using her power and influence, if he proves that he is a tough nut to crack. He may worry that he may lose his job or he may be transferred to a remote area, etc. These are genuine worries, which may be very significant. Perhaps a good way to calm his worries is to study the Surah 12 entitled "Yousuf". He will find that a young man destined to become a prophet faced the same temptation by his master's wife and his resistance meant that he was imprisoned for several years. When he was threatened with imprisonment, he was very certain of his answer: ***"He said, My Lord, imprisonment is more pleasant to me than that to which they are inviting me."*** He appealed to Allah for assistance and Allah answered his prayers. Therefore, your friend should rely on Allah to help him get through this difficulty. He must trust that Allah's help is sure to come, but he may be tested and the test may be severe. If he proves to be firm in his faith, determined to please Allah, giving any sacrifice that he may be called upon to give in order to earn His pleasure, he will eventually be rewarded for his determination both in this life and in the life to come. The imprisonment of Prophet Yousuf was an example of what such a test may involve. In prison, Yousuf continued to call on his fellow prisoners to believe in Allah and to disown all false beliefs. He submitted to Allah's will and did not grumble or complain at being imprisoned. Hence, when he proved his dedication to his faith, Allah rewarded him and he was taken out of prison to be given a high position in government.

Your friend may lose his job as a result of resisting this woman. He may be even put to a severer test. But if he proves his strength of faith, then he will find that such an adversity is tolerable when he realizes that it is combined with earning Allah's pleasure.

Your friend will do well to reflect very coolly on his position and what options are open to him and what are the likely consequences of each option. Let him consider that no one can deprive another of something that Allah has determined to give him. The provisions of every single person are sure to reach him, if he works for them. No one can stop what Allah wishes to bring us. Consider this authentic Hadith related by Al-Tirmithi and reported by the Prophet's learned cousin, Abdullah ibn Abbas: "One day I was riding behind the Prophet, peace be upon him, and he said to me: Young man, I shall teach you some words of advice. Be mindful of Allah and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, ask of Allah; if you seek help, seek the help of Allah. Know that if the whole nation were to gather to benefit you with anything, they would benefit you only with something that Allah has already assigned to you and that if they gather to harm you with anything, they will harm you only with something Allah had already determined for you."

Another version of this Hadith states: "Get to know Allah in prosperity and He will know you in adversity. Know that what has passed you by was not going to befall you and that which has befallen you was not going to pass you by. And know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction and ease with hardship."

What your friend should reflect on in the light of the aforementioned Hadith is that it is possible that he loses his job for some other reason. He may respond to this woman for fear of losing his job, and then he finds himself losing the job anyway for some other reason or even for the same reason, such as by being made redundant through the discovery of his affair with this woman. In this case, she may make him a scapegoat and use her influence to get him punished for trying to seduce her rather than being seduced. He will then end up losing on every account. In order to avoid such a prospect, he should be convinced that offending her in order to please Allah is the only course for him to follow. If he offends Allah in order to please her, he will end up in utter ruin.

### ***Sins: Temptations & How To Avoid Them***

May I put to you the case of a company owned by a Muslim who was approached by some high officials in an African country for issuing fake bills and receipts. That country had received a large loan from the World Bank to finance a big development project. When the project was completed and everything was paid in full and there was no longer anything to be done, the officials were left with a surplus from the loan, estimated at \$30m. They want a company to provide them with proper receipts for supplies and services in connection with the project to cover this amount. They are prepared to pay the company \$10m for its cooperation. The owner of the company felt the temptation to be very strong, yet he was uneasy about it. He then felt that if he takes the money to spend on welfare projects in his home country, he would be able to help thousands of poor and needy Muslims. With proper planning and investment this could bring relief to a countless number of Muslims. Please comment.

There is a Hadith, which is fascinating in its direct and precise import. It defines what is sinful in a way, which makes the whole idea of prohibition very clear, but we only need to reflect and determine how it should apply to situations that we may encounter in real life. The Hadith describes sin as "That which causes one to feel uneasy deep inside, and which one hates that other people should know about." These are two important elements to identify what is sinful: It troubles a clear conscience, and one does not like it to be known publicly. The reader may take the preceding as an answer without having to read the rest of what I am going to say, because it only serves as an explanation. Both are present in this case.

Consider first of all how the person concerned feels it necessary to have some justification for accepting the money. He knows that he does not deserve it and nobody would give him even a fraction of the amount he is offered if it was something honest and public. The temptation is too strong, but he seems to be able to resist it when it is a clear case of personal benefit. Therefore, Satan tries to get through to him by persuading him that he could take the money to benefit his community and that there is an immense amount of good work, which could be achieved by a proper utilization of the \$10m he stands to receive. This is a trick Satan always plays on good human beings. He tells them to deny their personal benefit and to put the proceeds of their unlawful actions to the benefit of the Muslim community. But once they are in possession of the illegal money, Satan finds it easier to trick them into making it their personal property, thus leading them to commit what they know to be unlawful.

If this man takes the money and begins to think how to utilize it for the benefit of the poor Muslim community, the first thing Satan would try to persuade him to do is to ensure that he and his family are well provided for, so that he can devote all his time and energy to his welfare initiative. So, a portion of the money should be his own. He should also ensure the future of his children, so another portion is kept in their names in order to guard against any misfortune that may befall him. The line is endless. The other element of hiding the whole affair from all people is so clear that it does not merit any discussion.

Another method of temptation may be that of this person trying to persuade himself that this group will inevitably find someone to do what they want. Why not him, when he may be in need of it or when he can use it for common good? The important thing for him to be able to resist the temptation is not to try to take on any grand responsibility, because the less responsibility he assumes, the better he is able to stick to what is lawful.

Now let us consider the aspects of the particular case we have here. This surplus of the loan is going to line the pockets of corrupt officials and those who may facilitate that for them. The whole population of the country will have to pay back that loan and its interest for a long time to come. So, it is going to burden the entire population. How can this be justified? The fraud is enormous and its effects are so heavy for a whole community. Anyone who takes part in this will have to answer very serious questions by God Himself.

Besides, if there was any good aspect in the whole matter, efforts would have been made to ensure that the people of the country will benefit by the surplus. There are two positive ways to do that. Either the World Bank could be persuaded to transfer the surplus to finance to some additional development projects in the country, or the money is returned so that the burden of debt of the country is reduced.

My simple advice to the reader who has put this question to me is not to have anything to do with this, no matter how tempting it appears to him. If he does, then he is accessory to the fraud against the Muslim community. Even if he actually fulfills his designs and does not use a single unit for any purpose connected with him and his family, he is actually taking money which belongs to one community and giving it to another without any authority. How is that different from stealing?

### ***Slaughtering Of Animals: Approach the Task With Humility***

Despite the availability of hi-tech facilities in slaughterhouses, animals are still chained and dragged in some places, boiling water is poured on them when they are still alive to help remove their skin and hair. Big businesses where such practices are common supply meat in different forms to many Muslim countries. May I ask whether such treatment of animals to be killed for food is permissible. Within the same context, what is the Islamic view of the practice of killing unwanted fish and other life caught while fishing.

Human beings should always remember that it is only by the grace of God that they are allowed to slaughter animals, such as sheep, cows and poultry for food. They are also permitted to catch fish to eat. Therefore when they do slaughter animals and catch fish, they should always show their gratitude to God and His blessings, and approach the task of slaughter with humility and propriety. This requires that they should understand and abide by the Islamic teachings, which regulate this activity.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, once instructed one of his companions who was about to slaughter a sheep to take it out of sight of other sheep. Needless to say, the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not want the other sheep to witness the slaughter of one of their numbers. He wanted to spare them that feeling of sorrow.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, also emphasized the need to ensure that the slaughtered animal will be placed in the most comfortable position and that it should be allowed to die very quickly and with minimum pain. He is authentically reported to have said: "God has indeed prescribed that all things should be done in a proficient manner. Thus, when you kill, kill properly. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he is slaughtering." [Related by Muslim.]

It is clear that the Prophet, peace be upon him, considers a quick death as part of the proper slaughter. He has emphasized this on several occasions. In another Hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "When any of you slaughters, let him ensure the animals death." The Prophet, peace be upon him, once saw a man sharpen his blade after having laid his sheep down. He said to him: "Do you want her to die over and over again? Could you not have sharpened your blade first before laying her for slaughter?"

All this goes to show that Islam has a clearly pronounced attitude with respect to treating animals in a humane manner, particularly those, which we intend to slaughter for food. When people neglect this, they demonstrate their apathy to what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught.

Needless to say, God will ask every one of us about his lack of response to the Prophet's teachings. Such people will not be able to provide a good reason for their lack of care.

Moreover, Islam has forbidden any painful extraction from animals. The people of Arabia used to cut off the humps of camels or the fat part of the sheep while still alive. The Prophet, peace be upon him, realized that such action would torment the animal and he stopped it by making it forbidden to eat. He said: "Whatever is cut off an animal when it is alive is just carrion." It is well known that carrion, which refers to any animal dying by natural causes, is forbidden to eat.

All this goes to show that Islam does not allow any practice which causes any unnecessary suffering to the animal. To cut the throat of an animal and then to pour boiling water on it when it can still feel the pain is certainly unacceptable. People who do that will certainly have to account for it on the Day of Judgement.

The same applies to fishing. If the catch is found to include some live fish which are unwanted, the proper thing to do is to put them back in the water so that they can survive. The same applies to any other living creature that is taken with the fish. What is not needed should be allowed to live, unless it is harmful. In that case, it should be killed in a humane way.

### ***Slaughtering Of Animals: How Does It Fit Into God's Mercy?***

How does the act of slaughtering of animals fit into God's mercy? Does not His mercy include animal world?

God is certainly most merciful and His mercy includes animals. A Hadith tells us that God has divided mercy into one hundred portions. He kept 99 portions for Himself in order to bestow His mercy on his creatures and gave one portion to His creatures to share among themselves. It is that portion which is the source of all mercy and humanitarian actions that take place in life.

The Hadith tells us that everything that can be attributed to mercy is part of that one hundredth portion of God's mercy, because God has created life in this fashion. Slaughter may not be as painful to animals as we think, because we tend to think in our own terms. We do not know even how animals feel pain. That God has allowed this to happen means that it is not inhumane.

### ***Slaughtering Of Animals: Hunting Birds & Their Slaughtering***

Is it permissible to hunt pigeons to eat? Which birds are forbidden to eat? What if the bird dies as a result of the shot and before the hunter is able to slaughter it?

It is perfectly permissible to hunt and shoot birds to eat. There is no restriction except that we do not do that when we are in the state of consecration, i.e. Ihram, when we go for pilgrimage or Umrah. Nor do we hunt within the Haram area which surrounds the Ka'abah.

Birds of pray, generally, are forbidden for us to eat. Otherwise all birds are permissible to eat. You slaughter it if you catch it alive in order to relieve its pain. Your shot might have injured the bird and incapacitated it from flying, but it could



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live with that injury for a long time. Rather than do that, it is more merciful to slaughter it. If it dies as a result of the shot, it is still permissible to eat.

### ***Smoking: Ban On Use Of Tobacco — the Islamic View***

In a series of articles by Dr. M. Haitham Al-Khayat, the question of health was discussed, with quotations from the Prophet, such as: "There shall be no infliction of harm on self or others", and "He who causes harm to others will be at the receiving end of harm by God." I believe that God has forbidden the use of alcohol, as it is a substance unfit for consumption, and the cause of much tragedy in this world. I applaud the Islamic prohibition of alcoholic drinks. There are other addictive and harmful substances which, paradoxically enough, seem to be permitted. The most glaring example of this is tobacco. As you are well aware, tobacco is highly addictive and extremely hazardous to health, not only of the smokers but of those around him. It is no exaggeration to say that cigarettes kill. I am curious to know why the principle of health protection is not applied to tobacco and other addictive substances when it is applied to drugs and alcohol.

Generally speaking, Muslim scholars are very hesitant when they come to issue a verdict of prohibition on anything. This is largely due to the fact that the authority to forbid or prohibit anything belongs to Allah alone. Moreover, He has given us a detailed account of what He has forbidden us. There is a general rule that everything is permissible, unless it is pronounced otherwise. Therefore, you must have a very solid evidence in support of a verdict of prohibition.

As you realize, tobacco was not known at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, when Islamic legislation was revealed. It was not possible to include among what Allah has forbidden a substance that was not known, saying that when this will be available, it shall be forbidden. Instead, Islam lays down certain principles, which should be applied at all times. One of these is the Hadith, or statement by the Prophet, peace be upon him, which you have quoted from Dr. Khayat's articles, namely: "There shall be no infliction of harm on self or others." This is a very clear principle and applies to everything that causes harm; whether to oneself or to other people. I agree with you that tobacco is a harm causing substance.

It has been proven beyond any shred of doubt that the smoking of tobacco is very harmful indeed. Tobacco smoke contains more than four thousand substances, most of which are harmful. Indeed, 500 compounds, which are available in tobacco smoke, are classified as very harmful. Hence, it is not surprising that tobacco is the major cause of lung cancer. Indeed, 90% of all cases of lung cancer are attributed to smoking. Moreover, smoking causes many types of cancer including cancer of the lips, the gums, the larynx and the bladder, and, in women cancer of the uterus. It also causes chronic bronchitis and emphysema, as well as coronary heart disease. Its effects, as you say, are not limited to the smoker. Passive smoking, or the inhaling of tobacco smoke from other people's cigarettes, is also hazardous and causes the same list of diseases. As such, smoking is a habit, which is certain to cause harm. Other uses of tobacco, such as chewing and sniffing, are likely to produce very similar results. With such long list of diseases caused by the use of tobacco, your statement that "cigarettes kill" is indeed correct.

Now what verdict would Islam pass on the use of tobacco? The answer is a definite prohibition, although some scholars are still reluctant to do so. May I say, however, that their reluctance is due to the fact that they have not studied the subject thoroughly well. I am absolutely certain that any scholar who studies the problem of smoking and the use of tobacco properly will arrive at the same conclusion.

I say this advisedly. Dr. Al-Khayat, who is Director of Program Management at the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office in Egypt of the World Health Organization [WHO], sought to have a definitive ruling on smoking and the use of tobacco generally. He collaborated with Al-Azhar, the well-known seat of Islamic learning in Egypt. The WHO placed at the disposal of Al-Azhar several scientific reports on the likely effects of the use of tobacco and smoking. It sought a definitive ruling. Al-Azhar put these reports at the disposal of ten of its scholars, seeking a ruling from each one of them. All ten agree that Islam prohibits the use of tobacco. Eight of the ten rulings were absolutely clear that smoking and use of tobacco are forbidden from the Islamic point of view. The other two say that the verdict ranges from "strongly reprehensible" to "forbidden". In the past, scholars used to say that smoking may be discouraged or reprehensible, basing their argument on the fact that tobacco gives a bad smell and that it is a waste of money, which could be more beneficially used in some other ways. As you realize, tobacco is addictive.

Faced with a large number of people who are addicted to smoking, a governmental authority will be unwise to withdraw it from the market immediately. That would lead to a vigorous smuggling activity trying to get the substance into the country by illegal means. The price will then rise considerably and a list of endless problems will be encountered. Instead, a government should resort to a sustained campaign of health education, seeking to make people clearly aware of the risks they take when they smoke. At the same time, government authorities should concentrate their efforts of health education at schools, particularly on students at the age when they are most likely to try smoking a cigarette. If this is coupled with a regular tax increase to raise the price of cigarettes every two or three months, then that is bound to reduce people's desire to smoke.

If all that is coupled with a total ban on cigarettes advertising and other methods of tobacco promotion, then we have the right strategy which may, in time, lead us to a tobacco free society. We hope that the authorities will undertake such an integrated approach to reduce the smoking pandemic.

### ***Smoking: From Reprehensible To Forbidden***

1. An increasing number of scholars are endorsing the ruling that smoking is forbidden in Islam, pointing out that it is the responsibility of every Muslim to look after his or her own health. They also mention the fact that smoking is addictive, though not mind-altering. But many smokers are angry because they feel that it is a matter of personal choice. Please comment.

2. What were the reasons that caused the ruling concerning smoking to be upgraded from reprehensible to forbid?

1. The first ruling on the prohibition of tobacco smoking is more than a hundred years old. However, it was not based on health reasons, because the health risks of smoking were not known at the time. More than 20 years ago, a group of prominent scholars in Saudi Arabia issued a Fatwa making tobacco smoking, growing and selling forbidden under Islamic law. Later, ten leading scholars from Al-Azhar in Cairo, the oldest Islamic university in the world, issued a series of ten fatwahas, with eight making it clear that smoking was strictly forbidden, while the other two saying that it is close to being forbidden.

More and more scholars have come to the same conclusion. It should be said that the Al-Azhar scholars based their Fatwahas on reports submitted to them by the World Health Organization [WHO] explaining the health risks of tobacco smoking. Sheikh Al-Qaradawi says: "On such matters, when doctors say that something is certainly harmful, Islamic scholars have no option but to pronounce it as forbidden."

The health risks of tobacco smoking are too clear to be overlooked. It is the direct cause of more than 25 killer diseases. Its harmful effects are not limited to the smoker, but include his family and colleagues at work as well as those who are in close proximity to him. Besides, it is an addiction, which is very difficult to break. You say that it is not mind altering. I have my reservations about that statement. It works very slowly and gradually, but it certainly alters the smoker's mind. This is why smokers consume more cigarettes in both states of sadness and joy.

There is no doubt in my mind that smoking is forbidden. Muslim countries should adopt health policies that aim to make their territories tobacco free over a period of time. This will be a great service to their populations.

2. The ruling on smoking has not changed over the last few years, except for the fact that scholars are increasingly coming in support of a verdict of complete prohibition of smoking on the basis of the great harm it causes to the smoker, his family, colleagues and neighbors. This is the correct verdict beyond any shred of doubt.

The World Health Organization sent scientific reports to Al-Azhar, the oldest Islamic University in the world, requesting a verdict on smoking. In response, ten scholars have issued a clear verdict of prohibition. This is published in a book by the World Health Organization under the title, "the Islamic Ruling on Smoking." You may write for a copy in Arabic or English to The regional adviser, Tobacco-Free initiative, WHO-Eastern Mediterranean Region, P. O. Box 1517, Alexandria, Egypt.

### ***Suicide: Getting Killed & Killing Oneself***

It is well known that suicide is forbidden, but what about a woman who kills herself in order to save her honor?

Suicide, as you say, is strictly forbidden. No matter how miserable one is, one must not kill oneself for any reason, because such an action indicates despair of receiving God's grace. God says in the Qur'an: "***Only those who are non-believers despair of God's mercy.***"

However, the case you ask about is not that of someone who wants to kill herself, but she does so in defense of her honor. No one can judge such a situation. It is only God who determines judgment.

Having said that, I add that it is much better for a Muslim woman who finds herself in such a situation to resist her attacker with all the means at her disposal. If he kills her during her struggle to prevent him reaching her, then she is a martyr and she secures her place in heaven. Anyone who dies while defending his/her life, honor, family, or property earns the reward of a martyr.

### ***Suicide: Severe Case Of Depression Or Other Mental Disease***

It is said that suicide is forbidden in Islam and that the person who commits suicide is destined to go to hell. Suppose a person is suffering from a severe case of depression, or some other mental disease. Should such a person commit suicide, will he also go to hell?

One thing which people often do is to say that such and such a person will definitely go to heaven or to hell. This is something over which none other than God has any control. So to suggest that such a person goes here or there in the hereafter is an affront to God, because it precipitates His judgment.

There are certain verses of the Qur'an, and statements by the Prophet, peace be upon him, which tell us that those who perpetrate certain sins will be punished. But then

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it is up to God to determine what punishment fits every single case, because God judges us individually, on the basis of His perfect knowledge of our intentions and conditions.

It is true that suicide is strictly forbidden, because it is an affront to God. It is like a person saying to God: "You have given me life and I am taking it away." The sacred Hadith in which God is quoted as saying of the one who commits suicide means: "My servant has precipitated My will with regard to himself. Therefore, I am forbidding him entry into heaven." But this Hadith applies to a person in full control of his faculties, suffering no overpowering adversity and having a reasonable life. If such a person commits suicide, then may be God will not allow him in heaven.

A person who commits suicide as a result of a mental disorder like depression or some other severe form of anxiety is not in full control of his senses. We cannot say how God will judge such a person, but we trust to God's justice, because He does not deal unfairly with anyone. We pray for the person concerned, and request God to forgive him. When a man committed suicide during the Prophet's lifetime, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was distressed. He did not perform the Janazah prayer for the deceased, but he ordered his companions to do it. When they did, they prayed for the man and requested God's forgiveness for him. This shows that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not exclude the possibility of his being forgiven by God.

### ***Suicide: Women To Submit To A Rapist Or Commit Suicide?***

Should a woman commit suicide rather than submit to a rapist? Is there any situation, which permits suicide?

Islam views suicide very, very seriously, because it is an affront to Allah, the giver of life. A person who commits suicide actually puts himself on the same level as Allah, saying to Him, in effect: "You have given me life and I take it way." This is totally unacceptable. In a Qudsi Hadith, Allah is quoted by His messenger as saying: "My servant has affronted me with regard to his life and I, therefore, forbid him entry into heaven."

Committing suicide is a grave sin. Many scholars view a person who has committed suicide as someone who has turned his back on Islam altogether. However, a man committed suicide at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, did not offer the prayer for the deceased person [i.e. Janazah prayer for him], but told his companions to offer it. When they did, they obviously prayed Allah to forgive him. Therefore, it is permissible to mention a person who has committed suicide in our supplication and pray Allah to forgive him.

In some Muslim societies, a common notion is held that a woman should sacrifice her life rather than submit to a rapist. The Islamic ruling is not so. A woman is not required to sacrifice her life for that. If she is forced, either by brute force or by other means, to submit to rape, she is not punished for that. However, it is very difficult to regulate how a woman may behave when faced with such an extreme situation. It is Allah who judges every one of us on the basis of His knowledge of our intentions and the factors that influence our actions.

Perhaps the only situation, which may be exempted from this strict prohibition, is in a case of war when a group of Muslims are besieged by the enemy and threatened with certain death. If one of them sacrifices his life to give the rest a chance to survive, then it is a case of sacrificing one or two lives in order to save many others.

### ***Supplication: Collective Supplication. [Ijtemaee Dua]***

Is it the practice in mosques in certain parts of the Muslim world that the imam offers supplication after he has finished the prayers and the congregation answer with 'Amen.' Does Sunnah support this?

It is true that this practice is quite common in many parts of the Muslim world. We have no authentic report that the Prophet, peace be upon him, ever did this after having finished congregational prayer. He certainly finished prayer with glorification of Allah and praising Him, but he did that privately and he instructed his companions to do likewise. The best time to supplicate is after one finishes Tashahhud and just before finishing prayer altogether. If he says a couple of short supplications at that time, then he follows the Sunnah. He may lengthen that supplication as much as he wishes, if he is praying alone.

However, supplication by the imam during the prayer, with the congregation confirming the supplication with the word 'Amen', which means 'Answer our prayer, our Lord,' is acceptable. This form is known as 'Qunoot.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, did that in Witr prayer and in other prayers in times of urgent need facing the Muslim community or when some of its members or the whole community were in distress. Therefore, Qunoot in Witr is a Sunnah, while it is recommended in times of distress.

[Added: Allah has directed in the Qur'an — read Surah "the Heights" — which may be rendered in translation as:

***"Call upon your Lord humbly and in secret. Lo! He Loves not the transgressors"***  
[the Heights — "Al-A'araf" 7: 55]

***"And do thou [O Muhammad] remember thy Lord within thyself humbly and with awe, below thy breath, at morn and evening. And be thou not neglectful."*** [the Heights — "Al-A'araf" 7:205]

Thus Allah has guided us the manner of supplication.]

### ***Supplication: For Family Only & Not On Own Behalf***

A friend of mine says that he does not make any requests to God on his own behalf but only on behalf of his family. He argues that God knows his situation best, and He would give him whatever he needs without him asking for it. Please comment.

Prayer to God demonstrates a person's real awareness of his need of God. He knows that he faces a situation, which only God can deal with. And he turns to Him with an earnest appeal to help him.

That is indicative of real faith. Hence, the Prophet, peace be upon him, describes supplication to God as the "essence of worship." This shows that your friend's attitude is wrong, because he refrains from demonstrating his need of God and help. His argument that God's Knowledge of his need should be sufficient is wrong. It assumes that he has an inherent right to have his needs fulfilled. The fact is that God has showered on us favors in plenty, and we do not thank Him enough of them.

To assume that He is aware of our needs is rather impudent. Besides, why does your friend pray to God for his family? Is God not aware of their needs? Why pray Him to fulfill those and not for our own needs? We should remember that it is God Himself who enjoins us to pray Him so that He would respond to our prayers: ***"Your Lord says: Pray Me and I will respond to you"*** [The Believer — "Al-Mu'min" 40: 60]

### ***Supplication: For Revenge***

Some people suffer torture at the hands of their oppressors, and they often curse those oppressors and pray God to avenge them against such people. In some mosques supplication is voiced against Sharon and other foreign leaders. Is this acceptable from the Islamic point of view?

Torture is forbidden in Islam and in practically all civil laws. Nevertheless, most countries practice torture. Press reports suggest that it is practiced against detainees even in some of the most liberal countries, which pride themselves on their culture of tolerance, such as the US. It is certainly practiced in Israeli jails against Palestinians, even though Israel tries to project itself as the only "democracy" in the Middle East. It may be democratic with its Jewish population, but it has an apartheid society that reduces its Arab population to a tenth-class status. Torture is often practiced to extract confessions, and it is often the case that confession extracted under torture is unsound because the tortured person often gives his torturers what they want him to confess so that they will stop their torture. This is indeed one of the worst aspects of our modern life.

It is true that the victim, and indeed those who sympathize with him, find themselves powerless, except for praying for God's help. Sometimes, their prayer requests God to curse the oppressor. This is perfectly normal. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Beware of a supplication by an oppressed person, because such supplication goes directly to God, with nothing to stop it."

### ***Supplication: In Congregation Or In Private***

When I read verse 55 of Surah 7, I had some doubts as to the practice of saying prayers, or supplication, in congregation, as happens in my home country when the Imam finishes a congregational obligatory prayer, or during the Friday Khutbah, or in Witr prayer when offered in congregation. Please clarify.

Let us first of all look at the verse in question, together with the one that precedes it. They may be translated as follows:

***"Your Lord is God who has created the heavens and the earth in six aeon, and is established on the throne. He covers the day with the night in swift pursuit. The sun, the moon and the stars are made subservient to His command. Surely all creation and all authority belong to Him. Blessed is God, the Lord of the worlds. Call upon your Lord with humility, and in the secrecy of your hearts. He does not love those who transgress the bounds of what is right."*** [the Heights – "Al-A'araf" 7: 54-55]

The first of these two verses gives us a clear vision of God's greatness and His control of the universe and all creation. When we take all this in consideration, we experience a feeling of awe, which brings up our own humility in front of God. This is a suitable time to address God with our prayers or supplication, requesting Him to accomplish what we need. Let us now look at what the late Sayyid Qutb says in his commentary on verse 55 of Surah 7, starting with '*call on your Lord with humility*'.

"This directive is made at the most appropriate point, with human beings in the proper frame of mind. They are directed to call upon their Lord and address Him with humility and submission. They should also call on Him in the secrecy of their hearts, not making loud noises. A secret appeal to God is much more befitting because it affirms the close relationship between man and his Lord. Muslim, the renowned Hadith scholar, relates this authentic Hadith on the authority of Abu Moosa who reports: "We were with God's Messenger on one of his travels. In one version it is

stated that this took place when they were on a military expedition. And people started to glorify God out loud. God's Messenger said to them: O you people, gently and quietly. You are not calling on someone who is deaf or absent. You are calling on the One who hears all and is close at hand. He is indeed with you."

"The Qur'anic drift stresses the consciousness that God, in His Majesty, is so close to man. This is described here in its practical form as we make our supplication to God. A person who is conscious of God's majesty feels too modest to appeal to Him in a loud voice. If we realize that He is so close to us we can have no reason for appealing to Him loudly. Along with this scene of sincere supplication to God and complete humiliation before Him, an order is issued not to try to usurp His authority as the Arabs used to do in their days of ignorance, when they claimed sovereignty for themselves, while all sovereignty belongs to God alone. They are further commanded not to spread corruption in the land by following their capricious desires, after God has set the earth in proper order and laid down the law to govern both the earth and human life. A believing soul, which calls on its Lord with humility and in secrecy, feeling His closeness and ready response, is not given to aggression and corruption. The two attitudes are closely related in the depth of the human soul and feelings. In its approach, the Qur'an touches on those feelings. It is an approach designed by the Creator who knows His creation and is fully aware of everything.

**"Call on Him with fear and hope, [7: 56],** fearing to incur His anger and punishment, and hoping to earn His pleasure and reward. **"Truly God's grace is ever near to the righteous," [7: 56],** who worship God as though they actually see Him. If they do not see Him, they are fully aware that He sees them. This is the attitude defined by the Prophet, peace be upon him, as belonging to the righteous."

This is what Sayyid Qutb wrote. As you see, there is no contradiction between this and the Imam offering supplication in Witr prayer or during the Friday sermon. This is not the type the Prophet, peace be upon him, criticized. Thus, there is nothing wrong with the situations you have mentioned, but the best prayer is that said in humility, and in secrecy, when one feels one's need of God's help.

### ***Supplication: Jointly For Muslims & Non-Muslims***

As a student at the University of Adelaide, Australia, I received a request from the Department of Anatomical Sciences to find someone from the Muslim community to take part in an annual university ceremony to pray for the people who had donated their bodies for the sake of science. Basically, they need a religious leader to pray for the souls of these people. Are Muslims allowed to pray for dead non-Muslims? If not, why? Could you please advise how to respond to the University's request? I have also heard that the practice of donating bodies is forbidden. Please explain the Islamic perspective.

No doubt the University's request is made with all good intentions. Perhaps you should leave the matter to the local Imam to handle, if you think he is suitable. If not, you need to explain to the university that in Islam we do not have a clerical order and that anyone could lead prayers. So, a Muslim person from the University may be as good for the purpose as any religious leader. What he could do in the ceremony is that he may explain that Islam prefers that such prayer be done in silence, everyone on their own, addressing God and appealing to Him to bestow His mercy on those who died to improve the lot of humanity. Then in a period of silence lasting a minute or so, every one could say whatever prayer they wish.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us that he sought God's permission to pray for the forgiveness of his own mother, but God refused him that permission. Hence, the

Prophet, peace be upon him, did not pray for his own mother's forgiveness. Hence, it is not for any Muslim to pray for the forgiveness of any unbeliever, even though that person may be closely related to him. The reason for this is that we do not know what such people are like in their beliefs or their attitude to God.

Hence, we must leave the question of their destiny to God. He determines it according to His own criteria. We also know that God is most just in His judgment and that He does not deal unjustly with anyone. Therefore, we leave the matter entirely to Him.

It is not correct to say that donating organs is prohibited. In fact, Muslim scholars have reiterated the ruling that it is perfectly permissible for a Muslim to carry an organ-donation card with him, so that if he is killed in an accident and some of his organs may be used for transplant, this could be carried out without undue delay.

### ***Supplication: One To Define Man's Nature***

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent

***“To its credit shall be whatever good it does and against it whatever evil it does. Our Lord, do not take us to task if we forget or lapse into error. Our Lord do not lay on us a burden such as that which You laid on those before us. Our Lord, do not burden us with what we do not have the strength to bear. Pardon us, forgive us our sins, and have mercy on us. You alone are our Lord Supreme: Give us, then, victory over the non-believers.”***

[the Cow, “Al-Baqarah” : 2;286] Commentary by Sayyid Qutb — Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi

This is how a Muslim views the duties Allah has imposed on him when He put him in charge of the earth, the test He has set for him and the reward He has set for him and the reward He gives at the end. He is certain of Allah's mercy and justice in all that. He, therefore, does not complain or grumble about his duties, nor does he think that he is overburdened with such duties. He knows that Allah who has imposed those duties on him is fully aware of his own capabilities and that He would not have imposed those duties on him if he is incapable of fulfilling them. Such a reassuring view is certain to provide an incentive for the believer to discharge his duties. If he weakens or slackens, he knows that the problem is his own weakness, not that the task is too excessive. He can then motivate himself anew and strengthen his resolve to discharge his duty.

The second part of this concept is embodied in this statement: To its credit shall be whatever good it does and against it whatever evil it does. It is then a personal responsibility. Every individual is credited with his or her own good actions and bears the consequences of his or her evil wants. Every human being will return to Allah holding his own personal account, which shows everything, recorded to his credit or against him. He cannot make any endorsement to anyone else, and he expects help from no one. When people are fully aware of the fact that they return to Allah as individuals, every one of them becomes a fully independent unit, which does not concede Allah's right in him to anyone. Every single human being will stand in Allah's rights against any temptation, tyranny, transgression and corruption. He is responsible to protect himself and to protect Allah's right in him, which is to obey Allah and to submit to Him alone in matters of faith and behavior. If he, under the pressure of temptation and seduction or coercion and tyranny, gives up that right — with the exception of one who pretends to do so under pressure and by force while his heart remains genuinely faithful — he should know that no person will be able to intercede on his behalf on the Day of Judgement or to protect him against any punishment. No one shall help him with taking over any part of his burden, and no one shall stand to defend him against Allah. Hence, every individual will fight as



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hard as he can in order to defend himself and defend Allah's right in him, since he will stand alone to receive his reward from Allah. There is no danger from this type of individual responsibility. Faith requires that every individual should fulfill his duty toward the community as part of his duty toward Allah. He is required to maintain as part of the community in an exercise of complete and mutual social security which is not confined to matters of earnings and finance, physical help and sincere advice, but also includes working together in order to enforce what is right and to destroy what is evil. All this will either be credited to or debited from his account when he faces Allah as an individual waiting for his reward.

We then have a prayer, which suggests an attitude of hope mixed with fear, as if the believers who repeat that prayer have fully understood the preceding fact. This prayer describes the relationship between the believers and their Lord. They are aware of their weakness, their need for Allah's pardon and forgiveness, and for His help and shelter, and the fact that their only proper course is to be on His side and to reject any claim other than His, and to be ready to fight for His cause, seeking help and victory only from Him. The prayer is characterized by its soft tone and fine rhythm.

Our Lord, do not take us to task if we forget or lapse into error. When a Muslim is overcome by his human weakness, his actions are dictated by error and forgetfulness. He, therefore, prays to his Lord seeking His forgiveness. He does not boast of his deviations, or deliberately contravenes Allah's orders, or imagines that he is too great to obey Allah and submit to His will. Nothing of this can be true of the believer in his relationship with his Lord. No one who adopts such an attitude hopes for Allah's forgiveness unless he regrets his attitude and turns to Allah in repentance. Allah has answered this prayer of His believing servants. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: Allah has pardoned my nation anything they do genuinely by mistake, or out of forgetfulness, or what they are forced to do. [Related by Al-Tabarani].

Our Lord, do not lay on us a burden such as that which You laid on those before us. This prayer results from the fact that the nation of Islam is the heir of Allah's messages to mankind. The Muslims have learned through the Qur'an of the behavior of other nations which received messages and the burdens Allah imposed on those nations in punishment for what they had done. He made certain good things and luxuries forbidden for the Israelites. He also required them to kill themselves in atonement for worshipping the calf, as related in the Surah. He had also forbidden them to trade or hunt on the Sabbath. The believers pray to their Lord not to impose on them such burdens as He had imposed on those nations before them. Allah has sent Muhammad — the unlettered Prophet, peace be upon him, to relieve all those who believe in Him and His message of their burden and the chains with which they were fettered. His faith is, therefore, an easy and tolerant one. It is in perfect harmony with human nature. Allah says to the Prophet, peace be upon him: "We will facilitate your path to that which is easier."

The heaviest burden, however, of which Allah has relieved the nation of Islam, after having imposed it on other nations before them for contravening the terms and conditions of His covenant by which they are put in charge of building the earth, is that of having to submit themselves to fellow human beings. It is an enslavement of one man by another, represented by one man enacting legislation and others submitting to him personally or to his group or class. Those who believe in Allah have been relieved of this the greatest burden of all. This relief is embodied in Allah's requirement that they worship and obey Him alone and receive their legislation from Him alone. In this way He has released their spirits and minds and their lives from submission to fellow human beings.

Submission to Allah alone, as represented by deriving legislation, laws, values and standards from Him only, is the point of human liberation from submission to the

authority of tyrants, priests, superstitions, customs and traditions, caprice and every other false authority which imposes a burden which makes people hang down their heads in submission to someone other than the Almighty.

The prayer of the believers: Our Lord, do not lay on us a burden such as that which You laid on those before us, reveals their gratitude for their release from being enslaved by other people as well as their fear from sinking back into that abominable depth.

Our Lord, do not burden us with what we do not have the strength to bear. This is a prayer, which emphasizes the fact that those believers have submitted themselves to Allah. They do not intend to neglect any duty Allah imposes on them. They only pray to Him to consider their weakness and not to charge them with what they cannot fulfill. Their attitude is one of total obedience and submission, colored with the hopes entertained by a weak servant for mercy by the Supreme Master. They are only asking Allah to extend to them what He extends to His servants of benevolence, compassion and easy duties.

This is followed by an acknowledgment of weakness and fear of their own shortcomings, which cannot be removed except by Allah's grace: Pardon us, forgive us our sins, and have mercy on us. This is the only guarantee for passing the test and winning Allah's pleasure. No matter how hard a human being tries to fulfill his duties, he falls short of what is required of him. Allah shows him His grace and extends to him His pardon and forgiveness. Ayesha, the Prophet's wife, quotes him as saying: "None of you shall enter heaven on the basis of his actions alone." When his companions asked the Prophet, peace be upon him: "Not even you, messenger of Allah." He answered: "Not even me, unless Allah showers His mercy on me."

To the believer, this is the crux of the matter. He works as hard as he can, but he always feels his weakness. He compensates for his weakness by his ever-present hope that Allah will have mercy on him.

Finally, the believers seek Allah's help as they intend to fight for His cause in order to establish the truth and implement His law on earth so that there be no strife, and submission remains to Allah alone. The believers seek help from the only source of strength and lift the banner, which shows that they have their allegiance to Allah alone. They seek victory from Him since He is their Lord Supreme, and since they fight the non-believers under His name: You alone are our Lord Supreme: give us, then, victory over the non-believers.

It is a summary of the concept deeply rooted in the minds of the believers and their relationship with their Lord at all times.

### ***Supplication: Raising Hands In Supplication***

A learned man has said that it is an innovation to raise one's hands in supplication after an obligatory prayer. Is this correct?

It has been authentically reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, raised his hands in supplication during prayer. It is also reported that when he raised his hands in supplication, his armpits were seen through his sleeves. This report suggests that the Prophet, peace be upon him, was not in prayer when he did so. His companions would have been offering prayers with him. I see nothing wrong with raising hands in supplication.

I think that an element of splitting hairs is involved when one says that you can raise your hands in supplication if you are offering a voluntary prayer but you may not do so after an obligatory prayer. I have not seen a Hadith restricting this practice.

### ***Supplication: Sanctity Of Maghrib Time For Supplication***

It is also said that Maghrib time is sacred, and it is very good time to pray for whatever we wish. Please explain

There is no such concept as a sacred part of day. Maghrib, or prayer after sunset, does not carry any special sanctity. As regard time, the only sacredness is that of the four months when fighting is not allowed. These are the three consecutive months of Dhul-Qaadah, Dhul-Hijjah & Muharram and the month of Rajab in the Islamic lunar calendar. As for prayer it can be done at any time; and when it is sincere it is always answered.

### ***Supplication: When Prayers Are Not Answered***

1. Finding my mother very sad and depressed, I tried to get her to explain the reason. She told me that she has been supplicating for a very long time, praying Allah to grant us the same things, hoping that our social and economic problems will be relieved, but no help has seemed to be forthcoming. I tried to convince her that we only get what Allah has assigned to us. She asks, "what is the use of supplication, then?" Is it true that we only get what has been determined for us long time before we are born?

2. My younger brother has been complaining that he is often ill treated and hurt by his classmates. I taught him the supplication which the Prophet, peace be upon him, says will keep us from harm. A few months later, I asked him whether he is continuing with that supplication. He turned to me and said: "What is the use of it? I am still exposed to harm inflicted by my classmates?" Please comment.

3. A woman who has a good job and reasonable looks feels that God has not answered her prayers. She wishes to be married and to have a family, but she has past 30 years of age and feels that she is missing the boat. Does this mean that God has not accepted her prayers?

The first thing to be said about this question is that supplication will definitely be answered by Allah. We should entertain no doubt about that. This is because Allah states in the Qur'an: ***"Your Lord says, 'Pray Me and I will answer you'"*** The way this statement is phrased in Arabic makes it a conditional sentence with the result, i.e. that answering of supplication is sure to come upon the fulfillment of the required action, which in this case is the supplication. This is, then, a promise by Allah made in a very clear statement, which admits no ambiguity. Allah always fulfills His promises. It has never been known that what is promised by Allah has failed to come.

What is required for supplication to be answered is sincerity. This means that when a person turns to Allah and prays Him to accomplish a particular purpose of his, he does so with an honest and sincere feelings that he needs Allah's help and that Allah is able to accomplish that purpose whenever He chooses.

We often think that we are praying Allah when we are actually expressing a desire. Our action lacks the conviction that is necessary for our application to be sincere. We often adopt the attitude of a junior employee expressing a wish for the sort of promotion that gives him a big jump in the hierarchy of the company or the

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department where he works for. This is not the way to seek Allah's help. When we pray Allah we should feel that we are in a position of weakness and that He is able to accomplish any purpose we have without the slightest difficulty.

When we address our supplication to Allah, He may choose to answer it in a way which makes anyone who is aware of the situation admit that it is only through Allah's intervention that what we prayed for has been granted. I personally have experienced this. Indeed, there is hardly a human being who does not experience it at one time or another during his life. Alternatively, Allah may answer our supplication by facilitating the accomplishment of our purpose either through our own efforts or through an interaction of a variety of factors. I will give you an example.

A friend of mine has a son who stammers when he speaks. His speech defect has caused him such distress as other children laugh at his difficulty. One day he prayed Allah with much sincerity to cure his defect. Within a few days, his father learned that an excellent speech therapist was visiting the small town in which they lived and intending to stay for several months. The father arranged that the boy gets what he needed of professional help. The speech therapist told the boy that he can only guide him and that the boy must work hard to help himself by doing the exercises he was going to give him each session. In this case, the boy can only blame himself if he fails to take advantage of what he has been offered. If he follows the speech therapist's guidance and does the exercises he is given, he will almost probably be cured of his defect within a matter of months. If he fails to do so, he cannot say that Allah has not answered his supplication. The fact that this arrangement could ever be made is a demonstration of answering the boy's sincere supplication.

It is also important to remember something that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has told us about supplication. He says that Allah will definitely answer all our prayers, but [only] some prayers we will see answered in this life. Allah may choose to defer the answering of other supplications so that He rewards us for it in the life to come. The Prophet, peace be upon him, also explains that when we come to see the sort of reward we will have as a result of that postponement of answering our prayers, we would wish that Allah had not answered any of our supplication in this life and that He had deferred it all to the life to come. Hence, we should not be hasty. Some people may ask here: "What is the use of postponing the answering of a supplication when we need the thing that we are praying for here in this life?" The answer is that Allah postpones answering our supplication for our own good. As His knowledge is perfect and absolute, and as it encompasses the future as well as the present and the past, He knows perfectly well what effect the answering of any particular supplication will have on our lives. Take for example the case of a person who prays Allah to make him very wealthy. Now look at wealthy people and you are sure to find that many of them do not make the sort of use of their wealth, which will improve their position in the life to come. On the contrary, many are the ones who use their wealth in ways, which displease Allah. This means that their wealth is not a blessing but something that may condemn them in the hereafter. If Allah knows that the person who is making this supplication is of the latter type and He does not answer his supplication immediately but defers it to the hereafter, He is actually giving him more than what he has prayed for. He is giving him protection against the errors He knows that the man will be committing when he is wealthy and He is rewarding him for his supplication in the hereafter.

Moreover, when we look at the blessing with which Allah has favored us, we are bound to conclude that even if we are suffering a great deal of hardship, we enjoy much of Allah's blessings. We should be grateful to Him and we should pray Him all the time. Besides, supplication is part of our worship. Indeed, the Prophet, peace be upon him, described it as the heart of worship. It is appropriate to ask ourselves whether we worship Allah simply because it is beneficial to us? If so, we have to

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change our attitude so that we make our worship a fulfillment of our duty and a gesture expressing our gratitude to Allah for what He has given us. When we address our supplication to Allah, it is we who benefit by that. We are indeed acknowledging His Lordship and this acknowledgment is bound to bring us good reward.

What I have said about the postponement of the answering of a prayer may not sound very appealing to some people. They want their wishes which they include in their supplication, fulfilled here and now. This is due to the fact that most people tend to think of this life as the be all and end all. A Muslim should have a much wider view of life so as to include the life to come as an undoubted reality. Moreover, a Muslim does not think of the life to come as something remote, but as something coming soon. No one knows when his time of death arrives. To a Muslim, this could be much closer than anyone can think.

When he dies, a human being moves from one stage of his life to the next stage, where he will certainly have the reward for his supplication. Besides, when anyone of us thinks of the blessing Allah has already given him, he is bound to feel that Allah has bestowed His grace in abundance on him. Let him reflect that what he has is more than enough for him. What he asks may lead him astray. That would be a net loss to him.

2. As far as the case of the reader's brother, he must accept with conviction that what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has said is true. If he is in doubt, then his supplication may remain unanswered. Besides, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said that if you use this supplication regularly, whatever happens to you will not harm you. The Hadith does not say that no harm will happen, but whatever happens will not harm the person. Here we have to take "harm" in a broader sense. Something may happen to a person who he dislikes, but he will be able to repel its harmful effects or reduce them to an absolute minimum. Once more, much depends on his conviction that what the Prophet, peace be upon him, said is true. We have to try to attain the sort of conviction the Prophet's companion had. I will conclude with an example illustrating this point.

Once Abu Ad-Dardaa', a companion of the Prophet, was told that his house was burned down. He said, "it has not." When he went with those who gave him that report to his place, they found that the area had suffered a big fire very close to his house, but the house itself was safe. They asked him how did he know that his house was not burned down. He said, "because I said this morning, like I do every morning, a certain supplication I heard from the Prophet, peace be upon him, who told us that when we say it, we will be spared all harm to ourselves and our property. Ever since, I have been saying this supplication every morning."

3. We have to look at life, in its entirety as a test, which we all have to go through. The test takes different forms for different people. Some of us are tested with what seems to others to be a great blessing for which they would sacrifice much. But they do not know whether when they have that very thing they covet, they would be happy or more miserable. But we all yearn to have what we believe to be better than what we already have. This is part of human nature. However, a believer should always look at life as a passing stage and that the important thing is to pass one's test with good results, because it is on the basis of his or her results that their status in the life to come depends.

Take the case of a childless couple. They may look at their relatives or neighbors who have children and think that they are much happier. They pray hard for a child, believing that having a child would bring them greater happiness. Yet if they imagine for a moment that they could have a child who will be a source of misery for them, they would revise their attitude. I knew a couple who did not have a child for more than 15 years of marriage. They sought medical help and after trying so many

devices had a daughter whom they loved so much. But from the first month, the child was ill. They hardly spent a month without taking her to a doctor once or twice. She seemed never to be in good health. When she was seven years of age, she died. What happened next was that the couple seemed to have endless arguments that resulted in their divorce within a few months. The woman married again, but she had no children, and the man never married again until he died some 15 years later. Do you think it was better for them to have a child, or would it have been better for them to remain childless? Only God knows.

Other couples might have several children, but each of them gives his or her parents a different type of worry. Would it be better for such people to be without children? Only God knows.

One woman might get married and lead a very happy life with her husband, while another would give half her life to return to her parents' home as she were before marriage. Who can tell at the moment a couple gets married if either of them will be happier for getting married?

What we need to understand is that every aspect of our life in this world is part of the test we have to pass. Accepting what God gives us, trying to make the best of it, is a step toward achieving this pass. This does not mean that we should not hope for a betterment of our lot, or that we should not pray to God to grant us what we desire. What it means is that when we have prayed Him for something we dearly desire, we should leave the matter to Him, knowing for certain that He answers our prayers. But His answer takes one of three forms.

- 1] He gives us straightaway what we have prayed for as it actually is;
- 2] He does not give us that thing, but replaces it with something that He knows to be better for us; or
- 3] He delays it for a short or a long while, or indeed until the Day of Judgment when He rewards us for praying Him. He does this as one aspect of our test so that we would prove whether we will remain patient trusting to Him or we will give up to despair.

If we remain patient, not hastening the fulfillment of our prayers, and we do not have it answered in this life, we will, on the Day of Judgment, wish that He had kept all our prayers to be answered then rather than have them answered in our present life.

So, the first thing I would urge you to do is not to despair, and to trust to God that He hears your prayers and answers them in the best way for you. You should continue to pray to Him for all that you wish, but you must not hasten the result. It will certainly come, or what comes will be better for you.

### ***Suspicion: Misplaced Suspicion Be Purposely Cleared***

#### ***Commentary By Adil Salahi — Arab News!***

Suspicion could ruin relations between people, particularly when it is based on flimsy evidence, or hearsay. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has spoken in very clear terms about misplaced suspicion, giving clear orders to refrain from it. One clearly authentic Hadith that groups together some of the actions that cause discord within the community and made people dislike one another is reported by Abu Hurairah. He quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "Beware of suspicion, for it is the most untrue of what people say. Do not spy against one another, or compete with one another. Do not boycott, envy or hate one another, but

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remain - you servants of God - brothers and sisters." [Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood and Al-Tirmithi].

This Hadith stresses the importance of maintaining good relations within the Muslim community. The Prophet, peace be upon him, highlights certain things that would undermine such relations, and he tells us not to allow ourselves to indulge in them. Boycott, envy and hate should never be allowed to exist, let alone flourish in any Muslim community. Relations between Muslims should always be close. All members of the Muslim community should look at one another as brothers and sisters. They must value this tie of brotherhood, because it is established on the best basis, which is servitude to God.

But the Hadith begins with a warning against suspicion describing it as the most untrue of speech. This is an apt description because whatever said on the basis of suspicion has no basis in reality. It is all conjecture, leading to false accusation and false ideas. It poisons relations and leads to discord and hostility. It also encourages what the Prophet, peace be upon him, mentions next, which is spying on one another. People would not spy against their neighbors or competitors unless they have some sort of suspicion which they want to explore. Hence, they try to gather information secretly, perhaps through spying. This is again forbidden.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, teaches us that we should help one another not to entertain any doubt leading to suspicion. One of the Prophet's wives, Safiyah, mentions that one day, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, was spending the last ten days of Ramadhan in the mosque, devoting his time to worship, she came to visit him. She sat with him for sometime before she left. The Prophet, peace be upon him, walked with her toward her home. As they were close to the door of the mosque, passing close to Umm Salamah's [his other wife's] door, two men from the Ansar passed by and greeted the Prophet, peace be upon him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said to them: "Wait a moment. This is Safiyah." They said: "Limitless is God in His glory." They felt very bad, but the Prophet, peace be upon him, said to them: "Satan goes as close to man as his own blood, and I feared that he might put something into your minds." [Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawood].

There are different versions of this Hadith, but the one we included is the most detailed. All agree that the Prophet, peace be upon him, sought to clear any doubts that might have occurred to the two passersby, even before they occur. They were upset that the Prophet, peace be upon him, thought they might suspect him. In one version, one of them said to the Prophet, peace be upon him: "Whoever I might doubt, I would not doubt you." This is clearly the attitude of believers toward the Prophet, peace be upon him, whom they loved and trusted. How could they suspect him when they believed that he received revelations from on high? But the Prophet, peace be upon him, was clear on this point. Yet he wanted to teach his companions something that benefits them in their social relations. This he explains by the closeness of Satan to man and his thoughts. He can creep into one's mind so as to be as close to him as his own blood. This means that at any time suspicion might arise at the slightest indication, or the smallest gesture. This is what the Prophet, peace be upon him, expressed in a most graphic description: "Satan goes as close to man as his own blood." Hence, a wrong thought could be planted in someone's mind very easily. Therefore, when we feel that a particular situation we are in might give rise to some thought or doubt, we should clarify it, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, did when he told his two companions that the woman walking with him was his wife, Safiyah.

Sometime suspicion arises because of an event or a misfortune. Abdullah ibn Masood says: "A person who has been victim of theft continues to suspect until his offense becomes greater than that of the thief." [Related by Al-Bukhari]. This is clearly true. When we suffer a misfortune like theft, we are so aggrieved that we begin to

suspect people, thinking that they were the perpetrators. But when we entertain such doubts on no firm basis, we soon become guilty of a worse offense, which is suspicion without evidence.

The Prophet's companions, particularly the scholars among them, understood this well and acted on it. Abu Al-Dardaa was one such scholar among the Prophet's companions. One day he received a letter from Muawiyah, the caliph, asking him to write down for him the names of all transgressors in Damascus. Abu Al-Dardaa said: "What business would I have with the transgressors in Damascus? How would I know who is a transgressor?" His son, Bilal, said: "I will write their names." He did so. His father said to him: "How do you know them? You cannot know that they are transgressors unless you are one of them. Begin with mending your own conduct." He refused to send their names to Muawiyah. [Related by Al-Bukhari].

We note here that Abu Al-Dardaa refused the caliph's request on grounds that he could not for certain judge anyone unless he had clear information. How could he when he did not have firm first hand information? How could he have such information unless he was there and spoke to them? Hence, when his son wrote down their names, he told him that his action was not acceptable, because having the necessary information required associating with such transgressors. Hence, he told his son to start with reforming himself. We should note that Abu Al-Dardaa refused to accept his son's information as correct because it did not rely on first hand knowledge. His son was later to become the chief justice in Damascus, during the time of Yazeed ibn Muawiyah.

### ***Suspicion: Suspecting Others***

Please explain what Islam teaches on suspicions, as in the case of one person suspecting another of being a thief when he is not, or a couple suspecting each other of having an affair with someone else.

The first thing to be said on suspicion is to quote the relevant verse in the Surah entitled Al-Hujurat, or the Private Apartments. The verse states:

***"Believers! Avoid suspicion as much as possible, for, some such suspicion is a sin. And do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Surely you would loathe it. And remain God-fearing. God is certainly the One who accepts repentance, and He is Merciful."*** [Private Apartments — "Al-Hujurat" 49: 12]

Perhaps the best thing to do in explaining this injunction concerning suspicion is to quote what Sayyid Qutb has written about it in his priceless commentary, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*.

"The verse establishes certain rules to apply within Islamic society, protecting the integrity and freedom of individuals, while at the same time teaching people how to cleanse their feelings and consciences, using a highly effective mode of expression.

"Following the pattern of the Surah, it begins with the endearing address, "Believers!" It follows that by issuing an order to avoid most suspicion, so that they do not leave themselves to any thoughts of doubt about others, justifying this order by the fact that some suspicion is sinful. Since the prohibition applies to most suspicion and the rule is that some of it is sinful, then the verse implies that all negative suspicion should be avoided, because a person does not know which part of his or her doubts are sinful. Thus the Qur'an purges a Muslim's inner conscience so that it may not be contaminated with evil suspicion and incur sin. It leaves it clean, free of doubt, entertaining only friendly and affectionate thoughts towards one's brethren. In this way it keeps suspicion away from society in order to enable the



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community to enjoy a feeling of reassurance unmarred by worry and apprehension. Life in a community where ill thoughts have no place is both serene and comfortable.

“But Islam does not stop at this point in educating people’s heart and souls. The verse we are looking at establishes a principle that applies to people’s dealings. It protects the rights of those who live in its pure society so that they may not be punished or tried on the basis of suspicion. Such suspicion is no basis for filing charges against people and putting them to trial. Indeed suspicion does not form a proper basis for interrogating people or investigating their affairs.

“The Prophet, peace be upon him, is quoted as saying: “If you have doubts, do not investigate.” [Related by Al-Tabarani] What this means is that people remain innocent, enjoying all their rights, freedom and status until it is evidently clear that they have committed some offense. It is not sufficient that they are suspected of having committed something in order to pursue them with the aim of establishing whether they are guilty.

“This verse shows us the limit to which Islam goes in protecting people’s freedom, integrity, rights and status. How does this compare with what even the best democratic countries boast of with regard to protecting human rights? This standard, which the Qur’an sets for the believers, is far superior indeed. Moreover, Islam achieves this in real life, after it establishes it in people’s hearts and consciences.”

This is what Sayyid Qutb has written. It clearly shows that one must not pursue suspicion, and that it is infinitely better that should there be some indications of a person’s guilt, one should try to find a good explanation for them, away from suspicion. This applies to a colleague, a friend or spouse. We should act only on clear evidence. In the absence of such evidence, we dismiss suspicion and think the better of our people. This is more conducive to strengthening relationships and making Islamic society well knit.



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**T*****Terrorism: Is This Terrorism?***

In our world today, much is said about terrorism. Could you please explain which kinds of terrorism are condemned in Islam? Would it be terrorism if a group of people embrace Islam and buy a plot of land where they build a mosque and a school, despite a government ban? In such a case, are they allowed to fight against those who try to prevent them from doing so?

Terrorism is a word that has acquired a very loose meaning. Unfortunately, we do not have any definition of it, neither at the international nor at the popular level. When some Muslim countries called for a convention to be held on terrorism, objections were raised by the US and other governments, because such a convention would inevitably have to define terrorism, and perhaps include state terrorism which is practiced by Israel and condoned by Israel's friends who are never tired of speaking about their respect of human rights, but whose actions belie their statements.

If terrorism means an attack on civilian population, taking them unaware, and intending to cause damage and loss of life in order to promote certain aims and objectives, then Islam condemns such actions. The Prophet, peace be upon him, made it clear to the commanders of Muslim armies that they must never kill a woman, child, elderly person, priest or anyone who is not engaged in fighting them. Islam is not after scoring victories against enemies. It aims to make God's message known to mankind and explain to them that it is a message of guidance that fulfils their aims and achieves their happiness when they implement it properly. Islam does not wish to kill anyone. It only fights those who wage a war against it, or kill its advocates. This has been the case throughout history.

The reader asks about a specific action probably in his own country. He has not explained the details of the situation. He simply cites one case of buying a piece of land in order to build a mosque and a school. This should be a very legal matter that a government should support. When the reader says that the government bans it, there must be something special about this case, which means that we cannot make a judgment on it. It is always the case that a ruling is given on the basis of the situation. If I were to give a judgment on the basis of the information supplied by the reader only, my judgment is bound to be erroneous. What is important to realize is that fighting in Islam is always undertaken against a well-identified enemy who is the aggressor. Islam is never the aggressor against any people, regardless of their beliefs. Some Muslims may be resort to aggression, but that is their action, and Islam cannot support it.

***Terrorism: Were Nine-Eleven Attacks Jihad?***

Could you please tell me whether the Sept. 11 attacks were acts of jihad or terrorism? Would those who were killed in them be martyrs? What about other acts such as those done by Hamas and similar groups?

Islam does not approve of indiscriminate killing in any situation. When Muslim armies went out to war in the early period of Islam, the Prophet, peace be upon him,

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and his successors like Abu Bakr and Omar gave them clear instructions. They ordered the army not to kill a child, a woman, an elderly person, a priest or anyone who is not engaged in the fighting or helping the enemy fighters. The attacks on the US that took place on Sept. 11 involved hijacking planes and flying them into buildings.

The passengers in the planes were innocent bystanders and the people in those buildings were the same. Those who launched this attack did not consider them so, because they followed a mistaken view that everyone who pays taxes to the US government is aiding war against Islam. This view is seriously defective, because people have to pay taxes or they will be in great trouble with their government. Besides, to ask every citizen in the world to have an informed opinion on the justice of our cause and then to take an attitude of peaceful disobedience to his or her government is to live in a dreamland. Had people been able to judge things in this way, they would all be very religious. God says in the Qur'an that He could have made all mankind a single community, but He has not done so. So, how can we impose our views or beliefs on people?

I cannot understand how a Muslim could justify boarding a plane, intending to kill all its passengers by flying it into a building used by thousands of civilians. This is simply terrorism and cannot be justified under Islamic law. The operations launched against Israeli occupation are totally different. They are undertaken against occupiers who have turned the local people, Muslims and Christians, from their homes and lands, desecrated mosques and terrorized the population into leaving their land. To resist Israel by all means available to us is justified under divine and human law. It is indeed Israel and its supporters that are engaged in a gigantic and continuous act of terrorism.

### ***Terrorism: Western Media Campaign***

A study of world history would show that Islam and terrorism are extreme opposites. Then why all this tirade against Islam in Western media? I will be grateful for your comments.

You are absolutely right. There is no meeting point between Islam and terrorism as practiced by terrorist groups in different parts of the world. Terrorism involves the indiscriminate use of force to achieve certain objectives. In Islam, the use of force is allowed only in special situations, particularly when the Muslim community is threatened by hostile forces. Then again, the use of force in a campaign of jihad is determined by the leader of the Muslim community in a very orderly way. The enemy will be well identified, and the use of force is only a last resort. However, what is happening in some parts of the Muslim world today involving some groups which are often described as "fundamentalists", is not always accurately reported or portrayed. Now let us be clear about principles.

Islam does not allow the use of force against peaceful civilians. Moreover, using military tactics against an established government and causing in the process the loss of life among civilians is a very serious matter. There will be some people who will try to justify it on the basis of Islamic principles. What we have learned from trusted authorities on Islam is that such use of force is not acceptable at all. We must remember that God did not allow the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions to use force against the non-believers in Makkah, despite the fact that the believers were subjected to a campaign of persecution that caused the death of several people and subjected many to enormous torture.

Moreover, God stopped the Muslims from fighting the non-believers in Makkah at the time of Hudaibiyah stating in the Qur'an that had a fight taken place, the Muslims would have been victorious and the non-believers would have run away. Yet He

ordered the Prophet, peace be upon him, to accept the peace agreement which seemed to be unjust to Muslims. The Prophet, peace be upon him, declared to his companions that he would accept any conditions which would prevent bloodshed.

Therefore, resorting to terrorist campaign in order to change a government is not acceptable although the government may be a bad one and follows un-Islamic policies.

However, we must also recognize that there is a sustained effort to associate Islam and the advocacy of implementing Islam with terrorism. This is part of the worldwide campaign to prevent Islamic revival. Therefore, we must not believe any report about Muslims resorting to terrorism tactics, unless we are absolutely certain of what has taken place and why it took place in the way it happened. There is much at fault with news reporters and media coverage of such events.

### ***Treaties: Agreements, Pacts & Treaties***

Does Islam recognize any regional pact or cooperation council among a number of Muslim states in a particular area as opposed to the cooperation and alliance which applies to the whole Muslim nation? Can a Muslim individual or a Muslim state enter into financial transactions, business partnerships or political treaties with non-Muslims?

It is certainly permissible for two or more Muslim states to agree to cooperate more closely with each other as opposed to having a pact or an alliance or a treaty to which all Muslim states throughout the world belong. There is only one proviso, namely, that this must not be directed against any other Muslim state or community. This is akin to two brothers in a family joining together in a business partnership, while the rest of their brothers prefer not to join them. There may be many good and valid reasons for such a partnership being limited to those two brothers. Similarly, if two Muslim states join forces and cooperate more closely for their common good, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. They may have a variety of valid reasons, which help forge this partnership between them while the same reasons may not apply to other Muslim states. As long as the rights of other Muslim communities are recognized and respected by those Muslim states that went into a partnership or a treaty of one sort or another, they may go ahead and strengthen their mutual ties.

It is also permissible for a Muslim individual or a Muslim state to enter into any business or political arrangements with non-Muslims provided that they do not encroach on the rights of other Muslims. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, and companions, who came with him from Makkah and settled in Madinah, he took several steps to establish the Muslim state there and ensure its safety. One of these steps was to establish the bond of brotherhood between the Muhajirs, i.e. Muslims emigrating from Makkah and the Ansar, i.e. Muslims from Madinah. Secondly, he arranged an alliance with Jews in Madinah, which provided for cooperation and friendship between the Muslim and Jewish communities. Also, some sort of arrangements was established for peaceful coexistence with the polytheist Arabs in Madinah.

On the individual level, there is nothing to prevent a Muslim from making a partnership with a non-Muslim as long as it is fair to both of them and fair to others. What Islam does not approve of is to encroach on the rights and privileges of other people. And it forbids injustice, regardless of the religion or the person who suffers such an injustice.



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## ***Umrah: A Duty On Its Own***

If one performed the Umrah, must he also perform Hajj? Is it true that if he does not, the Umrah will not be valid?

I must admit that I find this argument intriguing. Why should the delayed performance of one duty affect another duty, which has already been performed?

Both Umrah and pilgrimage are duties applicable to all Muslims. The only condition, which makes this requirement optional, relates to the ability of the person to perform this duty. When a person meets the condition of ability, he should hasten to perform the pilgrimage and the Umrah as early as possible. If he delays its performance, he never knows whether he will be able to fulfill his duty the following year or later. With this possibility in view, the Prophet, peace be upon him, instruct us: "Offer your pilgrimage before you are unable to offer it." I realize that some people argue that it is better to offer the pilgrimage in old age, when one will have all his sins forgiven. This is a false argument. For one thing, a person is never sure that he will be able to offer the pilgrimage when he grows old. For another, the benefit of offering pilgrimage early in one's life is limitless.

Now, Umrah is a duty in the same way pilgrimage is one. Its fulfillment must be done as early as possible. Therefore, when you are able to go to Makkah to do the Umrah, you should do so. Whether this takes place at the same time that you do the pilgrimage or not is immaterial. If you have not done the pilgrimage yet but you are able to go and perform the Umrah, you should not hesitate to do so. There is nothing, which will render your Umrah invalid after you have offered it. It is not right that its reward depends on whether or not you offered the pilgrimage.

## ***Umrah: Business Trip To Jeddah & Ihram For Umrah***

I visit Jeddah often on business, and every time I try to do the Umrah, starting my Ihram from Jeddah. A friend told me that I should start in Riyadh, unless I am coming purely for business and the decision to do the Umrah is made after my arrival. But the fact is that when I travel the possibility of doing the Umrah is always in the back of my mind. Where do I start my Ihram?

As you are traveling on business, you do not have to start your Ihram until you actually embark on doing the Umrah, which means you start wherever you happen to be in Jeddah. As I understand your situation, your trip is essentially for business, and should your business take all your time in Jeddah, you would go back home without performing the Umrah or visiting Makkah. In this case, your trip is undoubtedly a business trip. When you feel you have the time to go to Makkah, you will go. This is a later development. It is true that it was in the back of your mind, but you made no decision at the time to change your trip into one for Umrah. You left it to subsequent development. Therefore, you take each step at a time, and you leave the matter until it is decided.

Having said that, I would like to add that if your visits are very frequent, such as every two weeks or so, then you do not have to do the Umrah each time. You can go to Makkah to pray and do the tawaf, wearing your normal clothes, but you do not need to do the Umrah on every occasion.

### ***Umrah: By Proxy***

I am planning to do the Umrah on behalf of my father who is alive and in good health. However, he does not have enough money to pay for his travel. He has to sell some of his assets in order to do so. In the circumstances, can I do it on his behalf?

Certain types of worship are possible to do by proxy, such as the pilgrimage and the Umrah, and the payment of Zakah and charity. Normally, the pilgrimage and the Umrah are offered on behalf of someone else if he dies before fulfilling either duty, or if he can afford to pay for the journey but suffers from a chronic illness that prevents his travel. In this latter case, he asks someone else to do his duty, paying all the expenses involved. This is a totally different from the case put by the reader. Therefore, I will give him the following reply.

You cannot do the Umrah on behalf of your father since he is alive and in good health. If he does not have enough money to finance his trip to do the pilgrimage or the Umrah, then he is exempt from these duties until such time as he has sufficient funds to undertake the journey. If his assets are essential for his living, such as his home or shop then he should not sell them in order to do these duties. If the assets are extra to his needs, and his family's needs, he may be then in the position of ability in which case he must consider how to perform his duties. The important thing to remember is that the pilgrimage and the Umrah are duties for those who are able to perform them, and the ability is both physical and financial.

If you are keen on your father doing the pilgrimage or the Umrah, then you should invite him to do so, paying his expenses. If you can afford this, it will be far more rewarding for both your father and yourself than if you do the Umrah on his behalf when he is exempt from it. In fact, doing it on his behalf in the present circumstances is not possible.

### ***Umrah: Disallowed For Reasons Beyond Control***

When we were on our way to Makkah to perform the Umrah, the police stopped us because our papers were not in order. What is the compensation for that? Can that compensation be offered in our home country? Could you please comment on all the aspects of this case?

God does not require anyone who has not met the conditions of ability to perform the pilgrimage or the Umrah. It is clearly stated in the Qur'an, that these duties are required only of a person who is "able" to do that. The conditions of ability include all aspects, physical, financial and procedural. For more than 70 years millions of Muslims in the Soviet Union could not be considered to have met the conditions of ability to perform the pilgrimage, even though you may have had enough money and they were in good enough health to undertake the journey. They continued to be "unable" to do the pilgrimage simply because the authorities in the Soviet Union did not allow them to go abroad. Islam does not require any of its followers to expose him to the problems of trying to violate the laws or the regulations of the government of his country in order to fulfill a duty of worship. If he tries to do that, he may land himself in endless problems. A Soviet Muslim who might have tried to cross the borders into another country would expose himself to imprisonment or something worse. Islam does not require him to do that in order to offer the pilgrimage.



In your case, you apparently paid no heed to the regulations, which have been issued with regard to offering the Umrah. It is the responsibility of the authorities in Saudi Arabia to issue the necessary regulations in order to organize the process of offering the Umrah and the pilgrimage in order to ensure the safety of the worshippers and their ability to fulfill their duties. It is the responsibility of an individual who wants to offer the pilgrimage or the Umrah to ensure compliance with these regulations. If he cannot, he is not required to do either duty. If he violates these regulations, he is also in the breach of Islamic teachings. Because Islam requires its followers to obey the orders of Islamic government, provided always that these orders meet the overall requirement of being permissible from the Islamic point of view and are calculated to serve the interests of the Muslim community. All regulations concerning the travel for Umrah and pilgrimage fall within this category. Therefore, prospective pilgrims must observe them.

When the police stopped you from completing your journey because you have not had the right papers, they were fulfilling their duty. This placed you in the condition of a person who, having entered into the state of consecration, is unable to complete his journey and do his duty. Such a person is required to slaughter a sheep in compensation and release himself from the state of Ihram. The sheep is due to be slaughtered at the place where he is prevented from continuing his journey. If this is not possible, then he should ensure that it is done in the Haram area, i.e. Makkah, and its surrounding area. He cannot partake of the meat of sacrifice, which should be distributed in total to the poor of the Haram area.

### ***Umrah: During the Pilgrimage Period***

Can a pilgrim offer two or more Umrahs during the pilgrimage period?

As you are aware, the Umrah consists of tawaf; Sa'ie and cutting your hair, in addition to being in consecration. It is a duty once in a lifetime and recommended after that. Most scholars suggest that one Umrah a year is sufficient, but if a person does more he will earn reward for that.

If you have done the Umrah and are staying in Makkah, for pilgrimage or for worship in the Haram, you are not recommended to go out of Makkah for another consecration to do the Umrah again. That is because of all Umrah duties only the tawaf may be offered as a Sunnah act of worship. You do not need to do a fresh Umrah in order to do a voluntary tawaf. You may do that wearing your normal clothes. You may do it as often as you wish without the need to do another Umrah.

### ***Umrah: Entering the State Of Consecration [i.e. Ihram]***

If I travel in Jeddah for some personal business and then perform Umrah after its completion, where do I enter into the state of consecration?

If your journey is for some business which may take you a day or two, and then you want to do the Umrah after you have finished, you do not have to enter into the state of consecration, i.e. Ihram, at the point of Meeqat. Indeed, your point of Meeqat is Jeddah, because that is the place where you are at the end of your business.

I should point out that much of this question depends on intention. Let me give you the other possibility. If a person in your home town decides to do the Umrah, and then it occurs to him that he has some business to do in Jeddah, then his case is totally different. Although he wishes to go to Jeddah first in order to complete his business, he should enter into the state of consecration at the point of Meeqat, i.e. Rabigh. The difference between the two situations is the intention. In the first case, the trip to Jeddah is for business. In the second, the whole trip is for Umrah. Therefore, in the second case, every condition of the Umrah should be observed right from the beginning. A pilgrim or a Muslim doing the Umrah must enter into the state

of consecration at the point of Meeqat. In the first case, the trip to Jeddah is the original trip, and the intention is to do the business there. The Umrah is incidental to the journey and, therefore, it begins with entering into the state of consecration at the point of Meeqat relevant to him. Since he is in Jeddah, then Jeddah is his Meeqat.

### ***Umrah: In the Month Of Shawwal***

1. I went to Jeddah in connection with my work. When I was preparing to go to Makkah for Umrah after finishing my work, my friends advised me that since it was the month of Shawwal, no one may offer the Umrah unless he is preparing to do the pilgrimage later on. They told me to visit Makkah without Ihram. I took their advice, but some people told me that I did wrong. Please clear this confusion and tell me what I should do.

2. A person does more than one Umrah during the month of Shawwal, or Thul-Q'adah or early in the month of Thul-Hajjah, without having intention of performing the pilgrimage. Later on, he decides to go to pilgrimage. What sort of pilgrimage applies to him?

I have answered both queries on several occasions. There remains, however, an element of confusion which arises out of incomplete information on both points of entering Makkah without Ihram garments and doing the Umrah after the end of Ramadhan and before the start of pilgrimage. Neither point is difficult to understand.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, has named the points of Meeqat and made it clear that anyone who wants to go to Makkah for doing either the Umrah or the pilgrimage must enter into the state of consecration i.e. Ihram at these points. The Hadith states clearly that this applies to the people of the named areas and anyone else who passes through them "intending to do the Umrah or the pilgrimage." Therefore, a person who does not intend to do either duty is not included in this restriction. Such a person can go to Makkah in the normal way as he goes to any other town or city. He need not enter into the state of consecration. What this means in effect is that the Ihram, or consecration, is a condition of performing a religious duty in Makkah. It is not meant for entering the city at any time or for any purpose. It is the reason for entry, which counts.

The other point is that of offering the Umrah in Shawwal. There is no restriction on any person to offer the Umrah in the month of Shawwal or Thul-Q'adah or Thul-Hajjah which are the three months of pilgrimage. Many people tend to think that if you offer the Umrah in this period, you must follow it with pilgrimage. This is terribly wrong. There is simply no time when Umrah cannot be offered.

The confusion arises in some people's minds because they reverse the conditions. The correct thing to say is that if you offer Umrah in these months, even when not intending to do the pilgrimage, but you then follow it with doing the pilgrimage, you are deemed to have done the two duties in the Tamattu method. This requires you to sacrifice a sheep in gratitude to Allah for enabling you to do both duties. If one does more than one Umrah in Shawwal or Thul-Q'adah, he is perfectly entitled to do so. If he does not intend to do the pilgrimage, either because he had done it, or because he does not meet the conditions of ability, or for any reason, he is welcome to do the Umrah.

If a change in his circumstances takes place and he decides or becomes able to do the pilgrimage later, he is deemed to do it in the Tamattu method, which is the method, preferred by the Prophet, peace be upon him.

Having said that, I must add that if after he has done the Umrah in this period, and before he comes back for pilgrimage, he leaves to any place beyond the point of

Meeqat and then comes back for his pilgrimage, the Umrah he had done does not affect his pilgrimage in anyway. He can choose any method. In other words, my reader from Riyadh could have done the Umrah in Shawwal and left for Riyadh. If he then decides to come back for pilgrimage, he can do the pilgrimage in the Ifraad method, because he traveled beyond the point of Meeqat.

***Umrah: In the Month Of Thul-Hajjah — On the 9th, 10th Or 11th***

The author of a book in Urdu says that Umrah cannot be offered on the 9th, 10th or 11th of Thul-Hajjah, even if one has performed the pilgrimage. Please comment.

If the author means that a person who is offering the pilgrimage cannot do the Umrah on these days, he is correct. Many pilgrims take the opportunity of being in Makkah in order to do Umrah after pilgrimage. This particularly applies to those who opt for the Ifraad method of pilgrimage. These pilgrims should wait until the 14th of Thul-Hajjah when they should go out to Al-Taneem or any point at the boundaries of the Haram area where they enter into the state of consecration [or Ihram], making their intention to do the Umrah and come back to Makkah to fulfill its duties.

However, a person who is not doing the pilgrimage may offer the Umrah at any time, even on the day of Arafat, or on the day of sacrifice. Take, for example, the case of a person traveling from Europe or Africa to Pakistan, India or any eastern destination. He makes a stopover at Jeddah for one day or a few hours, during which he wishes to do the Umrah. There is nothing to prevent him from doing so, if he has the necessary permission [i.e. the appropriate visa]. If such a person arrives in Jeddah on the day of Arafat, he may go ahead and do the Umrah. There is nothing to prevent him from doing so.

***Umrah: In the Month Of Thul-Q'adah?***

Is it acceptable to perform the Umrah in the month of Thul-Q'adah?

The Prophet, peace be upon him, performed the Umrah four times, all of which were in the month of Thul-Q'adah, but in different years. So there is nothing wrong with performing it during that month. People are often confused on this point because they think that if the Umrah is done in that month, then the pilgrimage becomes obligatory. This is incorrect.

***Umrah: Mistake Remains A Mistake — Howsoever Grave***

Some parents took a 13-year-old girl to perform the Umrah. She did the tawaf and the rest of the Umrah while she was in her period, not realizing the magnitude of her error. She was too shy to mention the fact that she was in the period to her parents at the time. It is only recently that she realized the gravity of the situation, but it is many years since then and now she cannot even remember whether she started menstruation before or during her tawaf. What is she to do now? If she has to give compensation, who would have to pay for that: her father, or her husband?

Of course this is a grave mistake, but it is not more than a mistake. The young girl was aware that she could not pray when she was in menstruation. That should have been a sufficient reason for her to ask her mother whether she could go ahead with her Umrah when she realized that she had her period. Had she done so, her mother would have either informed her or asked her father and the girl would have been told what she could do. Anyway, the fact remains that the girl's mistake was a genuine one. As such, she would be included in what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has

said: "My community is pardoned for what they may do through genuine mistake, forgetfulness, and compulsion,"

All that she needs to do now is to seek God's forgiveness for her error, and to learn from her mistake that her children should not find themselves in the same position in future. This she could ensure by helping her children to ask about every thing related to religion, without feeling ashamed of anything, particularly what is natural or normal.

The question about who pays for her error does not arise because there is no compensation to give. However, had she needed to give compensation for an omission, she would be the one to give it, not her father or her husband. Islam treats a woman in the same position of responsibility as a man. If she has no money to pay for her pilgrimage, this duty does not apply to her, even though her husband may be very rich. But if he pays for her pilgrimage, she may accept and God will, if He so pleases, give him a rich reward.

### ***Umrah: Omitting To Shave Head For Umrah***

Some years back, when I first arrived in this country, I performed my first Umrah, finishing with shaving my head. I stayed a week in Makkah at the time, performing the Umrah four more times on behalf of some of my deceased relatives. However, since I had shaved my head the first time, I did not do that again in the subsequent Umrah. I was not aware of the fact that shaving one's head or cutting one's hair was a duty part of the Umrah. What is my position now with regard to those four Umrahs?

Shaving one's head is one of the four duties required when we perform the Umrah. However, scholars consider that a bald man with no hair on his head should emulate the shaving by passing a razor over his head.

The majority of scholars recommend this, but the Hanafi School of Fiqh considers it a duty. The reader was practically in the same position as a completely bald man.

As such, and since he performed those Umrahs several years ago, we advise him on the basis of the majority view that he omitted what was recommended. This means that he does not need to do anything now, and his Umrahs were, God willing, valid.

Another point that supports this ruling is that he omitted this part of the Umrah through a genuine mistake. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says that God pardons us what we omit through forgetfulness, a genuine mistake or compulsion.

### ***Umrah: On Behalf Of A Deceased Friend***

I did the Umrah for myself a few weeks ago, then I did it again, but this time I intended it on behalf of my relative who passed away three months earlier. A friend told me that this second Umrah is not valid. Please explain.

You have not told me what grounds did your friend mention for saying that your second Umrah is not valid. You did it after you had done your obligatory Umrah, so it should be perfectly valid. You can do the Umrah on behalf of a deceased relative, and God will, if He so pleases, credit your Umrah to your relative and reward you handsomely for your kindly act toward him.

I cannot even try to guess your friend's reasons, but on the basis of what you have told me I would say that he is wrong.

***Umrah: On Behalf Of A Living Person***

Is it possible to perform Umrah on behalf of one's mother when she is alive? Or on behalf of one's deceased father?

If the living person is able to perform the Umrah or the pilgrimage, they must perform their duty themselves. If they are unable, because of ill health, they may ask someone else to do it for them, paying all the expenses of that person. If they cannot afford to pay for the journey, they are not required to do these duties.

It is not right to offer it on their behalf. You will be much more dutiful to your mother if you send her an air ticket so that she could come and do the duty herself. On behalf of your deceased father, you can certainly do the pilgrimage or the Umrah, provided you have already done your obligatory pilgrimage.

***Umrah: On Behalf Of Relatives***

I would like to do the Umrah on behalf of my grandparents who died a long time ago. How do I proceed about this?

Of course you may do the Umrah on behalf of your deceased grandparents. You should, however, do it separately on behalf of each one of them. You cannot do one Umrah and intend it on behalf of both your grandparents. That is not possible.

When you wish to do the Umrah on behalf of your grandfather, you proceed with your preparations normally. At the point of Meeqat, you enter into the state of consecration and declare your intention of doing the Umrah on behalf of the person you choose. Then you proceed to Makkah and when you get to the Haram, you do the other three duties of Umrah, namely, the tawaf, Sa'ie and the shaving of your head or the cutting of your hair. That would complete the Umrah. You then release yourself from the state of consecration.

If you wish to make use of your presence in Makkah to do the Umrah on behalf of your other grandparent, then you may go to the nearest point of the 'hill' area which is a place called At-Taneem, about six kilometers away, and re-enter into the state of consecration and declare your intention of doing the Umrah on behalf of the person you wish. You then proceed to the Haram and carry on with the duties of the Umrah. If you have shaved your head the first time, then you go over it with the razor again before you release yourself from consecration. If you have cut or trimmed your hair, you cut part of it again [or shave it.]

***Umrah: Ordinary Clothes For Umrah***

When my brother-in-law came for Umrah from Sri Lanka, I was surprised to find him wearing his ordinary clothes. He explained that although he intended to put on his Ihram garments when his plane reached the Meeqat, he discovered while on the plane that these were in his suitcase which was in the luggage hold. When he completed his Umrah, he sacrificed a sheep in compensation for his omission. However, later an imam in our local mosque told me that Ihram is by the intention, not by wearing any clothes. This is very surprising, because I have always been told that to be in consecration, or Ihram, one must wear garments without any stitching. Please explain.

There is no discrepancy between what the local imam told you and what you have always assumed. One enters into the state of consecration, or Ihram, when he or she declares their intention to perform the pilgrimage or the Umrah. On reaching the Meeqat, or the point on his route defined for Ihram, one says: "I am embarking on

doing this duty [the pilgrimage or the Umrah], my Lord, so facilitate it for me and accept it from me.” When one says this, or similar wording indicating his intention, the process of performing either duty is started. For that process to be properly done, he or she should be now in Ihram garments because they have already started their Ihram, or consecration. One of the restrictions of Ihram, or consecration, is to wear the type of clothes required. Ihram garments are the full clothes a woman wears normally, covering all her body with the exception of her face and hands, up to her wrists. For a man, Ihram garments consists of two large pieces of cloth, one wrapped round his waist and covering the area from his navel to well below his knees, and the other thrown over his shoulders and covering the upper part of his body. His head must remain uncovered and he may wear slippers, but not shoes. There are a number of restrictions a person observes during Ihram, such as the prohibition of cutting or plucking his hair, using perfume, hunting or killing birds and game for food or for any purpose, sexual play or intercourse with one’s wife or husband, etc. The violation of any of these restrictions does not mean that the person is no longer in Ihram, but it means that he should give some compensation.

Now if a man does not have such garments or cloth, he may wear his ordinary clothes in the same way as he wears those pieces of cloth. He may, for example, wrap his robes round his waist, without putting his arms through the sleeves. If his clothes will not help him with that, and he must remain in his ordinary clothes, he is deemed to be in the state of consecration, observing all its restrictions, but he has violated the rule on the type of garments allowed. He is required to slaughter a sheep for this omission, or to feed three needy persons or to fast 6 days in compensation. The same applies to a person who is ill and his illness prevents him from observing any restriction of Ihram. On his pilgrimage, the Prophet, peace be upon him, saw one of his companions with his head so badly infested with bugs. He said to him: “I could not have imagined that your condition could be that bad. Can you get a sheep?” When the man answered in the negative, he ordered him to shave his head and either fast for 6 days or feed three needy persons.

### ***Umrah: Several Umrahs On One Journey — Not the Best Way***

1. How many Umrahs can one offer on the same journey? Is it possible to offer the Umrah on behalf of deceased parents and relatives? If so, where does one start his Ihram? If one’s parents are alive but he cannot afford to bring them from home, could he offer the Umrah on their behalf?

2. Can one person perform a second Umrah immediately after he has finished the first one?

1. When people come for pilgrimage or Umrah, we find them offering several Umrahs over a short period of time. They feel that they should not miss the chance that their presence in Makkah affords them to earn more reward from God. The practice is not the best they can do. It is better for them to offer one Umrah only. They should follow it with attending congregational prayers at the Haram as often as possible, and with doing the tawaf as frequently as they can. Tawaf is like prayers, with the only difference that ordinary talk does not invalidate it. Hence, it is a good means of earning reward.

All this applies to a person who is offering the extra Umrahs in his own behalf, like one who offers extra prayers, or rises up at night for worship. He should determine what earns him the best reward and do it. If he is doing the other Umrahs on behalf of other people, the case is different. In any way, the Umrah for a person who is in Makkah starts with Ihram, which begins at the nearest point in the Hill area, such as Taneem. One does not need to go to another city for this purpose, unless he is going, say, to Jeddah or Taif for business, in which case he may start his Ihram there.

If one is offering Umrah on behalf of his parents who are alive, he should consider first of all whether they have the financial means to offer that duty themselves. If so, then they should come over and do it in their own time. He cannot do it on their behalf.

If a person has the financial ability to cover the expenses of the journey, but is too ill to undertake it, he or she should appoint someone else to do the pilgrimage or the Umrah or both on their behalf, covering all the expenses of that person. If a person does not have the financial means, then that person is not required to do the pilgrimage or the Umrah. Ability is a condition for that duty to become applicable.

A son or daughter who is able to cover the expenses of the pilgrimage or the Umrah of one or both of his parents should do so, because then that son or daughter will earn rich reward from God. If such a son cannot afford to do so he finds himself in Saudi Arabia, he may decide to offer the pilgrimage or the Umrah on behalf of one of his parents. While it is not an incumbent duty on either, considering their poverty, he will be doing an act of dutifulness, which earns his parents and himself good reward.

Offering the Umrah on behalf of deceased relatives is perfectly appropriate. If those relatives are alive, then the whole thing does not apply.

2. There is nothing to stop a person from offering another Umrah after he has finished one. However, when he finishes the Umrah, he has to release himself from Ihram. For second one, he has to go to the nearest point of the "hill" area, i.e. outside the Haram area, to put on his Ihram. And declare his intent there. He cannot do that in Makkah itself. Maybe it is convenient for him to put on his Ihram garments in Makkah, but he does not make the declaration of intent until he has gone out, at least to the nearest place outside the Haram area. The place most people prefer is called Al-Taneem.

I think I have to explain that in normal cases, one Umrah a year is sufficient for any person. If one is visiting Makkah, whether he is coming from a far away place or from Jeddah, or Dhahran or even nearer, he needs to do only one Umrah. If he is staying in Makkah for several days, he can do the tawaf as frequently as he can. But you realize, that tawaf is considered in the same light as prayer. The only different is that it is permissible to talk during tawaf while ordinary talk in prayer invalidates it. You can do one tawaf after another, without any restrictions. Sa'ie, the other main feature of Umrah, is not something we are encouraged to do voluntarily. We do only one Sa'ie for Umrah and one for pilgrimage and we are not encouraged to repeat that Sa'ie. Therefore, when we do the tawaf voluntarily, we are doing the part of Umrah, which can be offered in voluntary worship.

### ***Umrah: Shaving Or Shortening the Hair After Umrah***

Many people do not shave their heads at the conclusion of Umrah. Is this permissible? If one wants to offer more than one Umrah, how could he shave?

It is sufficient to shorten one's hair, or even to shorten a few hairs in order to fulfill the requirement of Umrah. It is certainly more preferable to shave one's head, since the Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed three times for those who shaved before including [a prayer] those who shortened their hair. However, if one prefers to keep his hair for any reason, he violates no rule or regulation of Umrah. If you have shaved your hair after completing one Umrah, and then you performed another, you can fulfill the requirement of going over your head with a razor.

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***Umrah: Tawaf Of Ziyarat & Wid'a For Umrah***

I have done the Umrah several times but on no occasion did I do either the tawaf of ziyarat or wid'a. How necessary are these? What if a person goes to Makkah and does the tawaf only?

If I understand you correctly, you seem to have been told that these two types of tawaf should be performed with Umrah. If so, then you have been given wrong information.

The Umrah has four duties to be performed: Ihram or consecration, tawaf which is to walk round the Ka'abah 7 times in an anti-clockwise movement, Sa'ie which is a brisk walk between the two hills of Al-Safa and Al-Marwah 7 times, and shaving one's head or trimming one's hair. This means that there is only one tawaf required with Umrah.

The two Tawaf, which you have mentioned, are required with pilgrimage, not Umrah. The first one, ziyarat that is also called Ifadah, is one of the essentials of the pilgrimage, in the sense that if it is not done then the pilgrimage is not done.

The other, wid'a, is meant as farewell to the Ka'abah. This is also done in pilgrimage and it is a duty. It is indeed the last item a pilgrim does before he leaves Makkah. Its omission requires a compensation by slaughtering a sheep and giving all its meat to the poor in the Haram area.

If one goes to Makkah without any intention to do either the Umrah or the pilgrimage, he does not need to be in consecration. For a resident in Jeddah like yourself, you may go there anytime without doing the Umrah. You may do the tawaf at any time.

***Umrah: Travel Without Mahrem***

My wife, now in Riyadh, wants to visit Makkah, although she does not intend to perform the Umrah, but she will be alone because no one can travel with her. Can she make this travel without a Mahrem?

The whole point of the need for a Mahrem to travel with a woman is to take care of the woman and ensure that she comes to no harm. A Mahrem is a husband or a close relative who is forbidden for her to marry, such as her father, brother, nephew, son, etc. Therefore, when a woman is able to travel with safe companionship, there is no harm in her traveling without the company of such a close relative. The company should include some women so as to ensure that she comes to no harm. Thus, your wife can travel with such company if it is available. She should not hesitate to do the Umrah on her travel because of the lack of Mahrem. In fact, it is much better for her to do the Umrah since she is coming from a place beyond the Hill area.



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# V

## ***Vengeance: Cursing & Truth Are Incompatible***

Cursing others is commonly seen. People everywhere and from all cultures indulge in it. Tempers explode when there is a dispute and the interests clash. When questioned on such behavior, people take refuge in the fact that it is only a form of expression of anger by the aggrieved. Please comment.

Let me start with a Hadith reported by Abu Hurairah in which he quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: “A saintly person cannot be one who curses.”

In this Hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him speaks of a saintly person. In Islam, we do not have any sort of religious hierarchy or a clerical order. Hence, we do not use the term “saint.” Instead, I have used the term “a saintly person” in order to emphasize that it is a saintly character of which I am speaking. This is something to which every Muslim aspires because it places him in a grade immediately below that of prophets. On the Day of Judgement, such persons are in the company of prophets and martyrs in heaven. The most important element of their character is that they have no doubts about their faith. They believe in God and His messenger and do not question the validity of anything once they are certain of its attribution to the Prophet, peace be upon him, as authentic. That is the reason why the term has been derived from the root, which indicates truthfulness. They are truthful and they believe that everything, which the Prophet, peace be upon him, has told us about our faith, is the truth. The Arabic term which denotes that meaning is “siddiq”, and this is the title which the Prophet, peace be upon him, gave his closest companion Abu Bakr. He later explained that Abu Bakr never allowed any doubt to pass through his mind with regard to the truthfulness of the Islamic message.

As the Prophet, peace be upon him, puts this term in contrast with being given to cursing others, this implies that cursing is incompatible with being truthful. There is an element of untruth about it.

But cursing is one way of expressing anger. If one is rather quick-tempered, then it is likely that he curses those who put him in a fury. It is well known that anger causes a person to behave irrationally without thinking. Most people instinctively curse those who infuriate them. A believer should try to check his anger and not allow him to abuse or curse others. Cursing is something that is strongly discouraged. There is perhaps no more expressive way of discouraging it than that used by the Prophet, peace be upon him, when he heard Abu Bakr cursing some slaves who belonged to him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, questioned his behavior, saying “Abu Bakr, to curse and be saintly? That cannot be, by the Lord of the Ka’abah” The Prophet, peace be upon him, repeated that twice or thrice. Abu Bakr set free some of his slaves, then came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said: “I will never do that again.” [Related by Al-Bukhari and Al-Bayhaqi]. This story which is reported by Ayesha, the Prophet’s wife and Abu Baker’s daughter, is highly expressive. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has indicated in most emphatic of manners that to be saintly and to curse are two incompatible qualities.

Abu Bakr was certainly saintly. The Prophet, peace be upon him, gave him that title which testified to his truthfulness and to his firm belief in Islam. Abu Bakr, however, was a human being who could be infuriated by the actions of his subordinates. Although Abu Bakr was generally very kind to his slaves, he could be put in a rage by some of them, if they did something unpardonable. In this particular case, some of them did so and Abu Bakr was infuriated. He cursed them. But the Prophet, peace be upon him, was close at hand and he heard him. He wanted to give Abu Bakr a lesson, which he could never forget. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was certainly very kind to Abu Bakr and he wanted him to live up to his title and to set an example for all Muslims in all generations. He, therefore, reminded him of that quality which must have been dearest to Abu Bakr, namely, being a saintly person. He then emphasized to him in the strongest of manners that this could not be compatible with cursing others. He could think of no better way than to set them free. He acted on that and those slaves won their freedom. He was not satisfied by merely doing so, he went to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and pledged his word that he would not do that again in any circumstances.

Cursing is not acceptable to Islam. However, people are given to invoke God's curse on others, by saying to them "May God curse you or may be angry with you." The Prophet, peace be upon him, has pointed that out to us, saying that it is unacceptable. Samurah has quoted him as saying: "Do not invoke God's curse against one another, nor invoke God's wrath nor invoke the curse of the fire." [Related by Al-Bukhari and Abu Dawood & At-Tirmithi].

This is a particularly severe form of cursing and the Prophet, peace be upon him, has made sure of singling it out to emphasize its unacceptability. If God wants to curse someone and deny his mercy and grace, he would do so without the need for this to be invoked by other human beings. For any person to use such curse is to use the most emphatic expression of the highest form of anger. This can only aggravate matters between him and the person he is cursing. Islam is keen to teach its followers to always leave room for reconciliation. When they take their quarrels to extremes, that room for reconciliation becomes insignificant or non-existent. The nature of the Muslim community does not allow that. Hence, the Prophet, peace be upon him, draws our attention to it by instructing us not to use such language. He himself did not curse anyone, not even disbelievers.

Abu Hurairah reports that some of his companions said to the Prophet: "Messenger of God, pray to punish the disbelievers." He said: "I have not been sent as one to curse but as a mercy." [Related by Muslim and Al-Bukhari]. That shows that cursing and mercy are incompatible. God describes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as having been sent as "*a mercy to Mankind*." How can he, then, invoke God's curse on anyone?

### ***Vengeance: Cursing Or Seeking God's Help***

I lead a very wretched life, as I am often the victim of injustice at the hands of people who are close to me. When I complain, the result is often repeated abuse. I frequently think of cursing those people who cause my agony but then I refrain from doing so. Sometimes when I offer my prayers I burst out crying. Should I stop and repeat the prayer again when I am calm and able to concentrate better? Is it a sin to even think of cursing people for their injustice?

The short answer to both parts of the question is simply, 'No'. When you pray, try to concentrate as much as you can on your prayers, but if your emotions overpower you and you are in tears, just take the matter calmly, and wait a while until you are able to compose yourself and continue your prayer. May be a short supplication for God's

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help to remove your distress can get you to calm down more quickly. But do not interrupt your prayer for such an overpowering emotion. Continue with it as best as you can, giving yourself a chance to cool down.

When we think of doing something forbidden, but do not carry out that intention, God does not hold us to account for such thoughts. This is part of God's grace, which He bestows on us all.

However, thinking about cursing people when they have caused us harm, or done us injustice, is a natural feeling. But a curse is not the proper thing to do in order to seek God's help to remove the injustice inflicted on you.

When we are in a position of weakness, unable to remove injustice, we can put our complaint to God and appeal to Him to help us remove it and punish the perpetrator. This is the proper way.

Another thing we may do is to try to get support from others who may have an influence on the offender. If this is not possible, then we may consult some people who may appreciate the problem and give us advice. But it is important to try hard to break away from such injustice as you have described.

My advice to you is to seek God's help in solving problem. Get someone respected by the other party to talk to them on your behalf. And defy those unjust people and, if necessary, to break away from them.

Certainly it is wrong to be in a situation where one is subjected to repeated ill treatment, with no solution in sight.

### ***Vengeance: Punishing & Then Cursing Is Helping the Satan*** ***Commentary By Adil Salahi — Arab News***

The Prophet, peace be upon him, always showed exemplary care for those who accepted the message of Islam. He would not deny his care to anyone, even when they might have perpetrated a serious violation of Islamic teachings. Indeed, he received everyone with a smile, and was genuinely pleased to meet his followers. He never showed anyone that he was not welcome, at any time. ***But this was absolutely genuine.*** The Prophet, peace be upon him, is not known to have ever wished ill for anyone, not even those who opposed him and took a hostile attitude toward Islam. While he dealt with the enemies of Islam in a serious way, seeking to stop their hostility, he was keen that they also should adopt Islam. Therefore, he never tired of advocating his message, even to the most hardened of its enemies, such as Abu Jahl and Hayay ibn Akhtab.

Yet public behavior may not indicate one's true feelings. We sometimes speak about adopting a diplomatic attitude when we deal with those who are outspoken in their hostility to Islam. What is meant here is to show friendliness, even though it is not genuine. The aim is to reduce the hostility of such people. While this may be expedient, and may be acceptable if it prevents harm and hardship, it does not change the fact that the outward appearance does not reflect true feelings.

It is pertinent to ask whether the Prophet, peace be upon him, resorted to such pretence in his dealing with people. In answer we may quote the following Hadith reported by Amrah bint Abd Al-Rahman, a scholar who belonged to the generation that succeeded the Prophet's companions. She says: "I asked Ayesha: 'what was the Prophet, peace be upon him, like when he was alone?' She answered: 'He was the most caring, most generous of people, always smiling and laughing, may God shower His blessings on him.'" [Related by Ibn Hibban and Ibn Katheer].

Another version of this Hadith says: "God's Messenger was the most friendly and generous of people. He was just like anyone of you, except that he was always laughing and smiling."

This is a report by one of the closest people to the Prophet, his wife Ayesha, answering a specific question on his manners when he was at home, not attended by anyone of his companions. The questioner, a lady scholar of Hadith, was keen to learn his genuine attitude, in a situation when one does not need to hide his feelings. Indeed, we often breathe a sigh of relief when we are left alone after having had to put up a friendly attitude that is less than genuine. But we are told here that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not do that. On the contrary, he was kind, caring and generous, with a smile on his face in all situations. This is the perfect attitude.

Indeed, his care for his followers surfaced in all situations, even with those who committed some serious violations of Islamic teachings. Once a man was brought to him because he had been drinking alcohol. The Prophet, peace be upon him, told his companions to give him a beating. Abu Hurairah, the reporter of the Hadith says: "One person may beat him with his hand, another with his shoe, and a third with his robe. When it was over and the man was leaving, some of us said to him: 'May God humiliate you.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said to us: 'Do not say that to him, because you would be helping Satan against him. Say instead: May God have mercy on you.'" [Related by Al-Bukhari, Ahmad, Abu Dawood and Ibn Hibban].

We see here how the Prophet, peace be upon him, teaches his companions to be genuinely caring. We have to clarify first that the man was beaten up because this is the punishment for drinking in Islam. When a person drinks, he loses some of his mental power, thus his sensitivity is reduced. Admonition is not effective with him. He has to be made to feel the effects of his offense, and this can only be done by beating him up. The physical pain would sharpen his senses so as to bring them back to the proper level, when he will feel the shame he brought upon himself.

Yet the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not approve of anyone going beyond what is prescribed as the proper punishment. When some of those who took part in beating up the man added a curse, praying that God should humiliate the man, the Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered them not to do so. He explains this by saying that cursing the man would help Satan against their fellow-Muslim. This means that if the punishment were carried beyond the appropriate level, it would start to be counterproductive. Satan will use it to try to seduce the man again into committing further sins, either by repeating the same one or doing other prohibited acts.

Another Hadith which attains a superior grade of authenticity is reported by Abu Hurairah: "A man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said: 'I am perished!' The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked him what was the matter, and the man said: 'I have had intercourse with my wife during the day in Ramadhan.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked him whether he could free a slave. The man answered in the negative. The Prophet, peace be upon him, then asked him: 'Can you fast two consecutive months?' The man again said that he could not. The Prophet's next question was: 'Can you feed sixty needy people?' Once more the man answered in the negative. The Prophet, peace be upon him, told him to sit down. After the man sat for a while, a large container was brought to the Prophet, peace be upon him, full of dates. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said to the man: 'Take this and give it away in charity.' The man said: 'To anyone who is poorer than us?' The Prophet, peace be upon him, laughed heartily so that his back teeth were apparent. He then said to the man: 'Take it and feed with it your own family.' [Related in all six authentic anthologies and by Malik, Ahmad and others].

This Hadith outlines the atonement for the grave offense of having sexual intercourse with one's wife during the day of fasting. The man who does it will need to free a

slave in addition to his repentance of this sin. If he cannot afford this, or in our situation today when by the grace of God slavery has been abolished, the atonement takes the form of fasting two consecutive months. If the man cannot do it because of physical weakness or old age, then he should feed sixty needy people, two meals each.

In this case, the Prophet's companion who committed this offense could not afford to buy a slave, and was too weak to fast. He was also too poor to feed anyone. The Prophet's caring attitude is seen here when he told the man to sit, hoping that something would come up which could help him. When a sufficient quantity of dates was brought to the Prophet, peace be upon him, he gave it to the man and told him to give it away in charity. This would have been the atonement. This means that the Muslim state or the Muslim community could help an offender in making the atonement for a serious sin he might have committed.

A special case comes up when the man pleaded his own poverty. He wonders whether he could give the dates to anyone poorer than himself. In another version, the man says: "By God, no household within the two barren areas surrounding Madinah is poorer than my own family." Hence, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said to him: "Then eat the dates with your family. This will do for your atonement, but it will not do for anyone else in future."

This means that for the offender to feed his own family by what he pays in atonement for a sin is not permissible, except in this special case that the Prophet, peace be upon him, treated as an exception. It is a clear example of how caring the Prophet, peace be upon him, was, even to those of his companions who slipped and violated Islamic rules.

### ***Vengeance: Retaliation For the Wrong Done To My Father***

My parents have been wronged by some of our close relatives, and this caused them much distress. Indeed they had serious emotional scars as a result of the agony they had to endure at the hands of those relatives. On his deathbed, my father told me to revenge the wrong he had suffered and to restore the family's honor. He wanted me to give a lesson to future generations so that there will be no repeating of what he had suffered. Should I follow his instructions on this matter? The first thing I would like you to ask yourself is whether you are in a good position to judge in the dispute between your late father and his relatives? Are you fully aware of all the facts, or have you been hearing the details only from your father? If the latter, as it is more likely to be the case, then yours is inevitably a partisan position, which does not enable you to judge. Therefore, if you try to avenge your father's wrongs, you are likely to make mistakes. On the other hand, if you try to get your relatives' side of the story and ask them about your father's grievances against them, you will again receive a one-sided picture which you will not be able to corroborate or refute, because your father, who is the other party, is no longer alive. Hence, I would advise you not to get involved in a quarrel which is not yours. If you do, you are very likely to be in the wrong in one way or the other.

Moreover, you will only prolong a family problem and carry it over to your generation, while if you leave it to die down, you are giving the family a chance to patch up its division and set for itself a new track to follow.

It may weigh heavily on you that this would mean a total disregard to your father's wishes. However, your duty toward your father now is to try to increase his reward from God, by doing things and request God to credit their reward to him. If you offer a pilgrimage on his behalf, pay some charity and read the Qur'an, that will certainly improve his position on the Day of Judgement.

That is a much better act of dutifulness than any revenge of his wrongs. Leave these wrongs for God to settle. If your father was the injured party, God will claim his rights for him from those who had been unjust to him.

What you should do is to be constructive. Since the other party consists of members of your family, it is better to heal family divisions. That will not displease your father now or on the Day of Judgement.

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## ***Waseelah: Prophet's Prayer To Forgive Followers***

In an earlier answer, you have quoted a Qur'anic verse, which you translated as: "Your Lord says: Pray to me and I will answer you." However, in our part of the world, scholars say that it is permissible, indeed better, to pray to Allah to grant us our wishes for the prophet's sake, or for the sake of saints and martyrs. They quote Qur'anic verse, which speaks of the Prophet, peace be upon him, praying for the forgiveness of people who may have come to him. They say that unless we pray in this form, we do not belong to the community of believers, or "Ahl al Sunnah wal Jama'at." They explain the Prophet's role in this, giving the analogy of a huge factory or a plant. The management of a certain section is assigned to a sub-manager who is responsible for everything there. Similarly, the Prophet, peace be upon him, is responsible for his followers and their prayers. They further insist that we should include in our prayer martyrs, saints and other Muslims. I have heard people in this country [the Kingdom] reject all these arguments. I am, therefore, confused. Can you please clarify my confusion.

May I first begin by commenting on the analogy with a company assigning the management of a particular section of its factory or enterprises to its assistant manager or indeed to a manager of any description. That comparison is absurd. We cannot apply human standards to Allah. Far be it from Him to be subject to our conventions or to our limitations. A company assigns the management of a section of its work to a particular person simply because no human being can supervise a big enterprise, especially when it has numerous activities. As human beings, we have our limitations of ability, time, intelligence, comprehension, etc. A successful businessman who runs his own business increasing its scope of activity all the time will come to a stage when he can no longer cope with the demands of the business. Therefore, he seeks the help of assistants. If his business is more successful and grows bigger, he needs to appoint managers. They run their sections and refer to him for guidance. He resorts to such measures because one cannot handle the whole gamut of operations.

Can anyone who believes in Allah imagine that the same sort of limitations apply to the Creator of the universe? Allah forbids that any of us may entertain such an absurd thought. Allah knows everything, hears all and sees all that happens in the whole universe and He has power over all creatures. His will is free, absolute. His power is limitless, infinite. He is the Lord of all, Who creates all and controls all. He assigns none of His power to anyone, because He is in no need of partners. Our faith of Islam is based, in its entirety, on the Oneness of Allah and the inadmissibility of associating any partners with Him.

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the last of a long line of prophets and messengers who have preached the same message of the Oneness of Allah and that people are required to submit to His will. He never claimed to have any status other

than that of a servant and messenger of Allah. He taught us that we must never assign to him any other quality. We follow his teachings because he has conveyed to us what Allah wants of us. Those who try to elevate the Prophet, peace be upon him, to a position of partnership with Allah no longer believe in his mission. They do not follow his teachings. Yet people claim to love the Prophet, peace be upon him, and extol his praises.

How can anyone who contradicts the teachings of the Prophet, peace be upon him, claim to love him? If you profess to love your father and every time he asks you to do something, you simply assert that you love him but do not do what he wants of you, your claims of love are false. I give you another example of someone who lives abroad and receives a letter from his father telling him that he is ill and is in need of a medicine which is not available in his home country. He asks his son to dispatch that medicine without delay. If the son goes straightforward to a chemist and buys the medicine and posts it, or even sends it by special delivery, then he demonstrates his love of his father. If, on the other hand, he reads the letter and says some words expressing his sorrow for his father's illness and puts away the letter without buying the medicine or sending it, he does not love his father, no matter how strongly he professes to do so. This applies to the teachings of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in every respect. We can only demonstrate our love of the Prophet, peace be upon him, by following his guidance, not by singing his praises. It is action, not lip service that counts. That action must follow the Prophet's guidance and his teachings.

Those verses of the Qur'an which speak of the Prophet, peace be upon him, praying Allah to forgive his followers are quoted out of context. These verses do not sanction what some people do of praying Allah to grant them their wishes for the sake of one person or another. That form of supplication is known as "Wasila" which is totally rejected by Islam. Indeed, one of the great aspects of our faith is our direct appeal to our Lord, Allah, the Creator of the universe. We do not need to address Him through any intermediary. We put our supplication to Him directly and we expect that He will answer us. Indeed, He has committed Himself to answering our prayer when we pray to Him with sincerity and do not associate any partners with Him. When we pray to Him to do something for us for the sake of a human being, we are simply elevating that human being to a position which Allah gives to no one. He says in a Qudsi Hadith: "I am in no need of partners. I abandon anyone who associates a partner with me to that partner." That means when someone prays Allah to grant his requests for someone's sake, He refers him to that person to grant his wish. If that person is dead, as it is normally the case, then certainly he can do nothing for the supplicant. Nor indeed can he do so when he is alive.

These verses speak of something else. The Prophet's companions used to go to him and request him to pray to Allah for their sake. He used to address Allah and pray to Him to grant their wishes. That is indeed possible. Moreover, any one of us can do it for his relatives, friends or Muslim brothers. Indeed, when you pray to Allah for your brother in his absence, your prayer is certain to be answered. When you do that, you are not positioning yourself between that person and Allah. Indeed, you are joining him in praying Allah to alleviate his problem or grant him a favor.

Let me go back to the verse, which you have stated: "***Your Lord says: Pray Me and I will answer you.***" That is indeed a great favor, which shows how much of Allah's grace we enjoy. He has promised to answer our prayers, when we address Him. This is due to the fact that when we address our prayer to Allah directly, we are acknowledging His Lordship. When we do [so], He answers us.

What we have to realize is that in the Islamic concept, the relationship between Allah and His servants is direct, personal and never severed unless man distorts it by adding into it some arbitrary invention of his own. This is what we understand from the Qur'anic verse which states: "***When My servants ask you about Me, I am near: I***



***answer the prayer of one who addresses his supplication to Me. Let them, then, respond to Me and believe in Me so that they may be rightly guided."***

If we pray to Allah for Muslims who lived in earlier generations, they benefit by our prayer and we are rewarded for it. Martyrs who sacrificed their lives for Islam in the battle of Badr and Uhud are indeed in heaven. If we pray to Allah for them that is well and good, but they do not need our prayer since Allah has forgiven them their sins because of their martyrdom. But if we make that prayer for them a means to address Allah with our prayer, thinking that by doing so, we stand a better chance of having our prayers answered, then we are grossly mistaken. We must never do that. We should address our prayer to Allah directly and He would certainly answer us as He has promised.

### ***Waseelah: Seeking Help In Interceding With God***

Could you please explain the meaning of Waseelah, or intercession with God? I should be grateful for your advice on its status.

From the linguistic point of view, the term Waseelah indicates a "means" employed for a certain purpose. Within the religion context, however, the term acquires the added connotations of seeking someone's help in interceding with God for a certain purpose to be accomplished. These connotations are derived from the verb Tawassla, which means "to request with eagerness and humility, repeating the request frequently".

Islam stresses emphatically that everyone is free to address God, pray Him, and seek His help and protection directly, without any need for a "religious man" to act as an intermediary. We may pray God to help us accomplish any purpose in life. Whether it relates to the affairs of this world or those of the life to come. He listens to us and answers our prayers at all times. Nothing need prevent us from praying for any matter or purpose, at any time of day or night. It is definitely far better if we can make use of the Waseelah or means which tells us that it makes His answering of our prayers much more certain. That means seeing in "good actions". If we do the sort of deeds God has enjoined us to do; these serve as the best recommendation we may combine with fulfillment of anything we have in mind. We thus actually acknowledge that He is the Lord of the entire universe and that He controls everything and all forces in the universe. God is certain to answer the prayer of anyone who prays Him firmly believing that He is the overall Lord of the entire universe. If he combines that belief with good actions then he has demonstrated practically that he takes his faith seriously. With such a combination, his prayers are certain to be answered.

Over the centuries, people have come to seek some sort of an "intermediary" between themselves and God. They pray one whom they feel to be dear to Him because he is known to have been a "good believer". Their prayers normally take the form of "my Lord, I beseech you, by the high position or by the honor you have given to this man, to answer my prayers and accomplish this or that for me." More often the person named is dead. He is most likely to be one of those "holy" men for which people have built a tomb, which they frequently visit. Islam can never sanction such a practice. It is indeed a form of shirk or associating partners with God. We have frequently mentioned the Prophet's tradition that states that when any human being dies, his actions come to an absolute end except in one of three ways: "A continuous act of charity, or a useful contribution to knowledge, or an obedient child who prays for him." To imagine that a dead person, no matter how good and dedicated to the cause of Islam he was during his life, can after his death know what people pray for and intercede with Him to answer their prayers, is to place him on an equal footing with God. It is needless to say that Islam will never approve of such an idea. Indeed, this does not apply to the Prophet himself, the noblest and most devoted servant of God. How can we imagine that it may apply to an ordinary human being?

Moreover, when we claim that a dead person has a high position with God, we are actually placing ourselves in a position of judgement over others. This is again inadmissible from the Islamic point of view. How can we judge others when we are not aware of their motives or their actual objectives? How can we ever be certain that something done by another person was free of all hypocrisy and purely done to please God? If we acknowledge our inability to determine the intentions of others, then we cannot make any judgement on what position they may have with God. It is not for us to say that a certain person is truly good. We can say that we think him to be so, but we must add that it is for God to judge him on the basis of His knowledge.

There are unfortunately people who will claim that Waseelah, as defined above, is permissible. They argue mainly on what Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, the second caliph did when he and the Muslims in Madinah went outside the city to pray for rain after a period of draught. He prayed in these words: "My Lord, we used to beseech you by the Prophet, peace be upon him, to give us rain, and you answered our prayers. Today we are beseeching you by the Prophet's uncle, Al-Abbas, to give us rain." Al-Abbas then stepped forward and led the Muslims in prayer for rain.

Omar's action is totally different from that of those who advocate Waseelah. We note first that he did not beseech by the position of the Prophet, peace be upon him, although he was well aware that the position of the Prophet, peace be upon him, with God is far superior to that of the Prophet's uncle. The Prophet, peace be upon him, however, was dead while his uncle was still alive. What Omar actually did was that Al-Abbas would be leading the Muslims in prayer. All Muslims realized that, including Al-Abbas, who stepped forward and did exactly that. In this incident, the Muslims chose a relative of the Prophet, who they knew to be a good believer, to pray and they joined in his prayer. This is permissible because it does not involve any element of associating partner with God. When we choose someone who we think to be a firm believer to lead us in prayer and who is one of our members, the fact that he is merely a servant of God with no special status remains firmly established in our minds. Our action is no more than appointing a spokesman for the community. That does not involve giving that spokesman any holy status. The term "holy" is used in Islam as an attribute of God. Moreover, in Islam we do not use the term "holy" except in association with God; even the Prophet, or the Qur'an is not described as "holy" in Islamic terminology. It is not used to describe any person, place or object.

### ***Waseelah: Through An Intermediary***

In my home country, there are tombs of dead scholars who are considered to be in a favored position with Allah. People visit their graves to request them to recommend to Allah to accomplish any need or to solve any problem, which they may have. Recently, I objected to this practice when a member of my family suggested it. However, a relative has given me the reply: "From my experience of religious activists and company with scholars and religious intellectuals, I believe that such past devouts get a special position given them by Allah. We should not ask them to give us anything, but rather ask them to recommend to Allah to grant our wishes. On the basis of my Islamic studies and company of Islamic intellectuals I believe in media through whom Allah accomplishes what He wants. That is analogous to what happens in practice, when you seek the help of a doctor to get treatment for an illness, and when you use your hand to eat. The doctor and the hand are media through which Allah's will is accomplished. Similarly, Allah's revelations were given to the Prophet, peace be upon him, through the medium of Gabriel, the angel. Likewise those past devouts are a medium to grant us our wishes. It is easy for Allah to cure our illness without the help of a doctor, in the same way as

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He could have given His revelations to the Prophet, peace be upon him, without using an angel. If we were to ask those devouts to accomplish something, then that is a form of polytheism, but we are asking them to recommend to Allah to accomplish what we wish." As a result of this argument, I got very confused. I will be grateful if you comment on this and explain what is the actual role of such devouts.

What I find intriguing in your relative's argument is the fact that he tries to give it a scholarly color, attributing it to his studies and companionship with scholars. He, however, does not support his argument with any verse from the Qur'an or any Hadith of the Prophet, peace be upon him. As you realize, in all religious matters, the source of argument must be derived from the Qur'an and Hadith.

Your relative speaks of his companionship with scholars, but does he really mean scholars in the sense that these people have studied Islam in depth and achieve a position of renown in Islamic scholarship? If so, he should have referred you to their works which would have provided a more convincing answer. He does not, however, refer you to any such works. Instead, he supports his argument with his own personal experience. Can somebody else's experience be sound basis for the formulation of our beliefs? I find that in conflict with the Islamic approach. It is indeed the Christian way of thinking. Christians always speak about saying their experience with others in order to preach their faith. But your experience can never give me the same feelings as yours or help me arrive at the same conclusions. Furthermore, when you realize that the same experience can have totally different effects on people, you are bound to conclude that experience is not sufficient to propagate beliefs. In Islam, we have the fundamentals of our faith clearly stated in the Qur'an and elaborated and stressed by the Prophet, peace be upon him. When we want to explain our faith to someone, we resort to the Qur'an and the Sunnah and we may later supplement the principle with examples of what we may have experienced.

The examples presented by your relative are of little value. What he implies is that a medium is essential for the accomplishment of any task, even eating. He considers that using our hands is such a medium. That is not true. The basic thing in human life is that things come into being as a result of effort. No one can satisfy his hunger without doing the action of eating. That fits perfectly with the concept of action and reward in the hereafter. A person who makes the effort of eating gets the necessary nourishment and survives. Similarly, the one who takes the trouble of doing good things receives reward in the hereafter. The more conscientious he is in doing his Islamic duties, the closer he draws to Allah and the sooner his wishes are granted. That is part of his reward in this life. According to your friend, the mere companionship of a devout person achieves similar results. He forgets that such company does not involve any action. In actual fact, he is requesting those devouts to intercede on his behalf.

From another point of view, a doctor is not the medium of curing illnesses. Otherwise, you would have had to go to the doctor for any complaint, even a headache. When you have a headache, you take a couple of painkiller tablets. A short while later, your headache disappears. Had your relative spoken of medicines, rather than medical people as the agent of cure, his argument might have been more consistent. To him doctor is the medium, which is not true.

As for the medium of sending down divine revelations, you must not forget that a revelation is a very unique experience. It cannot be compared to ordinary human activities.

What we have to consider now is whether such devouts have any role to play after their death. Let us first consider: how does a person acquire this position after his death and how do we know it? If the answer to this question is that his action in his life elevate him to such a position, then we are appointing ourselves as judges of people. We must not forget that Allah alone is the judge, because He knows every action and what was in the person's mind before embarking on such an action. . When the Prophet, peace be upon him, heard one woman of his own household saying about a person who had just passed away: He is not in a happier place than this life, the Prophet, peace be upon him, asked her point blank: "How do you know? I am Allah's Messenger and I do not know what He will do to me in the hereafter. "Judgment on people's lives and actions is something that Allah has reserved for Himself. How can we claim for certain that any person had the right intention behind every single one of actions? Until we attain that sort of certainty, we cannot judge the fate of others.

When people visit the grave of someone in order to ask him, or his spirit, to recommend to Allah to grant us wishes, do they think that the dead person recognizes them, or hears them, or knows the likely results of granting their wishes? If we answer in the affirmative, then we are claiming that the dead person is given something superior to what living people have. Otherwise, on what basis would he recommend to Allah to grant us our wishes?

Furthermore, what need is there for such recommendation? Is it needed by Allah or by ourselves? Do not people realize that Allah knows everything about them? If they do their supplications to Him directly and earnestly, believing that He alone can grant their wishes then what use is the recommendation of the dead people. Can anyone claim that Allah needs such a recommendation in order to decide whom He should help? To entertain such a thought even for the briefest of moments is a great affront to Allah. Allah tells us in the Qur'an: "***Pray to me and I will answer your prayers.***" When we pray to Allah to do something for us, we are actually declaring that He is our Lord and the Lord of all worlds. This declaration, when meant seriously and honestly, is sufficient to get our prayers answered. Indeed, Allah answers the prayers of those who do not believe in Him, if they turn to him in sincerity. This is because of the fact that at the moment when they pray to Him, they make a declaration of recognition of his Lordship. This being the case, what use is an intermediary?

From another point of view, those devout people are dead. Let us not forget the authentic Hadith which tell us : "When a human being dies, all his actions come to an absolute end except in one of three ways: a continuous act of charity, a useful contribution to knowledge or a dutiful child who prays for him." If you examine this Hadith carefully, you realize that we are in a position to benefit the dead by praying for them, while they are in no position to benefit us.

There is no question about it. When a person visits a tomb of a dead person and asks the deceased to intercede with Allah on his behalf, he is guilty of associating partners with Allah. He is making that dead person a deity, on a junior or senior level. That cannot be countenanced in any way. That is direct opposition to the teachings of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who has taught us to worship Allah alone and to purge our thoughts, concepts and practices of all traces of polytheism.

### ***Waseelah: Through Prophet's Companions***

In my home country, a small community appeals to the Prophet's companions for blessings and bounty. Although they recite the Qur'an and offer their prayers and fulfill other duties, they feel that a direct approach to Allah is not appropriate. Therefore, they appeal to the Prophet's companions for blessings and bounty. This community is in

utter disarray at the moment. Could you please explain the Islamic view of their attitude.

What this community does is certainly very serious. To start with, their practice is contrary to the one the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us of addressing our supplication to Allah directly and seeking His bounty and grace. As you realize, there is only one source for learning what pleases Allah. That source is His messenger, Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Every Muslim is deemed to be fully aware of this, because it represents the practical implementation of the second part of the declaration, which brings a person into the fold of Islam. To be a Muslim, one must declare one's firm belief in the Oneness of Allah and in the fact that Prophet, peace be upon him, Muhammad, peace be upon him, was Allah's messenger. A messenger is required to convey a message, and the message is the one chosen by Allah. Therefore, any deviation from it represents disobedience to Allah. In this particular case, the message is very clear; Allah instructs us to address our supplication to Him alone and He promises to answer us: ***"Your Lord says: Pray me and I will answer you."*** [the Believers — "Al-Mu'min" 40: 60]

Secondly, this community, as you say, addresses its supplication through the Prophet's companions. It is well known that the Prophet's companions have all been dead for more than thirteen hundred years. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "When a human being dies, all his actions come to an absolute end, except in one of three ways: A continuing act of charity, a useful contribution to knowledge and a dutiful child who prays Allah to have mercy on his parent." All the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, were human beings. This Hadith applies to them as indeed it applies to all other people. When a human being addresses his supplication to Allah through one of the Prophet's companions, that person does not hear his supplication, because he is dead and can do nothing either for himself or for others.

Thirdly, by appealing to the Prophet's companions, this community actually raises those companions to a superhuman status. That constitutes, in Islamic terminology a sort of worship. While members of the community you have mentioned may not be aware that they are actually worshipping those companions of the Prophet, the fact remains that by elevating them in this way, they confer on them a status of Godhood. This is indeed very serious. It takes those people out of the fold of Islam altogether. Islam is based on the principle of the Oneness of Allah, and these people are creating other gods from among human beings who were dedicated to the cause of Islam. Were those companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to be resurrected now, they would have certainly fought hard to bring that community back to Islam by convincing them that their practice is not merely wrong, but it contradicts the very basis of the Islamic faith.

Next, why should these people think that addressing Allah directly and appealing to Him is not appropriate, when He Himself likes to be prayed to directly and promises a direct answer? Do not these people realize that supplication is a mark of submission to Allah? When you humbly request Allah to help you in a particular way, you are actually acknowledging that you are in need of help and that He is able to help you accomplish whatever purpose you may have. That acknowledgment is a mark of submission to Allah and recognition of His attributes. An important attribute in this connection is Allah's ability to accomplish any purpose and the fact that He has power over all things. When a human being earnestly and sincerely prays Allah, his prayer will certainly be answered. I have explained in the past that Allah answers all our supplication, but He may choose to defer answering some of our supplication to the Day of Judgement. When we realize what He has in store for us by way of answering our supplication, we would wish that He had deferred answering all our

supplications to the Day of Judgement. If He answers some of our prayers now, He does that because He knows that it would make us happy.

I have often quoted the Qur'anic verse in which Allah addresses the Prophet, peace be upon him, in this way:

***"When My servants ask you about Me, I am near, I answer the supplication of My servant when he prays Me. Let them, then, respond to Me and believe in Me so that they may be rightly guided."*** [the Cow — "Al-Baqarah" 2:186]

May I draw your attention to the way this Qur'anic verse is phrased. It begins with an address to the Prophet, peace be upon him, pointing out the situation when people ask him about Allah. It does not follow that with an instruction to the Prophet, peace be upon him, on how to answer that question. Allah gives the answer Himself directly to those questioners by saying: ***"I am near, etc."*** If Allah Himself answers our question directly, without even the need of asking the Prophet, peace be upon him, to give us that answer, then why should we be hesitant to appeal to Him, hoping for His bounty, and praying for His grace. That is indeed the appropriate method. Any other method is wrong and unacceptable.

### ***Women: Awrah In Front Of Other Women***

How should a Muslim woman appear before another woman, and which parts of her body must she cover?

The Islamic term 'awrah' denotes those parts of the body, which are required to be covered when a person is not alone. When we speak of men, the awrah, which should be covered extends, according to many scholars, from the waistline to knees. The knee itself is not part of it. However, other scholars, most prominent among whom are Imam ibn Hazm and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, limit the awrah between men to the essential organs and the arms. Judging by the evidence supporting these two views, I am more in favor of the latter one, which limits the awrah to the private parts.

Between women when they are alone, the same ruling applies. There is no difference with regard to the permissibility of looking at another person, between two Muslim women and one Muslim woman and one who follows another religion. This is in the same way as there is no difference between two Muslim men and one Muslim man and another that is a non-Muslim.

Imam Ahmad says, "Some people say that a Muslim woman should not take off her headdress when she is with a Jewish or Christian woman. My view is that she does not look at her genitals and she does not act as her midwife when she gives birth."

This is indeed the correct view because women who were non-believers, such as Jewish women, used to come to the Prophet's wives and see them. The Prophet's wives did not cover their heads when they met them and were not ordered to do so.

### ***Women: Breastfeeding & Milk Banks***

The idea of breast milk banks is common in Western and other countries. The breast milk is given to infants who cannot feed directly from their mothers for different reasons. There is a possibility that two babies of different sexes may be given the milk of the same woman donor. According to Islamic principles, marriage is not possible between a man and a woman who is in their childhood were given such milk from the same donor. As such they are a brother and sister. Given that possibility, it is appropriate to encourage such milk banks?

When God tells us of the woman we are not allowed to marry, He says: “Forbidden to you [in marriage] are your mothers, daughters, sisters.” He then mentions among them, “your mothers who breast-fed you, and your sisters through breast-feeding.” He does not speak of an event or a substance that causes such a prohibition of marriage.

He speaks of a relationship born out of a repeated action. It is motherhood that comes about when a woman takes in her hand a child who is under two years of age, puts him on her lap, and gives him her breast and watches as he sucks her milk until he is satisfied and happy. He speaks of a child feeling the comfort of a woman’s care, being so close to her and enjoying the feed he is receiving from her body. That should be repeated at least five times and give the child a full feed each time. That is the action of breast-feeding that gives birth to a permanent relationship of mother and son or daughter, with all the affiliated relationships. Hence, God speaks of our “sisters through breast-feeding” and the Prophet, peace be upon him, adds the statement “our aunt through breast-feeding”. These are the woman’s sisters and her husband’s sisters.

Milk banks have no such relationship. They are operated by nurses, with the milk kept in refrigerators, warmed on cookers, put in bottles, tested for temperature and given to the child. That is a very mechanical operation that establishes no relationship and creates no bond.

There is no caring mother, and no recipient child. There is simply no breast-feeding. Had God wanted to include such a method in the prohibition, He would have mentioned it. He has given us in full detail every aspect of our religion, which we need to observe in our lives.

### ***Women: Changing Family Name Upon Marriage***

Generally women adopt the husband’s surname, discarding their own family name. Is it appropriate to do so?

The adoption by a woman of her husband’s family name when she marries him is a token of her being subordinate to him. Historically speaking, a woman was in a position of total subordination to her husband.

In Islam, she suffers nothing of the sort. She retains her own family name because she is allowed to act independently of him. If divorce takes place, she returns to her own family. In some Western countries, even after divorce, she may continue to be known by her husband’s family name. This is strange indeed.

### ***Women: Childbirth & Attention To Religious Duties Thereafter***

Should a woman stop praying or fasting for complete 40 days after giving birth? Or should she fast and pray when she has stopped her postnatal bleeding? What if she is not sure of the time when she has stopped bleeding as the discharge comes and goes over a period of several weeks? May I also ask about the case of a woman who completes her 40 days in the middle of Ramadhan? She does not fast the whole month because she is breast-feeding. What does she have to do by way of compensation? Can she feed the poor? If so, how much and for how many days? The whole of the month or the last 10 days only? Does she have to make up for the missed days?

The first thing to say is that there is no minimum duration for the postnatal discharge, but it has a maximum, which is 40 days. Lady Umm Salamah, the

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Prophet's wife said: "During the Prophet's time, a new mother stayed for 40 days." [Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and others]. Al-Tirmithi comments: "All scholars among the Prophet's companions and their successors agree that a new mother does not pray for 40 days unless she stops bleeding before that. In this case, she should take a shower and pray. Should she continue to bleed after 40 days, the majority of scholars agree that she continues to pray." It is also well known that a woman does not fast when she is in her menstruation period or during the period of postnatal bleeding. However, she is required to make up for missed fasting but she does not need to make up for her missed prayers. A woman named Mu'athah asked Lady Ayesha, the Prophet's wife: "Why does a woman fast in place of the days she misses during her menstruation but does not offer her missed prayers?" She answered: "We used to have that during the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and we were ordered to make up missed fasting but we were not required to make up for the missed prayers?" [Related by all six]. In both situations of menstruation and postnatal discharge, sexual intercourse is forbidden, but not play with one's husband, provided it is away from the woman's private parts.

To sum up, a new mother must not pray or fast during her postnatal bleeding. If she does, then her fasting and prayer are not valid. She will still need to fast an equal number of days to those when she cannot fast, because her fasting during this period is of no value. As we have said previously, it is not necessary that the compensatory fasting should be on consecutive days. She may choose to fast one day at a time, and may delay her fasting until the winter when the days are cooler and shorter.

This is a separate issue from the case of a pregnant or a nursing woman. Such a woman may not fast, but she should feed a poor person in compensation. This is the view of Ibn Abbas and Ibn Omar, two of the leading authoritative scholars among the Prophet's companions. Ibn Abbas is reported to have said of the feeding of a poor person in place of fasting: "This is a concession granted to elderly people who find fasting too difficult. They may not fast provided they feed a poor person for every day they do not fast. The same applies to pregnant or nursing women, if they fear for the pregnancy or the newborn child. They need not fast provided they feed a poor person".

Ibn Abbas is reported to have said to a pregnant woman in his household: "You are in the same position of [an old] person who finds fasting much too difficult. You may compensate by feeding, and you need not make up the fasting." Ibn Omar was asked about a pregnant woman fearing for her child and he said: "She need not fast, and she feeds a poor person with a measure of wheat." The measure is roughly half a kilogram.

We say that this is a separate question from one concerning postnatal period because it applies to a woman who has finished that period before the start of Ramadhan. When the two situations overlap, as in the case cited by my reader, then there are two reasons for the woman not to fast, one requiring making up the fasting and the other requiring compensation by feeding. We say that the compensation is sufficient because it is the easier option. So the woman in this case should feed a poor person two meals for every day of Ramadhan she did not fast which is the whole month. I cannot tell her how much a meal costs. This should be of the average type of food she has at home. So it may vary from one woman to another according to the type of food she takes. I wish to add that this question is often linked to the woman fearing for her child or for herself. That was a reasonable assumption for scholars to make in the early generation of Islam when they [used to] say that a nursing woman who fasts may fall unconscious or may grow thinner everyday. We now know that the demands pregnancy or breast-feeding make on the body of the woman are too heavy.

Therefore, we say that the very condition of pregnancy or breast-feeding is sufficiently difficult for the woman to make her beneficiary of God's concession. She



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does not need to fast, provided she compensates by feeding a poor person two meals for every day she does not fast in Ramadhan.

***Women: Choice Between Education & Marriage***

I am a student of medicine, having three years to complete my studies. I have recently accepted a proposal for marriage from a man whom I find very suitable as a husband. He wants our marriage to take place without delay, while my father prefers that I should complete my university degree first. I am torn between my desire to finish my studies and my thought that if I allow this proposal of marriage to fall through, I may not wish to marry anyone else in future, because I feel that I will not be able to do my duties toward my husband wholeheartedly. In this respect, I would like to ask what Islam says about long engagement and about girls' education. Further, is it permissible for a girl to pursue her studies abroad, if she is not accompanied by any member of her family? She may have all the protection she needs if she stays in a students' hostel. I have been reading about my problem and two Hadiths which I have come across seem to me as if to contradict each other. In the first one, the Prophet, peace be upon him, is reported to have said that when a girl or a boy reaches the age of puberty, they should be bound in wedlock. In the other, he encourages the pursuit of studies, even if it takes one to China. If one wishes to pursue his or her studies to the university level, they are bound to finish long after reaching the age of puberty. How can these two Hadiths be reconciled? I would like further to ask about Istikhara. I have read that if one sees in one's dream green and white colors, then the result is positive, while red and black colors indicate a negative result.

It seems to me that your problem can easily be solved if everyone involved shows a willingness to cooperate and accommodate the desires of the other. There is no reason to stop you completing your studies after getting married to this gentleman, if he is truly a suitable husband. You will not be the first nor the last student to be married during her course of study. You put the two choices as if they were mutually exclusive when they are not. There may be some reasons which have caused you to do so, but which you have not explained in your letter. If it is practically possible for you to get married and complete your studies, then all you have to do is to ask your prospective husband to assure your father that you will complete your degree.

Having said that, I have a suspicion that this is not the real question. What bothers you is your future attitude to any man you may marry, other than the one who has already proposed to you when your thoughts continue to be attached to this particular person. You may feel that you cannot be sincere in your thoughts to your future husband. This is a romantic view of things, which we sometimes try to magnify. If we look at things realistically, then we recognize that life does not conform to our thoughts. At times, we value a certain attachment as something so precisely that we cannot survive without it. We may develop a certain friendship to the extent that we become inseparable from our privileged friends. Events may take place to separate us, such as a friend moving with his family to another city or going abroad to pursue his or her studies. When the separation approaches, we view it as an inevitable calamity. A few weeks or months later, we may stop to look at ourselves and we are surprised that we have coped with the separation without difficulty. Your case is the same, if you want to view it realistically. If, however, you want to look at it in a romantic light and you persist with doing so, then you will continue nursing your sense of loss and perpetuating the pain you may feel at the time of the separation. This is something which is largely your own to deal with.

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What I have to say is that if this proposal does not lead to marriage, it should not be viewed by you as the end of the world. You should try to overcome the problem and begin to look forward to a happy future. If you are married to someone else later, and then you have to do your best to give him what he is entitled to have of your attention, care and love. If he is the right sort of person, you will soon find out that you are more intimately attached to him than you could ever have thought possible. That is the nature of life. Romantic ideas have very little effect in practice. There is nothing in Islam to forbid a long engagement. From the practical point of view, a long engagement is not the ideal thing to do. It may have the advantage of stopping new proposals, but it ushers an unnatural situation. The two fiancés think of each other while they continue to live apart. If this goes on for several years, it may have a negative effect on marriage, since we always try to paint in our minds an idealistic picture of the other party. When this picture has been long in our minds, then marriage takes place and we find that the reality differs from what we have imagined. A difficult process of readjustment is then required. That could involve problems.

From another point of view, if the engagement is short of making the actual contract of marriage, then the two fiancés are not supposed to meet alone, either at home or in public. In other words, a Muslim may not take his fiancé out for a meal, unless they are accompanied by one of her parents or brothers. Some people may object to this saying that a man and a woman who have declared their intention to get married can be trusted to keep themselves within the proper limits if they go out. The answer is simple. To start with, problems may take place and the engagement may be broken. The reputation of the girl should not be blemished by her relationship with her first fiancée. Secondly, Islam lays down these restrictions for the benefit of its followers. The simple fact is that it is wrong to bring together a young man and a young woman, leaving them alone in a cozy, intimate atmosphere and then ask them to struggle with their feelings and passion in order to keep themselves within the Islamic limits. There is no denial that there is mutual attraction between them, and leaving them alone means exposing them to the danger of being overpowered by that mutual attraction.

Islam encourages every parent to provide their children with a good standard of education. That applies equally to boys and girls. It is unfortunate that educational systems nowadays require both sexes to take the same subject. Islam would have made girls' education rather different from that of boys so that it is tailored to help the girls, who are future mothers, to cope with their problems of life. For example, a course of nursing is highly beneficial to every mother. That does not mean that every girl should become a qualified nurse. It means that she should be able to look after her family in a proper way.

When it comes to taking a scholarship abroad, this is subject to the Islamic restriction on women traveling alone. As you realize, Islam does not allow a woman to travel alone even to perform the most important religious duty of pilgrimage. Her husband or a relative whom she cannot marry must accompany her. If a Muslim woman observes the standards of propriety then she may pursue her studies in any foreign institute. What is not permissible is to socialize in the way it is practiced in the West. It is definitely less permissible for a girl to stay alone in a foreign county for several years. To say that she is well protected in a students' hostel is unrealistic.

As for the Hadiths to which you have referred, the first one does not seem to be authentic. There is no requirement on parents to bind their children in wedlock when they have attained puberty. Early marriage is certainly preferred by Islam, but marriage is left to the individual to determine its time according to his or her circumstances. Nowadays, only a few men marry before they are twenty. Many do not marry until they are twenty-five or even older. Islam prefers Early marriages because they provide a chance to satisfy natural needs in a legitimate way.

It is true that the modern system of education does not allow most people to marry before they have completed their education and started work. In effect this takes them to about twenty-five years of age. Marriage places new responsibilities on both parents and they have to choose the time for taking up these responsibilities according to their circumstances.

What you have mentioned about seeing certain colors in one's dream after praying for Allah's guidance in a certain problem, i.e. the prayer of Istikhara is not correct. None of these colors have any significance. What happens after a prayer of Istikhara is that one finds oneself more inclined to a certain choice. The fact that he has prayed to Allah to help him choose correctly should make him overcome his worry and take the choice which becomes easier or more attractive to him, feeling that Allah will certainly respond to his prayer and give him the choice which is better for him, sparing him the problems of the worse choice.

### ***Women: Conduct With Close Relatives [Mahrems]***

Could you please explain how a woman should conduct herself with her Mahrems. Could she shake hands with them, kiss or hug a Mahrem and appear in front of him without her head covering? Could you also explain who are the Mahrems, and whether cousins could be considered in this category?

Mahrems are those close relatives that a woman may not marry, such as her father, son, nephew, uncle, etc. Certainly cousins are not, even though they may be very close as in the case of cousins of similar age who live in the same house. With such Mahrems a woman conducts herself as people normally do at home. Of course a woman need not put on her head covering in front of her brothers, uncles or nephews, let alone her father or grandfather. She may shake hands with any of these, and be close to them.

It is authentically reported that when Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter visited him, he would stand up to greet her, kiss her and sit her in his place. When he visited her, she would do the same, rising to meet him and kissing him. This was done on a regular basis and in front of people. The Hadith mentioning this is reported by Ayesha, in phraseology that suggests a habit rather than a one-off occasion.

When we speak about relatives whom a woman may not marry, her father-in-law and stepson come in this category. However, a woman should conduct herself differently with these. While she need not wear her scarf in front of her adult stepson or her father-in-law, she should be careful about being too familiar or liberal. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked about in-laws relations, and he described it as "death". What he means is that when things are allowed to go out of hand in such a relationship, this could spell a ruinous atmosphere that kills family relations. The same applies to a man with his mother-in-law, her daughters and his adult stepdaughter. Caution must be the guide in dealing with them. Where there is no chance that things could go wrong, one may be more relaxed. Otherwise, we should be careful.

### ***Women: Conversing With A Non-Muslim Man When Without Mahrem***

When I was Traveling along with my young son on a train in my home country, a non-Muslim man put to me a few questions about Islam. He was motivated by the title of the book I was reading and, perhaps, by my appearance because I was wearing my veil, allowing only my eyes to appear, but using also eyeglasses. He referred to my appearance and suggested the Muslim women are dominated, although he had learned in

his childhood that Islam was a liberal religion. He also asked about the prohibition of alcohol and mixed gatherings, etc. I felt that I gave him convincing answers to his questions. He stated that he was an agnostic. I felt, and told him so, that he needed a few discussions like the one we had in order to start searching for the right faith. After we arrived and went our separate ways, the thought aroused in my mind whether I was actually allowed to have such a discussion with a non-Muslim person when I was Traveling alone, without a Mahrem.

It is neither forbidden nor discouraged to have a conversation with a member of the opposite sex, if that conversation falls within the framework of what is lawful. There is a simple test to tell you whether such a conversation is lawful or not. You only need to ask yourself whether either of you or the man would have changed any part of that conversation if your husband or your father, who are presumably religious, would have suddenly appeared. If the answer to this question is in the negative, then there is nothing wrong with the discussion.

Since you have been Traveling by a train with a large number of people, then you were not in a private situation with the man. Conducting a conversation with him that may be overheard by people close to you is acceptable.

It may be suggested that what was wrong in the situation was your Traveling alone. We need probably to remember that the travel, which is restricted, is that which takes more than a day to complete. If you are Traveling between two cities where you have Mahrams in each city, then to make that journey is permissible, since it takes only 2-3 hours.

You have certainly put convincing arguments to this gentleman, because Islamic arguments have a power of their own. They have a direct appeal to the human mind. This is due to the fact that believing in the Oneness of God is a natural inclination of human beings. They may suppress that inclination by accepting beliefs that cannot be substantiated or proved. But a person who is searching for the truth is bound to feel their strength and he may very easily respond to them. However, I prefer that when we talk to a non-Muslim, we should not be over optimistic about his acceptance of the truth of Islam. It is quite possible that a person may accept that Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, conveyed the message of the truth, and he may also believe that he was a messenger sent by God to mankind to teach them how to believe in God and implement His message, but that same person may still not believe in Him.

Many of the Arabs in Makkah entertained no doubt that the Prophet, peace be upon him, was saying the truth, when he told them that he received revelations and that Angel Gabriel gave him a message to convey to human beings. They still believed in his sincerity when he told them that God wanted them to accept Islam and implement it. Nevertheless, they preferred to continue to worship idols that they made with their own hands.

The clearest case of all was that of Abu Jahl, the archenemy of Islam. When he was pressed for a frank opinion about Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his message, his answer was as follows:

“We competed with Bani Abd Munaf [the Prophet’s tribe] for honor. They provided food and drink for poor people and pilgrims, and we did the same, and they organized charitable and commendable efforts and so did we. When we were parallel to the race, they claimed to have one of their numbers as a prophet who received revelations. When can we attain such an honor? By Allah, we will never believe in him or follow his message.”

That was an honest answer giving the reasons for a negative attitude. Your interlocutor may not have had similarly perverse motives, but he, and any person for that matter, may have his own reasons for following a course which he knows to be the right one.

Following the right guidance requires that a person have the resolve to learn the truth and abide by its requirements. That is a conscious attitude, which a person resolves to adopt. If he does not, there is no way you can get him to submit to the truth of the message of Islam.

### ***Women: Discrimination Based On Sex & Apparent Behavior***

In our university in the US there is a Muslim Students' Association. Yet because of different views our biggest problem is dress. Some are of the opinion that all the Muslim women in the group must wear the hijab. They refuse to let anyone who does not wear the hijab to do anything in the name of the group, except for menial tasks like taking notes during meetings etc. Also, for some reason, they insist that the president of the organization be a man and that there be a "sister's representative" for the women. Even though I wear the hijab, I do not feel that it is the job of the male members of the group to force other members to don the garment. Certainly, they may advise that the sisters do so, but after that, it is between each woman and God.

I understand the point of a lot of sisters. Wearing the hijab is difficult in America. People stare at you, look at you weird, think that you are oppressed, and since 9/11 even try to label you as a terrorist. It takes a person of strong will to wear the hijab, and some people just are not ready, though most of them really want to. I do not think that it is the duty of the Muslim Students' Association to ostracize people who they do not think are "religious enough" or restrict certain people because of what they look like outside. After all, it would not be fair to insist that all the men in the group grow beards. Please comment on this issue. It has divided the Muslims in our small community to the point that there are now two Muslim student groups on campus.

I agree with everything the reader says. To start with, no one is responsible for another person's compliance with Islamic teachings. This is a matter for the individual. To insist that a certain person must wear this or that, even though Islam requires it, is to go beyond what Islam requires. We may have brothers or sisters whose compliance with Islamic teachings leaves something to be desired. We do not appoint ourselves as their keepers or guardians, because God does not want some of us to act as though they can judge others. How does any one of us know that the woman who is not able to wear Islamic dress is not closer to God than himself? She may be, after all, weak on this point but strong on others. She may be very keen and sincere in her observance of other Islamic duties and she may volunteer something additional. Her sincerity may earn her greater reward than others who appear to us to be more devout. It is not for us to judge anyone or to discriminate against anyone for apparent behavior.

Besides, when people adopt the attitude the reader describes, they actually drive the weaker members away from the rest of the Muslim community, when they should try everything to bring them closer. God says to the Prophet Moses, peace be upon him,

***"We will strengthen you with your brother."*** [the Story — "Al-Qasas" 28: 35]

Unfortunately, those people in your students association do not realize that their sisters would be better able to comply with the hijab requirement if they were more than welcome in the student community. While if they are treated as second class members, they are more likely to be isolated and find themselves weaker.

As for insisting on having a man president of the association, they have no argument for that. I suppose they liken it to the rule that the head of state cannot be a woman, but being a president of a student association does not constitute anything similar to that. A group of Muslims who have an organization looking after their welfare could choose a woman for their president, if she is capable. In fact they should choose her if she is the best of them for the task.

### ***Women: Employment In Business Alongside Men***

Due to various factors I feel that my business will not flourish unless I employ more women than men. My business includes some glamorous aspects, but on these the business utilizes only non-Muslim women employees. May I ask whether there are any Islamic restrictions on employing women with men, considering that no woman will have a Mahrem on the premises?

Scholars say that a woman needs a Mahrem when she travels and the journey takes more than 24 hours. When she cannot be accompanied by a Mahrem on a travel, she may travel with “safe companionship”, which means a trustworthy group of travelers who include some women.

The Mahrem does not have much of a role when it comes to day-to-day activities. Women can go about their business in the normal way as men, as long as they do not have to be in a compromising position with men who are not their close relatives.

This means that a working woman goes about her job in the same way as a man. If she has men as colleagues, then she should not be in a closed room with one man who is a stranger to her. If her working area is a ‘public’ place, which means that people can come in and go out without restriction, then she may receive any member of the public at her workstation. If the place has several men and women in attendance, then that is a perfectly acceptable environment.

All the above assumes that Islamic standards of propriety are observed. Thus, Muslim women who are employed should go to work wearing clothes that are acceptable from the Islamic point of view. They must not behave in a manner that suggests that they are going to a party, wearing heavy make-up and adorning eye-catching attires.

What worries me in the reader’s question is what he mentions about glamorous aspects to his business, which he does not allow Muslim women to undertake. He does not tell us what he means by glamour, but it is clear that the glamour to which he refers is unacceptable from the Islamic point of view. Otherwise why would he not allow Muslim women to undertake it?

If so, he should be very careful. He should inquire whether engaging in such a business is permissible in Islam or that it is not.

If it cannot be sanctioned under Islam, then he is well advised to abandon that line of business and seek some other line, which carries no such doubtful aspects.

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## ***Women: In Politics — A General Outlook***

Commentary by Adil Salahi

When we consider the life and needs of any family, it is easy to identify two main tasks which must be properly undertaken and fulfilled. These are the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the members of the family, including the provision of food, water, clothes and accommodation. The other aim is to ensure the continuity of the family, which entails the upbringing of the young generation. It is very difficult to try to state with absolute accuracy that the one task is more important than the other. If we look at the life of a family as a continuing process, not limiting its concern to the immediate but also looking forward to the future, then the needs of tomorrow are just as important as those of today. It may be argued that if we cannot survive today, then tomorrow is of no importance. That is a narrow vision because it seeks to isolate one phase of a continuous process, making the end of this phase an end to the whole process. The point is that if we survive today, then tomorrow is with us before we can realize it. Unless we are prepared for it, we could not know how to use it. Moreover, the needs of today take precedence only in as far as they are more immediate. That does not mean that they are more important, but they are needed earlier.

In a family set up, it is important to assign different tasks to different members, according to their talents and skills. This is the sort of logic, which is applied in all walks of life. There is no reason why it should not apply to family life. When we study the nature and temperament, as well as physical strength, susceptibilities and leanings of men and women, we are bound to come to the conclusion that each of them is naturally equipped to fulfill one of the aforementioned tasks. The man can more easily look after the family home and the young generation, which ensures the continuity of the family. It is not surprising, therefore, that in all human societies, past and present, men have tended to look after the immediate needs of the family, and provide for its present generation while women look after the young, provide them with care and love which they undoubtedly need. It cannot be said, as some philosophers have tried to argue, that man has been able to subdue the woman with his physical strength and compel her to do the less important tasks which he was unwilling to do. The fact that this has been the chosen order since time immemorial and across continents and civilizations confirms that it is the natural order. Any change would involve reversal of roles. Any society, which will attempt that reversal will find out soon enough that it causes itself many more problems than it can cope with.

If we look at life on earth and in the universe, we soon come to the conclusion that there is hardly any redundancy in the system of creation. Every creature and every species has a different role to play. None is created in vain. No two species have exactly the same qualities or tasks. Moreover, in every species the female plays a different role to that of the male. The two roles are usually complementary. All creations have accepted this system and abided by it. None tries to break its smooth, natural working. Only human beings try to advocate that from time to time. Yet the system implies that the roles of men and women are different because they have different characteristics. Otherwise, they would have had to be created in the same mold.

Having said that, I should add that the differences between man and woman are not absolute. Neither are their tasks absolutely clear-cut with inviolable lines of demarcation. Indeed, the tasks are mutually complementary with certain areas in each of them stretching deep into the area of the other. Allah's design is perfect and His creation complete. In life, there are many occasions when either partner is called upon to do partly or wholly the task of the other for a short or long period. There is period of sickness or absence, short or prolonged, and there is premature death of either partner. In any of these cases, one partner may have to fulfill the duties of the

other in addition to those of his or her own. Many a young woman faces the prospect of bringing up her family on her own after the death of her husband. In His perfect design of creation, Allah has given us the possibility of tapping additional resources, which in the normal course of events we hardly ever use. When we add this inherent flexibility to the fact that Allah has made every individual different from the rest of mankind, we understand the secret of the richness of human life and the great variety of talents, capabilities, skills and characteristics which we exhibit. It is not surprising, therefore, that some women come close to men in their characters, while some men have a good measure of tenderness, which characterizes the womenfolk.

All the foregoing support the conclusion that men and women have different roles to play in this life, but these are also made flexible enough to be able to understand each other's role when the need arises. For this reason, Islam stresses the complementarity between the roles of men and women and allows each of them to undertake some of the responsibilities of the other when the need arises.

As far as politics and government are concerned, these relate to meeting the immediate needs of the society. In other words, they are part of looking after the present generation, although by doing so we make it easier for the future generation to fulfill its own needs. Therefore, these are parts of the domain of men. But that does not prevent any woman from taking part in politics. Nor does Islam require Muslim women not to take an active interest in the political affairs of society. Indeed, to care for the affairs of society is required of all Muslims, men and women. Islam considers women equal to men and assigns to them all the rights and privileges which they should enjoy on an equal footing with men. Long before modern societies spoke of the equality between man and woman, Islam established this equality on a sound basis. It allows a woman to own any property and to invest her money in the way she likes and to conduct her business independently of man and to dispense with what she has in the way she thinks fit. It does not stand in her way if she wants to play an active role in the social life of the community, nor does it prevent women from being involved in politics. It does not approve, however, of a woman taking the leadership of government. In other words, Islam does not allow women to be heads of state, but it allows them to take up any other post in government. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with the lady who has contested the elections for a seat in the council, nor is speaking up on politics denied to women. I do not wish to pass any judgments on those women politicians in Bangladesh and Pakistan, but I am only stating a principle of Islamic legislation. [Added: A woman is not permitted to lead a congregation that has even a single man in it - Also refer the next question.]

### ***Women: In Politics — Electioneering For Position***

Does Islam allow women to run in the elections for position in government or to hold political office? Perhaps, I do not need to add that contesting an election normally requires campaigning which involves addressing rallies and making speeches to mixed audiences. Is it also permissible for a Muslim woman to head a party of an organization where the membership includes men and women?

All scholars agree that a woman may not be the overall president or a ruler of a Muslim state or community, where she becomes the final authority on all affairs of the state. This prohibition is based on the Hadith, which states that "No nation will prosper if they assign their leadership to a woman." The prohibition here is specific. It is the top post, the presidency or the top leadership, which is precluded from being held by a woman. It is needless to say that it is the nature of the post, not its title that makes this prohibition operative. In other words, in a country where the top post has a title other than "president", it is that post which may not be held by a woman.



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Apart from that, scholars have different views. Some of them preclude women from being judges. Others make even stricter rules while some others make all posts, other than the top one, available to any one who is suitable, man or woman.

That permission, however, does not override the Islamic rules which require a woman to be dressed properly in public, or to behave in a way which takes all the rules of propriety, as outlined by Islam, into account. A woman, therefore, may address a political rally, if she is properly dressed and if she confines herself to what is Islamically acceptable. In this, she shares the same obligations with men. What she cannot do, however, is to stand in the midst of a group of men who are either enthusiastic to be near her or act as her entourage. When she has made her speech and when the uproar dies down, she is hustled away from the scene into her quarters, like we see political leaders being treated all over the world when they address their supporters.

The question whether a woman may head a political party or not is a tricky one. While this position is not one of real authority over the community, it gives the holder the potential of being the ruler over the country. What happens if a party headed by a woman wins the elections in a system where the head of the winning party is automatically chosen as head of the government? Will she relinquish that privilege willingly? If the answer is in the affirmative, there is nothing to prevent her from holding that position. In practice, however, such an attitude does not come naturally to a person who is so conscious of power. Even if she is forced into accepting one of the highest positions in government, but not the top one, the situation will be rather unwieldy. There will be either infighting behind the scenes for the real position of authority, or the fact that she is the real leader of the government will be apparent to all. The first case will not serve the interest of the country, while the second position constitutes a contravention of the Islamic rule.

### ***Women: In Politics — Opposition To Their Participation***

Just before the general elections that took place recently in a Muslim country, an Islamic group included in its manifesto a clear opposition to the candidacy of women and their standing for parliament. History tells us that Lady Ayesha, the Prophet's wife, led battles against the enemies of Islam. How can we reconcile this with the view of that Muslim group?

Let me first correct you on the role of Lady Ayesha and her command of a Muslim army. She was not the commander in any battle whatsoever, and she did not fight the enemies of Islam. She was in disagreement with Ali, the fourth Caliph, and she was in the opposing camp when the battle known as "the Battle of the Camel" took place. She was not the commander in that battle, nor did she fight. When the fighting was over, Ali sent her, with due respect and honor, back to Madinah.

I am not aware of the manifesto of that Islamic group you have mentioned. I find it very strange that any group should adopt such an attitude. I hope that you are certain of your information. Otherwise, you could be acting on hearsay, which is not appropriate for a Muslim.

If your information is correct, then that Islamic group is mistaken in their attitude. There is nothing wrong with Muslim women standing for parliament or being elected to parliament. It is wrong to deny women the right to vote. Women offered their pledge of loyalty to the Prophet, and that was an act, which signified full participation in public affairs. Similarly, Muslim women gave their pledges to the early caliphs in the same way as men did. That was akin to exercising the right to vote. In recent history, whatever elections were contested by Islamic parties or groups in Muslim countries, they were ahead of other parties and groups in advocating full participation by women. Islam considers men and women to be equal. The Prophet,

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peace be upon him, says: "Women are the sisters of men." This signifies equality and the right to full participation in public affairs.

### ***Women: Is Heaven Under Mothers' Feet?***

Islam stresses the position of the parents and that they must always be treated with respect. Is it true that heaven is under the feet of mothers and that if a mother is alive she can protect us from punishment by God with her day and night supplication for our protection? It is said that when one's mother dies, this protective umbrella is no longer available. Please comment.

The statement that heaven is under the feet of our mothers is figurative rather than literal. What it means is that a dutiful son is more likely to earn God's pleasure by virtue of his mother's continued supplication for him to be guided by God in everything that is of benefit to him and to his community. Moreover, exerting oneself in trying to please one's mother makes a son or a daughter a better person. They put their mother's happiness above their own pleasure. That is the least a mother deserves after spending many years looking after her children.

It is not right to say that a mother protects her children from God's punishment because of her supplication. If her children are disobedient to God, then nothing can protect them. It is their good deeds that, with God's grace, can save them from punishment for past sins.

There is no doubt that dutifulness to parents is a good deed, which is richly rewarded by God, but this is how far it goes. People normally exaggerate matters, and their exaggeration can give them false ideas [when they take the figurative expression to mean a factual event]. To speak of an umbrella of protection from God which lasts as long as the mother is alive is one such false idea. [It is understandable, though, that supplication by the mother of a dutiful son or daughter is more likely to be answered by Allah and in that way it will provide him/her with protection against evils. This should never be construed to mean that one can go around indulging in sins and hope that mother's supplication will keep Allah's punishment away.]

### ***Women: Kept Only As Mother Of Children***

A man came home to find his wife lying on her bed, fully dressed, with a cousin of hers sitting on the bedside close to her. She assures him that nothing serious took place between her and her relative. She says she is prepared to confirm that under oath. He is not convinced. However, to avoid disgrace to his family, particularly to his own children, this man is thinking of keeping her as the mother of his children but not as his wife. How far is his decision acceptable from the Islamic point of view?

When the woman says that nothing serious took place between her and her relative, she is certainly wrong. For any Muslim woman to be alone with a man in her own bedroom is very serious because it violates the Islamic rule of propriety. The Prophet, peace be upon him, tells us that when a man is alone with a woman; Satan is their third. This means that by being alone together, the man and the woman will start to have thoughts about things that are illegal. There is the temptation to do what is forbidden. Therefore, Islam forbids that a man stays with a woman alone where they can have undisturbed privacy. This woman admitted her relative into her bedroom, where she lay down and he sat on the bed. That is going too close to what is an extremely serious prohibition. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us to avoid what is doubtful; so that we steer away from what is forbidden. Al-Bukhari and Muslim relate the following Hadith: "That which is lawful is plain and that which

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is unlawful is also plain. Between the two of them are doubtful matters about which not many people know. He who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and honor. But he who falls into doubtful matters falls into that which is unlawful, like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Truly, every king has a sanctuary and truly Allah's sanctuary is his prohibitions."

Since the woman is ready to take a formal oath that she was not unfaithful to her husband, her assertion should be accepted. However, she must be taught that what she has done is totally unacceptable from the Islamic point of view. Indeed, it is forbidden. Her husband should try his best to make her understand the seriousness of what she did. He should also ensure that she receives adequate education about what Islam forbids in social matters.

If the man is maintaining his marriage with this woman, then he must fulfill his marital duties. It is not proper that one be married to a woman but deny her what a wife normally receives through marriage. Both man and wife must help each other maintain their chastity. If there is a boycott between the two, then such boycott creates the temptation to go outside the bond of marriage in order to fulfill a natural urge. Thus, the medicine would not cure the earlier condition, but would worsen it. The proper thing to do is to enhance the woman's religious awareness so that she maintains a virtuous life and to live with her as a married couple normally. However, if both of them freely agree to a different arrangement, that arrangement is not unacceptable.

#### ***Women: Medical Colleges — Coeducation Or Girls Only***

My father is strongly opposed to co-education establishments. I want to study medicine, but he is unwilling to let me pursue my aim because the system of university education is co-educational. He suggested that I should travel to another city where there is a medical college for girls only. I feel I would lose much if I were living alone in another city. It is much better for me to be able to come home to my family every day. He feels that the dangers in co-educational establishments that a girl takes are enormous. I feel that an educated young woman should be able to look after herself, particularly if she adheres to Islamic teachings with regard to her dress and manners. I agree with his view that a woman is naturally suited to a life at home, bringing up her family, but the community needs women doctors, nurses and teachers. May I ask whether Islam prohibits studying in a university if it is co-educational?

It is clear that the lady reader is brought up in a conservative family which looks at co-education with strong disapproval. There is no doubt that Islam prefers single sex schools, particularly in intermediate and high schools, when students are all teenagers. That is a time which involves a great change in the physical and emotional make-up of every boy and girl. It is so much safer in such a stage not to burden young people with close contacts with the other sex, because that may lead to problems.

Having said that, I wish to make it clear that an in-depth study of Hadith and history reveals that Islamic society in the early period of Islam, including the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the rightly guided Caliphs, was a mixed society. Segregation of the two sexes is not a principle preached by Islam. In fact there is much misunderstanding of the role of woman in Islamic society. In Islam, the woman is an equal partner with man. She helps him in all aspects of life. However, the division of roles and responsibilities makes it preferable for a woman to stay at home, particularly when she has a young family, to look after children in their formative years.

There is no restriction on her to go out to work. This means that there is no restriction on her education either. In fact there were many woman scholars in the early periods of Islam, when Islamic civilization flourished. When you read any book of Hadith, you will find in the chain of reporters of Hadiths many women Scholars, who taught both men and women.

The best example is Ayesha, the Prophet's wife, who reported more than one thousand Hadiths, and all reporters after her were men, which means that they heard the Hadiths from her directly.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to take one of his wives with him each time he traveled. The choice was made on the basis of a toss. Omar appointed a lady as a supervisor or controller in the market place. This meant that women frequented the market to do their shopping. It is clear from this and other reports that there were also women shopkeepers. In fact women were in all spheres of life, sharing with men on equal basis.

This is natural because women constitute half the population, and there are many situations where a woman needs to work or do her business as an independent person. There is nothing in Islam to prevent that.

In our modern world, there is great need for qualified ladies to work in different sorts of professions. The lady reader mentions the medical profession, naming doctors and nurses, as well as teachers. But there is need for women in various other specialties. An Islamic society should work hard to have a sufficient number of ladies who achieve excellence in various areas of medicine, such as gynecology, obstetrics, internal medicine, so that Muslim women need not be attended by men doctors in such areas. So far, medical colleges, which teach both men and women at the same time, are better and have greater resources and facilities than girls' colleges. In this situation, it is better for our women who wish to study medicine to attend such colleges. There is no harm in doing so, as long as the women students observe their religious duties with regard to manners and dress. The reader's father need not fear for her, because she sounds to be a responsible and religious person who has been brought up with the right values.

In fact it is better for our lady reader to study in her home town, in a co-education college, so that she may be looked after by her family, than to travel alone to a different city where she studies in a girls' college. May God help her with her studies, so that she will be a fine doctor.

### ***Women: Military Training Conducted By Male Officers***

There is provision in certain educational institutions in my home country to join a military training course, which lasts a month. This is available for both boys and girls in secondary schools. Completing the course adds 20 marks to the aggregate examination marks of the student. This helps in securing admission to a good college. The training is conducted only by men officers and girls are allowed to have their head covering, although this is not required of them. Is it permissible for a girl to join such a course of military training in order to ensure good university education?

This is a case to which a general Islamic rule applies. The rule says that everything is permissible unless it involves something, which makes it forbidden. This means that something may be forbidden not because Islam does not approve of it in principle, but because of some other factors or circumstances which are added to it so as to make it unacceptable from the Islamic point of view.

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With regard to your question, we can say that for Muslim girls to undertake military training is permissible. However, if the setup or organization involves violating some Islamic teachings or principles, then the ruling of permissibility changes as a result of that.

If those Muslim girls were trained by women instructors in an enclosed setup, that is perfectly acceptable. On the other hand, if they are trained by men in a situation where they are allowed to dress in a way which does not violate Islamic rules and at the same time helps them pursue their training, and if there is no possibility of an instructor being in private seclusion with a woman he trains, the verdict again says that such a training is permissible.

However, a Muslim woman who wants to undertake it should make her intentions clear that she wants to have such military training in order to help in the defense of the Muslim community, or her family or herself. She should not follow this only to secure admission to a proper college. This is a small reward for her labors. She should seek Allah's pleasure and a good reward from Him by earmarking her effort dedicated to a noble purpose.

### ***Women: Nursing As A Profession***

I have known a colleague for several years and I am keen to be married to her. My parents, however, object to this marriage on the grounds that she works as a nurse in a hospital here in Saudi Arabia. Since my family enjoys a good reputation, they do not like my proposed marriage. Kindly advise.

I am afraid your family is taking a wrong attitude, which Islam does not accept. They are basing their objection to your marriage not on any fault they find with the girl herself, but on her profession. Even then, this profession is not what they make it to be. Even at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, women worked as nurses. We know, for example, that Rufaidah bint Al Harith, a woman companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, established a tent clinic where she nursed some Muslim soldiers wounded in battle, and that Sa'ad ibn Mu'ath, a leader of the Ansar, was her best known patient. It was during the siege of the Jewish tribe of Quraish that this took place. The Prophet, peace be upon him, himself was the one who asked the Aws, Sa'ad's tribe, to have this tent clinic for Sa'ad so that he could visit him whenever the situation allowed. Nursing, then, is a highly respectable profession. Otherwise, the Prophet, peace be upon him, would not have approved of it.

Now if you are certain that this woman you wish to marry is of strong faith, and has sound moral values, then you should make a better effort to persuade your family to accept her. It is better not to start a marriage with friction within one's family. You should try to make your parents realize that they are not really objecting to the woman's personality or to anything wrong with her, but to her work, which is honorable, useful and provides a good service to the community. You may ask them if anyone in the family needs to be hospitalized who would be looking after that patient. Would that nurse be called a bad person for looking after the patient? To say so is far from reasonable.

### ***Women: Obedience Of Husband Or Father — A Rude Question***

When a woman is living in her parent's home does she obey her father or her husband? May I cite the case of a married woman who is currently living with her father? Is it open to the father to let her work although her husband objects to that? Can he allow her to come and go as she pleases when her husband makes it clear that he is unhappy with that? What if

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the father goes beyond that to arrange that his daughter's young children attend pre-school against their father's wishes?

I am not particularly happy with the question and the way it is phrased. It suggests that a woman's affairs are decided for her without reference to her own wishes or how she may feel about the different alternatives that may be available to her. This is not the way Islam treats women, although some Muslims may think otherwise.

It is true that Islam wants Muslim men to take good care of their women folk, but that does not mean a negation of the woman's own feelings and desires. Islam treats women as equal to men in every respect, and assigns to them the same type of duties in religious and worldly affairs, with a division of responsibilities that takes into consideration their biological, physiological and emotional differences. If we take the major Islamic duties like prayers, fasting, Zakah and pilgrimage, we find that the woman has to meet the same requirements as man. She is accountable for any omission in the same way and she is rewarded or punished in exactly the same manner. Then, why should not she be assigned equal responsibilities in her life affairs?

The fact is that Islam gives women the chance to do so, even without interference by her men relatives. In Islam, a woman has the same rights of ownership and inheritance as a man, although her share of the latter may be less because her responsibilities are less. Many people acknowledge this but they soon forget what it entails in practical life. What is important to remember is that if we give women certain rights and privileges, we must accept that they may want to put these into effect. That places certain responsibilities on men generally, and in particular, on those of them who have women relatives wishing to benefit by these.

Let us take the example of the question of education. Islam encourages all Muslims to provide their daughter with good education in the same way as it encourages the education of male offspring. A wise and practically oriented education authority will work out some suitable differences between the education of boys and girls in order to equip each for the type of job they will be doing in practical life. But the importance of education is highly emphasized for both boys and girls.

At the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, his wife, Ayesha, was the best-educated woman in the Muslim community and in the whole of Arabia. Moreover, she put her education to very good use and she argued her point of view in a highly scholarly manner. She did not hesitate to express her opinion when she differed with the most learned people among the Prophet's companions. She was keenly interested in the welfare of the Muslim community during the lifetime of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and after he passed away. No one ever thought that she was overstepping the woman's role of looking after the house and the family. It is only in later generations, when ignorance and illiteracy was common in the Muslim world, that the notion of women's subservience came to acquire common acceptance. Otherwise, Islam has a high opinion of women and the role they can play in society.

What worried me in this question is that it is phrased in a way which gives the impression that there is a continuing dispute within the family as to who has the authority to dictate to the poor woman. Her own wishes or the general circumstances of the family are not even mentioned. I am not given any idea of the nature of the work the woman does, or why her husband wants her to stop working and stay at home. He mentions, however, that she lives with her father who allows her a significant measure of freedom to go about her work, while her two young daughters are looked after in a nursery.

Let us assume, then, that the girls' father wants his wife to stay at home to look after the two girls. There is no doubt that this is a very legitimate desire. Nobody can give

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young children the type of care their own mother provides. However, it is not difficult to make arrangements to provide good care for their children if their mother needs to be away. In this case where the mother is staying with her own parents, it may be that good care in the home is provided for the girls, possibly by their grandmother. If so, and since they go to a nursery, then there is not much wrong with the arrangement. Indeed it may be beneficial for the girls themselves.

There are particularly two important points, which I would like to stress. The first is that when a man proposes to a family to marry their daughter, knowing that the girl actually goes to work, if he does not make it clear at the time that he objects to the woman's going out to work, then the girl and her family are well justified to assume that he agrees that she should continue working after the marriage. He may not turn round in the future and arbitrarily tell his wife that he does not want her to work.

There is a rule in Islamic law which equates what is socially well known and established with what is stipulated as a binding condition. If we apply this rule to the situation the reader is asking about, we say that the husband has always known that his wife goes out to work and he has accepted that by mere fact that he did not object to it at the time when he came forward with his marriage proposal. He may say that now he has two daughters who need to be looked after by their mother. This is true, but his wife is providing the girls with adequate care, then that is all that he can expect from her.

My second point relates to women's education generally and the role the women play in society. It is well known that Islam encourages the education of both boys and girls. In an Islamic community, if parents neglect the education of their children, whether boys or girls, they are accountable to God for that omission. On the other hand, society must provide the changes and the facilities for the education of both boys and girls to the highest possible standard so that the Muslim community could have all trained personnel it needs without relying on any outside experts or expertise. This means, in practical terms, that women will be educated and some of them will attain university degrees. Needless to say, the community invests much of its resources in the education of any individual. When we have educated women, it follows that they will need to put their education to good use. This means that many of them will have to go to work. The community certainly needs that women, not men, fill some jobs. This is not merely natural but also beneficial.

There will always be men who say that they prefer their wives to stay at home and to look after their children. There is nothing wrong with that. But if all people will say so, then how wise is the community which invests so much in educating its women, then allows them to stay at home, making little benefit of the education it gave them? Besides, how are we to fill up those jobs, which need to be done by women professionals? If we, for example, train a woman to be a doctor and provide her with the facilities to become a gynecologist, then her husband forces her to stay at home, we will not only have wasted those resources which went into giving her that specialization, but also we will be forcing Muslim women to go to men gynecologists.

These are general points on the question of women's education and work, which my reader has given me the opportunity to tackle. He needs to consider them carefully as he reflects over his personal problem. However, I would like to give him a word of advice: He should look into his personal situation in a totally different way. He should try to understand his wife's point of view and ask himself whether it would not be better for both of them that she puts her education to good use. When he does so, he may discover that his wife's work may benefit his two daughters as well.

### ***Women: Passing Through Non-Muslim Graveyards***

Is it forbidden to celebrate birthdays? Are women allowed to visit Muslim graveyards? What if they have to pass through non-Muslim graves to reach there?

It is not forbidden to celebrate birthdays, of children or adults. What is forbidden is to imitate non-Muslims in their habits and traditions. If the celebration is intended as copying the way of life of non-Muslims, it is forbidden. If it is intended only as an occasion to express joy and happiness, and may be an informal way of understanding, it is appropriate.

Visiting graveyards is recommended as a way to remind us of death and the Hereafter. This is something both men and women need in equal measure. Hence, scholars say that it is perfectly permissible for women to visit graveyards, provided that they do not wail. If it is necessary to go through a Christian graveyard in order to reach the Muslim part that is appropriate. A Muslim should show respect when he passes through a non-Muslim graveyard. A funeral passed by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and he stood up. He was told that it was the funeral of a Jew. He answered: "Was he not a human being?"

### ***Women: Pregnancy Celebrations & Support By Husband***

People suggest that it is necessary to give a celebration when a wife is 5-7 months pregnant. They say that if one does not give a party during this period, the child will be unhappy. Please comment. May I also ask what should a husband do when his wife is pregnant

There is nothing in Islam or Islamic social tradition to suggest that there should be any function or celebration during pregnancy. I suppose those people who insist on such a celebration are only conforming to social traditions [from the West]. But this tradition is not an Islamic one. It must have its roots in the culture of your society, and I understand Muslims are in minority there.

A husband should be very supportive of his wife during pregnancy, particularly in our time when society is based on nucleus family. A woman goes through some very difficult periods in her pregnancy. Therefore, her husband should help in every way he can. May I remind you of the Hadith, which tells of the Prophet's behavior at home. When his wife, Ayesha was asked about this, she answered: "He would patch up his robe, mend his shoes and attend to all his household needs." Husbands should follow the Prophet's example and give their wives maximum support.

### ***Women: Riding Horses***

According to Islamic law, are women allowed to ride horses? If not, please explain why?

Horse riding is an activity encouraged by the Prophet, peace be upon him. He has urged us to teach our children "good marksmanship, swimming and horse riding." His statement includes both sons and daughters. When a woman rides a horse, she must continue to observe Islamic standards of propriety. She may not wear clothes, which are not acceptable from the Islamic point of view. The same applies to swimming. She may not wear a swimming costume, which reveals her arms or legs in front of men. If she is wearing such a costume, she has to confine her swimming to an enclosed private swimming pool, where she is seen only by people who are allowed to see her in that condition.



### ***Women: Role In A War***

Can a woman be the commander of an army or a group of Mujahedeen?

Islam does not require women to fight in a war or Jihad. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked whether women should take part in any Jihad campaign. He answered: "Women are required to share in a Jihad in which no fighting takes place, namely, pilgrimage and Umrah." This means that women are not required to take part in actual fighting in any war. They can, however, play a supporting role in any war, which the Muslim community fights. At the time of the Prophet, women took such a part, bringing water to the fighters in battle and nursing those who were injured or wounded. In other words, they remain behind the fighting lines.

At the time of the battle of Moat, when the Muslim community in Madinah was besieged by enemies who launched a pincer attack on them, women did not take part in fighting. They remained in their quarter, keeping a watchful eye, and ready to lend a hand of support to the fighters. But that is all that they were required to do.

This is naturally in line with the division of roles and responsibilities between man and woman as envisaged by Islam. The man looks after the present generation. He is the breadwinner of the family and he toils to provide a good standard of living for himself and his dependents. The woman looks after the new generation ensuring that the future of society is built on sound basis. This she does through looking after the children and bringing them up in a proper manner. While it is true that either of the two can fulfill much of the responsibilities of the other when the need arises, this can be viewed as a wise and precautionary measure to be used only in an emergency situation. War, whatever may be its causes and objectives, has much to do with the present rather than the future. It is natural, therefore, that it should be a task for the man who is better equipped to look after the present generation and all its affairs. It does not take much thinking to realize that if women were to fight in a war alongside men and be killed in equal numbers the effects would be far more damaging to the very fabric of society than it actually is. There would be much fewer women to look after the young who constitute the future strength of the nation. It is, then, for the pressing need that the future of the nation is established on solid foundations that women are not required to fight in Islamic wars. In a situation of dire emergency, however, such as the one which is created by an invasion of a Muslim state by its enemies, women are allowed to take an active part in the fighting which ensures repelling the enemy.

### ***Women: Social Gatherings, Segregation & Seclusion***

1. What is the purpose of women's segregation and seclusion? In your answers you seem to imply that if women are properly dressed and they cover their heads and their bodies then they could go about even if this means that they mix with men. Is it not true that the Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered women to walk by the wall, and made it clear that it is preferable for them to pray at home. Islam also says that women's voices should not be heard by men.

2. In your answers you seem to imply that if women are properly dressed and they cover their heads and their bodies then they could go about even if this means that they mix with men. Is it not true that the Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered women to walk by the wall, and made it clear that it is preferable for them to pray at home. Islam also says that women's voices should not be heard by men.

1. I am not exactly certain of what you mean by women being kept in seclusion. If you are suggesting that women are kept at home all the time, this is hardly true

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anywhere in the Muslim world. They certainly move within women's circles, visiting their friends and relatives and receiving visitors.

As for complete segregation, leaving women to have their own gatherings away from those of men, much of this is social tradition. What is forbidden in Islam is for one man to be alone in an enclosed area with one woman to whom he may be legally married. That includes his first cousins. In order to remove this prohibition, they would be joined by at least another woman, who may preferably be one of his relatives to whom he may not be married, such as his mother or sister. As for the presence of many men and women in a social gathering or in a lecture hall or a meeting hall, this is permissible in Islam, provided that women should wear proper Islamic dress which covers their heads and all their bodies with the exception of their faces and the lower part of their hands. What Islam does not like and does not approve of is the sort of intimate mixing which happens in other societies, where married men and women interact in complete disregard of Islamic standards of propriety.

Moreover, in a congregational prayer, men and women do not stand in the same rows. Men's rows are in the front and women's in the back. This is no indication of any superiority, since all of them are offering the same prayer as they are all required to offer it. It is simply a matter of organization, which takes human nature into consideration.

The fact that there are different Muslim countries with some of them being much stricter than others, with regard to mixed social gatherings. I would like to say that the proper Islamic method is somewhere in between the liberal and the strict attitudes. It is, the middle way which meets people's needs and provides proper limitations to prevent excesses. Both the strict and the liberal communities have gone away from the Islamic middle road and their movement is based mostly on social traditions rather than Islamic teachings.

2. My reader's observations are made particularly in connection with an answer which I have given to a reader who asked me about education in mixed schools, or what is generally called coeducation. I have given an answer which made it clear that if older schoolgirls and women in universities observe the Islamic requirements of dress and conduct then they may go to such educational institutions.

Perhaps I should first of all make my position clear on coeducation. In an Islamic society, all schools would be single-sex. It is also far more preferable to have single-sex universities, which offer a program of study for women, which is geared to their needs and equip them better for the jobs they will have and the role they play in society. But this is not available nowadays in the overwhelming majority of Muslim countries.

So, by necessity, Muslim girls have to go to what may be available to them of schools and universities. In this case we have to tell them that they must observe Islamic values of propriety and decorum. We also tell young men who go to these institutions that they also must observe the same values as they apply to them. They must 'lower their gaze' as God orders them in the Qur'an.

It is in keeping with those values that the Prophet, peace be upon him, told women to be the ones who walk closer to the wall when they go about their business. That is more likely to ensure their security and enhance their image of being respectable, chaste women. There is nothing wrong with a woman walking along the street, except that she is required to be decent in her appearance and behavior. The standards of decency are those of Islam, not of any other philosophy or ideology.

It is often the case that we give too much emphasis to some shades of the meaning of the words used by the Prophet, peace be upon him, in Hadith, in order to support our preconceptions of what Islamic life is like. We should guard against coming up with a distorted image as a result.

Take, for example, the fact that women are not required to attend congregational prayers in the mosques as men are. This is due to the fact that women may have to look after young children or may have to do other duties at home. The Prophet, peace be upon him, had told them that in such cases, they may pray at home and that is preferable because they can attend to their family duties.

But we take that as the only instruction in this regard and want to keep women away from mosques all the time. We overlook the other clear instruction by the Prophet, peace be upon him, who tells us: "Do not debar God's women servants to frequent God's mosques."

People frequently say that women's voices should not be heard by men. This is absolute nonsense because it does not have any basis whatsoever. Indeed the reverse is true. There is plenty of Qur'anic evidence to the contrary. Surah 58 begins with a statement which tells the Prophet, peace be upon him, that

***"God has heard the women who has been arguing you about her husband."***  
[She That Disputes — "Al-Mujaadilah" 58: 1]

That is a woman companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who stated to him her case and that means that he heard her voice. Do you think that the Prophet, peace be upon him, would have done any such thing if it was against Islam to hear a woman's voice?

There are numerous Hadiths speaking of women coming to the Prophet, peace be upon him, to inquire about what is permissible and what is not. Never did the Prophet, peace be upon him, indicate to any one of them that they must not speak to him or to his companions. Often the Prophet, peace be upon him, was with some of his companions when women were talking to him and he never told the men not to listen. Again, the Qur'an tells the believers how to behave when they request something from the Prophet's wives. This means that they would speak to them and listen to their answers. How can anyone say that men must not hear women's voices?

It is not true that Islamic society is a segregated one. Indeed the reverse is true. Islamic society makes use of all the capabilities of all its members, men and women. It tells them that there are certain standards of propriety and decorum, which all Muslims must observe. When they do that, they fulfill their duty as good servants of God.

But we must not impose on our society restrictions, which God has not imposed, and claim that these are part of Islamic requirements. That is not right.

### ***Women: Status — Are Men Superior To Women In Allah's Judgment?***

It is mentioned in the Qur'an that there will be women in heaven. May I ask why will they be there? In our country, some scholars suggest that a true believer will be offered as many as seventy such women. Are they correct? If so, what about women? Being a married woman, I cannot think of my husband having seventy women around him in heaven. I want him to be mine only. Is this possible? Do I commit a sin by entertaining such thoughts? Being a non-Arabic speaking woman, I am intrigued by the fact that every time a reward from Allah is mentioned for a particular action, it is suggested that it will be given to a man. What is the reward for women,

then? In the translation of the traditions of Al-Bukhari, the writer makes the comment women can never achieve the grade of men with regard to worship. Is the writer correct? Are men superior to women in Allah's judgment?

When we speak about the life to come, we must bear in mind that whatever we may do, we cannot formulate a "true to life" picture of what things will be like there. How does the resurrection take place? We believe in the resurrection as an essential part of our faith. We have accepted the passage of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, as the final and correct message from Allah to mankind, and that the religion of Islam is the faith chosen by Allah for human beings. To believe in the resurrection is a basic requirement of believing in Islam. Hence, we accept it without question. We are told by the Prophet, peace be upon him, in this connection that women who will be admitted into heaven will be made to look in their best form, full of life and vigor, as they were in their prime of life. How will women regain this form after having lived sixty, seventy or even ninety years? The answer is that we do not know. We believe in it because we believe that Allah has the power to accomplish anything He wills.

We must also bear in mind the Hadith which describes the luxuries which true believers will enjoy in heaven as follows: "In it [i.e. in heaven] there are things that no eye has ever beheld, and of which no ear has ever heard, and the thought of which no human mind has ever entertained."

This Hadith emphasizes the fact that what those who will be blessed with admission into heaven will have much more than they can enjoy. Yet, there are detailed description of what we are likely to have in heaven. Moreover, the description is made in terms of this life and its luxuries. A Muslim cannot entertain any doubt with regard to the truthfulness of any description given in the life to come. We must not forget that the Qur'an is the word of Allah, and whatever Allah tells us is truth, clear and simple. How do we reconcile the Hadith quoted above with the descriptions of heaven given in the Qur'an? This is very simple. Had Allah described the luxuries and happiness of heaven as they actually are, we would not have understood his description, because our life experience is too modest to comprehend it. Therefore, Allah has given us descriptions, which we can understand through our experience. But the luxuries and happiness of heaven are in actual fact much more than we can visualize. In other words, their measure is much more than we can imagine. It is true that in the Qur'anic descriptions of heaven, the presence of young, pretty woman is mentioned. But it is not to be contemplated for a second that these will compete with the believers' wives over their husbands. Your feelings about wanting to have your husband all for yourself are quite understandable. You will certainly have him as you please, if both of you are included among those whom Allah will bless with admission into heaven. It is perfectly legitimate for a believer to pray Allah to give him or her in the hereafter the same marriage partner they have in this life. As for the number seventy, referring to women who will be assigned to every man in heaven, this is news to me. I have not heard it before. However, seven and seventy are often used in Arabic as figurative numbers. They denote plenty.

Perhaps I should mention another point with regard to the relationship between believers and these heaven women. In this life, the main purposes of marriages are the satisfaction of our natural desire and having children. Indeed Allah has made sex so enjoyable in order to ensure the survival of man. The continuation of human life is part of Allah's creation. This does not apply to life in the hereafter. People in heaven will not go on giving birth to children and increasing their own numbers. At no time the description of heaven given in the Qur'an mentioned children being born to believers. You may, therefore, rest assured that you will not be fighting other women over your husband.

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That the Qur'an uses the masculine reference when it speaks of Allah's reward to believers is a requirement of Arabic language. This is indeed the case in many languages. The Qur'an makes it clear that the same reward is given to men and women for the same actions. Allah states in the Qur'an: "***A person, whether male or female, who does good works while at the same time he is a true believer shall be given a good life of Us, and We will give them their reward according to their best actions.***" Indeed, you should read all references to reward in the hereafter that occur in the masculine as equally applicable to the feminine. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says; "Women are the sisters of men." This denotes total equality between the two sexes, except where differences are necessitated by their physical differences and their different roles.

May I correct you on the last part of your question? Al-Bukhari has not written this book. He only made a compilation of statements made by the Prophet, making sure of the authenticity of the traditions attributed to the Prophet, peace be upon him. He included in his Sahih only those Hadiths the authenticity of which he was absolutely certain. These statements are not made by Al-Bukhari. They were made by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and Al-Bukhari's role was only to confirm their authentic attribution to the Prophet, peace be upon him. May be you are referring to the commentary on the Hadiths listed by Al-Bukhari. If so, this commentary is written by a human being that is liable to err. I do not think that it is correct, from the Islamic point of view, to say that a woman will never attain to the grade of man with regard to worship. This is a fallacy. The fact is that women may excel men in any respect, including work for pleasing Allah.

### ***Women: Status — Are Women Deficient?***

My daughter keeps asking me about the Hadith that women are deficient in mental ability and in religion. Could you please explain it? Why does the Prophet, peace be upon him, say that most women will be in hell?

Your daughter is not alone. Many are those who question the meaning it conveys. This is largely due to the fact that the Hadith is quoted only in part and the relevant statement is cited out of context. People always attribute to the Prophet, peace be upon him, the suggestion that women are inferior to men on grounds of a deficient mind a lack of faith. This is far from true.

Let us look at the Hadith in full: "On the occasion of Eid, either that of sacrifice or that of ending the fast, the Prophet, peace be upon him, went to the prayer place, and then went to speak to women and he said: "Ladies! I have not seen people deficient in mind and religion yet can get away with a rational man's mind like any one of you." They asked: "How are we deficient in mind and religion, Messenger of God?" He said: "Is it not true that a woman's testimony counts as half that of a man?" When they answered in the affirmative, he said: "This is her mental deficiency. Is it not true that when a woman is in her period she neither prays nor fasts?" They again answered in the affirmative. He said: "This is her religious deficiency." [Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

To start with, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was speaking to a congregation of women on a joyous occasion. Exemplary in his care for others, particularly his companions, and kind and compassionate as he was, it is inconceivable that he would insult them by such a statement, if he meant it as a statement of fact, like some of us do. The Prophet, peace be upon him, simply used this phrase "deficient in mind and religion" to alert them to what he wanted to say to them. The Prophet, peace be upon him, frequently uses such a method, inserting some words that may not be relevant to the point he wants to stress, so that they serve to attract the attention of his audience. Furthermore, his statement expresses amazement at a well-known situation, when a man is infatuated by a woman to the extent that his

behavior changes in character. He may be wise and intelligent, yet he could easily behave in a way that is inconsistent with his intelligence and wisdom when he is so infatuated. This is a case where a woman who is generally weaker than a man can control him.

The Hadith mentions that the Prophet's women audience asked him to clarify what he said. His clarification pinpoints certain aspects that suggest no inferiority whatsoever. The mental deficiency is related to the fact that in certain cases, two women witnesses are required in place of one-man witness. This has to do with the role of each of the two sexes in Islamic society. It is no reflection on a woman's mental ability. As for religious deficiency, the Prophet, peace be upon him, states the fact that a woman is exempt from prayer and fasting when she is in menstruation. While God gives a woman the reward for prayer and fasting as if she has done them, since she stops only because of her condition and in response to God's orders, still the fact that she does not fulfill these duties means that her worship is less in terms of what she offers. It does not mean that she is a lesser believer.

As for a relevant statement of fact in this regard, the Prophet, peace be upon him, says, "Women are full sisters of men." In the Arabic text, the Prophet, peace be upon him, uses here a word, which implies total similarity and equivalence. Hence, the Prophet's statement suggests no inferiority attached to women. The Qur'an and the Sunnah assign the same duties to both men and women, and promise them the same reward. If this does not mean the same status, I would like to know what does.

May I add here that the translation of this Hadith as quoted by you is wrong, because it splits the relevant sentence and gives the Prophet's words in such a way that they appear to make a statement of fact. This is wrong, as I have explained.

As for the other part, a full translation of it goes as follows: "I have seen hell and I have never seen any thing more horrific than what I saw then. I also saw that the majority of its dwellers are women." They asked: "On what grounds, Messenger of God? He said: "By their denial., They said: "Their denial of God?, He answered: "No. Their denial of their spouses and their denial of kindness. You may be kind to one of them all the time, but when she finds fault with you she says: I have never received any kindness from you."

To start with, the Hadith does not say that most women are in hell. It says that the majority of hell dwellers are women, which simply signifies that more women fail in this worldly test than men. Then the Prophet, peace be upon him, points out their failure, which is not based on denying God. Rather, it is denying kindness, particularly in marital situations. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has pointed this out in more than one Hadith, warning women against grumbling and frequent complaints. He is also warning them here against denying kindness by their husbands, highlighting a failing that is often expressed in denying past kindness.

The Hadith shows that women can easily avoid such a destiny by being fair and appreciative of kindness. They should always be grateful to God for what He has given them and also be appreciative of any kindness done to them by others, particularly those with whom they live, be they their husbands, parents or other relatives.

### ***Women: Status — Attitude Towards Chores For Women In Islam***

I have heard many people say that girls should be denied the right to education, because in Islam, a woman's duty is merely to look after the house and the children. How far is this true?

Allah has sent His messenger to convey to mankind His message, which assigns to them certain duties. Everyone who fulfills his duties and works with diligence to fulfill what Allah requires of him is promised the reward of admittance into heaven. This applies to both men and women. One basic requirement of Islam is that which we inadequately translate as "fearing Allah". This "fear" actually means to be always conscious of Allah and to remember our duties toward Him at all times. It is a fact of life that the closer our own concepts of Allah to the concept laid down by Islam, the more God-fearing we are and the more likely we are to win admittance into heaven. Fearing Allah does not entail a relationship of fear and enmity. Indeed, the Islamic concept of Allah is that of a Supreme Being who is kind, merciful, gracious, dispensing His grace to believers and to non-believers. When we work to please Him, we experience a life of happiness that is incomparable to any other type of happiness. It is pure and sublime. At the same time, we always guard against incurring His displeasure. That comes only as a result of disobeying Him. We, therefore, need to try always to be conscious of what may displease Allah and avoid it. That is what fearing Allah all the time means. It is; then, appropriate to ask how do we develop this sense of fearing Allah.

There is a Qur'anic statement which is highly relevant in this context. Allah says:

***"Those among Allah's servants who truly fear Him are those endowed with knowledge."***[Creator — "Al-Fatir" 35:28]

Knowledge is then essential to develop a true sense of fearing Allah. Indeed, the wider a person's knowledge, the more likely he is to be God-fearing, provided that his knowledge is based on sound faith. It is certainly true that both men and women need to fear Allah, and to develop that sense. Hence, they need knowledge. Moreover, people need to know what duties are required of them and how to discharge these duties. To do so, they need knowledge. In this, men and women are equal. To start with, they have been required to fulfill the same duties. As such, they stand in the same position with regard to their needs of knowledge. Anyone who thinks that a woman could fulfill her duties, which Allah has imposed on her without knowledge, while man needs such knowledge for fulfilling his duties, does not know what he is talking about.

You quote some people as saying that the woman's duty is to look after the house and the children. Even if we say that this is true, she is in need of education to discharge her duty properly. How do we expect an ignorant woman to look properly after her children? In this day and age, it has become increasingly clear that an educated woman can look after her children better. It is not only that she could look after their own education, but she can also look after them from the health and nutrition points of view, making sure that they are vaccinated, watching their growth, ensuring that they have proper nourishment, etc.

Having said that, I have to point out that it is not true that a woman's duty is to look after her house. This is not an Islamic duty. Indeed, Islam does not require any married woman to look after her house, or to clean it or to do any household work. All that is the duty of the man, because the house is his and he is in charge of the family. Whether he does this type of work himself or employs a servant is his choice, but he certainly cannot require that of his wife as something assigned to her by Islam. I realize that it is customary or traditional in almost all societies that the woman looks after the house. Hence, we have the term "housewife" and it refers to a married woman who does not go out to work, but looks after her family and her house. This is acceptable from the Islamic point of view. Indeed, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has sanctioned this when he talked to his daughter, Fatimah and her husband, Ali. He divided responsibilities between them in a satisfactory manner, saying that the man should look after the external affairs of the family, i.e. the duties outside the home, and the woman looks after the inside. But this is a

recommendation, not a duty. [Recommendation of the Prophet, peace be upon him, cannot and should not be ignored, though.] Hence, no one may use this responsibility in order to deny a woman her right to education.

### ***Women: Status — Confusion Over Superiority Of Men***

Could you please explain the meaning of Verse 34 of the fourth Surah entitled "Women"? Some people state that the Qur'an endorses the notion of man's superiority to woman. I am rather confused. Please comment in detail.

The Qur'anic verse to which you have referred may be rendered in translation as follows:

***"Men shall take full care of women with the bounties with which Allah has favored some of them in greater measure than others, and with what they may spend of their own wealth. The righteous women are devout, guarding the secret which Allah has willed to be guarded."*** [Woman — "An-Nis'a" 4: 34]

Although the verse goes on to point out certain rulings in matrimonial relations, the part to which you have referred is the one I have quoted. As it is translated above, the verse gives no suggestion of superiority. Indeed, it relates to the way the family is organized in Islamic society. To explain its meaning and what is really involved in assigning responsibilities to man and woman within the family, there is little that I can do better than quote you at length from the commentary written by the late Sayyid Qutb in his priceless work "In the Shade of the Qur'an".

"The family is the first institution in human life, in the sense that its effect is felt in every stage of human life. It is within the family that man, the most noble of all creatures, according to the Islamic concept of life, is brought up. The running and administration of much inferior institutions, such as those engaged in financial, industrial and commercial affairs, is normally assigned to those who are most qualified for the job by their education, training and natural abilities. It is only logical that the same rule be applied to the family, the institution which looks after the upbringing of the most noble creature in the universe, namely, man.

"The divine code of living takes him and his nature in consideration, as well as the natural abilities given to both man and woman to enable them to discharge the duties assigned to each of them. It maintains justice in the distribution of duties, giving to each of them only the type of duties to which they are suited. It is needless to say that both man and woman are the creation of Allah who does not wish to do injustice to anyone He has created. Indeed He gives each of His creations the abilities and talents which befit the duties assigned to him or her.

"Allah has created human beings as males and females, following the "dual" role which is central to the system of creation. He has given the woman the great tasks of childbearing, breast-feeding and looking after her children. These are not tasks of the type, which may be fulfilled without careful preparation, physically, psychologically and mentally. It is only just, therefore, that the other part, i.e. man, should be assigned the task of providing the essential needs and the protection required for the woman to fulfill her highly important duties. She could not be given all those tasks and be still required to work in order to earn her living and to look after her children at the same time. It is only fair as well that man should be given the physical, mental and psychological qualities which enable him to fulfill his duties in the same way as the woman is given the abilities to help her fulfill her duties. All this is part of the reality of human life, because Allah maintains absolute justice among all.



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"Among the qualities the woman has been given are tenderness, good reaction and instinctive response to the needs of childhood without waiting for much deliberation and reflection. The essential human needs even of a single individual are not left for leisurely reflection and planning. Response to them is made instinctively so that they may be met more or less involuntarily. There is no external compulsion in this. It is an impulsive reaction, which the woman enjoys, despite the fact that it requires sacrifice from her. This is part of Allah's work, which is always perfect.

"These are not superficial qualities. Indeed, they are implanted in the woman's physical, mental and psychological constitution. Some leading scientists believe that they are present in each cell in the woman's constitution because they are rooted in the first cell, which multiplies to form the fetus and the child.

"On the other hand, among the qualities the man is given are toughness, slow reaction and response as well as proper thought and reflection before action. All these functions, ever since he lived on hunting in the early stages, to fighting for the protection of his wife and children, to earning his living in any way, require some deliberation and consideration before taking any decision and implementing it. These qualities are also deeply rooted in the constitution of man.

"It is man's qualities which make him more able and better equipped to take charge of the family. Similarly, his duty of supporting his family as part of the distribution of duties makes him more suitable to be in charge. That is because earning the living of his family and all its members is part of being in charge. Moreover, looking after the finances of the family is closer to his family duties.

"There are two elements which the Qur'an highlights as it states that in Islamic society, men are required to look after woman. It is an assignment of duties on the basis of natural abilities and fair distribution of responsibilities. Each party is assigned the duties to which he or she is most suited by nature.

"That man is better equipped to be in charge is part of human nature. He has the proper natural abilities for that role which is essential for the proper progress of human life. It is a simple fact that one party is equipped for this role and assigned the duty to play it while the other is not. Hence, it is totally unfair that the latter should be required in any situation to take up these responsibilities in addition to her own natural duties. If this latter party is given the necessary practical and scientific training to fulfill these duties, her ability to play the other role, i.e. that of motherhood, is undermined. That is a role, which requires certain abilities of the type we have mentioned, such as good reaction and immediate response along with the natural physical and mental abilities.

"These are very serious questions which may not be left to human beings to decide at will. Whenever they have been left to human beings to decide, whether in the past or in recent times, the very existence of mankind was threatened and the essential human qualities, which distinguish men from other creatures, was in danger of extinction.

"There is plenty of evidence which points out that the rules of human nature force themselves on man even when people deny them altogether. One aspect of that is the decline in the quality of human life and the serious danger to which it has been exposed whenever this rule which gives man the task and the authority to look after the family has been violated. Such violation leads to serious repercussions. Another indication is that the woman prefers that man assumes his role of being in charge of the family. Many women experience feelings of worry, dissatisfaction and unhappiness when they live with men who relinquish their role of being in charge for any reason. This is readily admitted by women who try to challenge man's role.

"Another example of the social repercussion of this unnatural family situation, where the father does not play his role either because of his weak character which allows the mother to overshadow or control him, or because of his early death or in one-parent families, is that very often the children suffer instability which may lead to mental perversion and behavioral deviation.

"These are only a few examples through which nature indicates its presence and the need to organize human life according to its laws. It must be finally stated that the way Islam distributes family responsibilities does not by any means lead to the negation of the woman's character or role in the home and in society at large. Neither does it mean the cancellation of her civil status. It simply defines her role within the family and how it is run. For the family is a very important institution which must be protected and maintained. In any institution, the observance of certain values does not mean the abrogation of the character or the rights of the partners or the workers. Islam defines the role of the man and what his being in charge means as well as his duties as one who takes care of his family, protects it and earns its living."

I trust this lengthy quotation from Sayyid Qutb amply explains the meaning of the verse to which you have referred and in which there is no suggestion of any superiority given to men.

***Women: Status — Equality Of Men & Women, Equal Yet Not So Equal***

You have on several occasions stated that men and women are totally equal in the Islamic society. Nevertheless, the question comes up time and again, perhaps because readers are not satisfied with your answer. While I agree that in general sense, men and women are equal in Islam, there is a degree of superiority for men. This has been indicated by many scholars and commentators on the Qur'an, particularly in commenting on Verse 228 of Surah 2 which states that men have a degree above women. One may really compare the relationship between man and wife to that between father and children. A person cannot enter heaven as long as his parents are displeased with him. The same applies to the wife. In addition, we see certain areas of men's superiority, such as the fact that there have been no women prophets or caliphs, and that the masculine gender has been mostly used in the Qur'an, and the fact that two women witnesses are equal to one male witness. Besides, if a woman accuses her husband of adultery, then the process of vows applies while if her husband is the accuser, she will be caned unless she proves her case. The difference is due to the division of responsibility and differences in natural traits. I am afraid that a woman will be aggressive to her husband after she reads your views.

There is a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion in this question that I find it difficult to deal with all the issues it raises in the limited space available to one question. There are also clear inaccuracies, such as the process to be applied following an accusation of adultery between husband and wife. I will try to tackle all issues raised very briefly.

When we speak of equality, we are really speaking of rights and duties. Of course there are differences between men and women, but these are due to their respective roles in human life, and how they have been equipped for these roles. Both men and women are required to believe in God and all the main beliefs of the Islamic faith in the same way. They have the same duties of worship to observe, and the same authority to enter into any transactions. What God has forbidden applies to both men and women in the same degree. Their reward is the same for their good deeds, and their punishment for their sins is the same. If this is not equality, what is?

Having said that, I realize that my reader is not alone in claiming for men a position of superiority which is not theirs. Often verse 34 of Surah 4 is quoted, and misunderstood, or given an inaccurate meaning, to prove that. It is always quoted in support of the claim that men have authority over women. Indeed many translations of the Qur'an render it in this sense. The best translation of it I have seen is that of Muhammad Asad who renders it as: "Men shall take full care of women." He explains this in a footnote in which he says: "The expression qawwam is an intensive form of Qaim [i.e. "one who is responsible for" or "takes care of" a thing or a person]. Thus qama ala l-mar'h signifies "he undertook the maintenance of the woman" or "he maintained her". The grammatical form qawwam is more comprehensive than Qaim and combines the concept of physical maintenance and protection as well as of moral responsibility. And it is because of the last-named factor that I have rendered this phrase as "men shall take full care of women".

This is indeed the meaning of the verse, and there are numerous cases of linguistic usage, which can be quoted in support of it. But people often quote it to prove their view that men are superior when such superiority is totally untrue.

The other verse to which the reader refers, 2: 228, mentions clearly that men "stand a step above" women. However when this verse is read within its own context, as it should be, it cannot be interpreted as giving men any superior status. As marriage is a contract between two parties, the right to terminate such a contract, which is in the first place a contract between equals, should also be equal. However, God has given men the right to terminate it when they choose to do so, while women are required to apply to a court for such termination. It is in this case only that men have precedence or a special status, and this is perfectly understandable because in the sort of society Islam establishes, it is the man who stands to lose more in the case of divorce.

It is true that in some Muslim societies the situation is different, but that is because in these societies, other factors are involved, or traditions borrowed from different cultures have been maintained.

We cannot make a blanket statement that no one enters heaven if his parents are displeased with him. While dutifulness to parents is clearly emphasized in Islam, there are also rights due to children. In fact the rights and duties of parent and child are clearly defined in Islam, and when the parents take an unreasonable attitude, the son does not need to obey them regardless of the cost their unreasonableness places on him or his own family. There are cases when the son needs to disobey his parents and is rewarded for that. Having said that, the comparison of child and parent relationship with that of wife and husband is grossly mistaken. Some women will certainly go to heaven ahead of their husbands. This is because they are better Muslims than their husbands.

When we speak of the masculine gender used in the Qur'an, we should know that in Arabic this is a standard usage, and it applies to both sexes equally. Nevertheless, God has taken care to mention on several occasions that His provisions and reward apply to men and women in equal measure. My reader says that it is the male that is addressed in the Qur'an. He makes here a grave mistake. The address applies to men and women equally. If anyone does not agree, he is then saying that Islamic duties do not apply to women. That is absolutely wrong. Read, if you will:

***"Their Lord answered their prayer, saying, 'I do not let go to waste the labor of any worker from among you, whether male or female, for all of you [human beings] are the offspring of one another. I will, therefore, forgive all the shortcomings of those who left their homes or were expelled from them for My sake or were persecuted and of those that fought for My cause and were slain, and admit them to the Gardens underneath which canals flow.***

***This is their reward from Allah and with Allah alone is the richest reward’.***  
[the Family of Imran — “Aale Imran” 3: 195]

***“Most surely the men and the women who have surrendered themselves to Allah; who are believing, obedient, truthful, and patient; who bow down before Allah, practice charity, observe the fasts, guard their private parts and remember Allah much; Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.”***[the Clans — “Al-Ahzab” 33: 35]

and reflect on the equality expressed in both. If there is a higher standard of equality expressed in any legal provision anywhere in the world, I would like to see that.

As for the testimony, the witnesses required are two men, or one man and two women. The reason given in the Qur’an is that:

***“Should one of them make a mistake, the other could remind her.”*** [the Cow — “Al-Baqarah” 2:282]

This is in business transactions only. It does imply that, as a rule, women are less familiar with business procedures than men and, therefore, more liable to commit mistakes in this respect. Besides, there are certain cases when only women witnesses are acceptable, and one woman witness is sufficient to prove her case.

My reader asserts that there has never been any woman prophet. In fact, all scholars do not acknowledge this. Imam ibn Hazm, a great scholar of high repute, discusses this point at length and maintains that there were women prophets, although there were no women messengers.

Imam ibn Hazm is not alone in this among scholars of repute. He defines a prophet as a person to whom God imparts knowledge of a future event before it takes place, or inspires him or her about a certain matter. He distinguishes between the different uses of the word “inspire”, or *awha*, in the Qur’an, particularly when it is used with other creatures. He also tackles the other ways that give a person a “sense” of what may take place, such as a dream or a vision, and shows that in none of these the person concerned acquires any certain knowledge. Thus, inspiration, or revelation which makes a person a prophet is intended by God to give the person receiving it certain knowledge, and that person is given by God an awareness of the certainty of this acquired knowledge, either by sending him an angel or by addressing him or her directly to teach them something without an intermediary. It is clearly mentioned in the Qur’an that God sent angel messengers to some women to give them something that was revealed to them by God.

Ibn Hazm gives four examples of women prophets, citing evidence from Qur’an and Hadith in support of his view. These are Sarah, Ibrahim’s wife, Marium, the mother of Jesus, Aasiyah, Pharaoh’s wife and also Moses’ mother. In the case of the first one, it is reported in the Qur’an that angels gave her the news that she would give birth to Ishaq who will in turn beget Yaqoob. When she expressed her amazement as being able to give birth at her age, the angels told her: “Do you wonder at the accomplishment of something God wills to happen?” Similarly, the Angel Gabriel came to Marium to tell her of the impending birth of Jesus, whom she was about to conceive when she was a virgin. In the Surah bearing her name in the Qur’an, she is mentioned alongwith many other prophets. When these accounts are over, God says:

***“These were some of the prophets upon whom God bestowed his blessings.”***  
[Mary — “Marium” 19: 58]

In the case of Moses’ mother, she was inspired by God, as He mentions in 28:7, to suckle her baby for a while and to cast him in the Nile when she has reason to fear

for his life, assuring her that he would come to no harm. She did so, and her action could only be justified on the basis of receiving certain revelation from God. Had it been taken on the basis of a dream or impulse, it would have constituted a crime. The evidence of the Prophethood of Aasiyah is derived from the Hadith, which mentions her and Marium as the only women who had attained to perfection. Since there are other women prophets, then these two are most distinguished among them.

This is the summary of Ibn Hazm's explanation of the position of women prophets. There is no doubt that his argument is based on very strong evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith. There are scholars who take a different view on this point. Whichever view we prefer, it does not justify any claim against our view that Islam treats men and women as absolutely equal.

My reader has confused the procedure of vows in the case of accusations and denial of adultery between husband and wife. It is when the man accuses his wife of committing adultery that the process of taking vows is applied. The man has to swear four times by God that he has seen his wife actually commit adultery. At that moment he is stopped and reminded that the next oath is too serious to be taken falsely. If he insists, he then swears a fifth time invoking God's curse upon himself if he is making a false accusation. At that point, the woman is given the chance to deny the accusation.

She is required to swear four times by God that he is accusing her falsely. When she has done that, she is reminded of the seriousness of the next oath, and that it is much easier to incur punishment in this life than to expose oneself to the consequences of a false oath. If she insists, she has to swear a fifth time invoking God's wrath upon herself if the accusation is correct. If anything, this procedure confirms the equality of husband and wife. If there were any superiority for either, that person's oaths would have been given more weight, but they are not, because the two are absolutely equal.

May I inquire why should men insist on giving themselves superior position which is not given to them by God? If they have that, their responsibility will be greater. My reader suggests that this will reduce a woman's obedience to her husband. I do not think family life in Islam is based on orders, commands and obedience. God says in the Qur'an:

***"One of His signs is that He creates for you mates out of your own kind, so that you might incline toward them, and He engenders love and tenderness between you. In this, there are messages indeed for people who think."*** [The Romans — "Ar-Rum" 30: 21]

When we conduct our family life on the basis of love and compassion, and when this is mutual, there is no room for lasting disputes or anything to poison the relationship between husband and wife. It is wrong to make our starting point supremacy on one side and obedience on the other. The right basis of family life is, as God says, love and compassion, so that the mutual inclination is realized.

### ***Women: Status — Equality Of Men & Women, In Rights Or In Value***

You have stressed the equality of men and women. May I suggest that this frequently asked question results from a problem of linguistics? The Oxford English Dictionary lists 12 definitions for "equal". The first two are 1) being identified in value and 2) having the same rights and privileges. Both these meanings are common in the every day usage of education. Thus the two sexes are unequal in the second definition. You have mentioned on more than one occasion some of the differences between the two sexes. May I suggest then that the answer to whether Islam considers men and women

equal should be both "yes and no". This will stress their equality in value but not in rights and privileges.

The case is certainly well argued by my reader, but I still disagree with her. People differ in their abilities, aptitudes, and temperament. When the law gives certain rights and privileges to all people, they do not exercise these rights in the same way. They cannot, even if they try. Some are bound to have much less than others. It can be argued that the law has given them the chance to be equal, but they cannot make that equality physically and materially apparent. Maybe this is part of what gives human life its richness. But if the law assigns the same rights and privileges to all people without taking care to favor some less endowed or less able groups, they may be at a great disadvantage. Take the example of education where the law in most countries gives all children the same rights. If the law does not take care to give special facilities to children with special needs, then these children will not have the same education. If the law gives them that, then it appears to indulge in favoritism. Dyslexia is a stark example. It signifies a range of learning disabilities that have no apparent cause and no cure. Yet many children are dyslexic and need to learn special strategies to get around their difficulties and acquire the learning to which they are entitled. Dyslexic children should be given more time on their tests and for their assignments. If the law gives them that, it appears to favor them, while if they are not given extra time they would find themselves less capable, and they are, as a result, at a great disadvantage. To my mind, equality cannot be administered unless these children are given the facilities necessary to learn at their own pace, and also to show their ability. Otherwise the law which guarantees a minimum standard of learning for everyone cannot be enforced.

Men and women are equal in God's sight, both in value and in their rights and privileges. How can we say that when there are several areas in which they appear to be in a position of inferiority? My reader lists quite a few of these including that they are not allowed to marry four husbands, and they cannot divorce at will, as well as their inheritance, and the fact that in certain cases two witnesses may serve in place of one man witness.

But if we take these at face value, we will be doing the same as one who claims that God has threatened those who pray. To justify his claim, he quotes the fourth verse of Surah "Al-Ma'un" 107, which says: ***"Woe to those who pray."*** If you take this verse alone without adding the following one, which qualifies it, you will think that people should not pray in order to spare themselves the woe with which they are threatened. But if you read the rest of this short Surah, your conclusion will be totally different, because it reads: ***"Woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayers; who put on a show of piety but refuse to give even the smallest help to others."***

In order not to make such a hasty and faulty judgment, we should carefully consider these differences in the rights and privileges of men and women. When we do, we are bound to conclude that the differences in rights and privileges do not have any bearing on the equality between them. They are meant only to help each of them fulfill the role assigned to them so that both give to human life the best they can. To satisfy ourselves of this basic equality, we need only to remember that both men and women have the same duties to believe in God after reflection and consideration, and to worship Him in the same manner. Both will have the same reward for any act they do in fulfillment of their religious and community duties.

### ***Women: Status — Hoors For Men, Are Women Inferior In Heaven?***

1. My friend suggests that women are inferior to men even in the Hereafter. He says that in heaven they will not be on equal terms as they will not have male partners similar to the Hoors mentioned in the Qur'an, for men. Please comment.

2. You mentioned that sex is not one of the pleasures we enjoy in Heaven. This does not seem to fit, because there are women companions in Heaven, known as Hoors. Besides, not everyone has the chance to enjoy sex in this life. Such people may have their compensation in Heaven. What is the alternative for women?

1. What determines equality is the tasks assigned to men and women and the reward they are given for them, or the punishment they incur for failing to attend to them. What we read in the Qur'an, and the Hadith, we realize that men and women are assigned the same duties and given the same reward. All verses in the Qur'an, which address "believers" are equally applicable to men and women. In fact, there are two types of address in the Qur'an: one to men and women equally and the other to women only. Thus, they are given a special status, not an inferior one.

The person who made the claim that women are inferior in heaven does not know what he/she is speaking about. How has this person come to the conclusion that the Hoors in heaven are women companions given to men? For what purpose? The fact is that these Hoors; normally translated as wide-eyed maidens are placed in the service of the dwellers in heaven. There is no indication in the Qur'an that they are to be companions only for men. Moreover, the description of heaven and hell in the Qur'an, and Hadith are given in what is familiar to us so that we may understand them. But the real favors and blessings God provides for those whom He admits to heaven are far greater and richer than these descriptions.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, says about heaven: "It contains what no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of and no mind has ever imagined." Furthermore, if the result of being admitted in heaven is perfect happiness, and if men and women attain such perfection of happiness in different ways, how does that signify superiority of one and inferiority of the other?

2. There is much that is said about Heaven and what people may receive there. Much of what is said does not carry any evidence. It is often received by word of mouth and taken for granted. Yes, there are Hoors, which means wide-eyed females; but there is nothing in the Qur'an, or the authentic Sunnah to suggest that the pleasure we have with them is sexual. Since the sexual desire is meant for procreation, and there will be no procreation in the life to come, it is logical to assume that there is no sex there. If some people do not seem to enjoy the satisfaction of their sexual desire in this world, it does not follow that they will have it in Heaven. What they will have is far superior to anything they have known in this life.

Besides, there is nothing to suggest that women will have so many husbands in Heaven, which, again, indicates that the whole idea of sex in Heaven is not realistic. If someone asks what is the point of having Hoors then, the answer is that their presence is part of life in Heaven, in the same way as the presence of boys serving its inhabitants. No one has ever suggested that these boys will be partners to the women inhabitants of Heaven. Why should the Hoors be sex partners to men? Many scholars express this view, but it is not shared by all.

### ***Women: Status — Men's Distinction?***

I have been researching the status of women in Islam, but I found certain things that I cannot understand. For example, I read a Hadith to the effect that if women were allowed to prostrate for anyone, they would do so before their husbands. Obedience by a wife is stressed very strongly. That should be all right if a husband is reasonable in his demands. But many are the husbands that are unreasonable, and with the requirement of obedience women can be in a very difficult position. Moreover, a Qur'anic

verse speaks of the steps to be taken before divorce, and it includes beating one's wife. I am told that the word 'beat' is an incorrect translation. Yet there is a Qur'anic statement that gives husbands a step over women in their status. That gives me the impression that the relationship between man and wife in Islam is similar to one between a man and his pet. It is easy to make a pet's life very difficult without ever incurring a sin. Please explain.

It is easy to misinterpret a verse in the Qur'an, or a statement by the Prophet, if one takes it in isolation, without relating to other verses and statements on the same subject. Hence it is imperative that we deal with religious text to understand the basic principles that Islam emphasizes and to relate such text to principles applicable to its subject matter. In the relationship between man and woman, the overriding principle is that stated by God:

***“Women shall, in all fairness, enjoy rights equal to those exercised against them, although men have an advantage over them.”*** [the Cow — “Al-Baqarah” 2: 228]

As this statement occurs in the context of divorce, it is applicable to all matrimonial relations. The rights of both husband and wife are equal. There is no doubt about this. The practice of Prophet, peace be upon him, and his guidance confirm this.

I realize that the next statement in the same verse speaks of men having an advantage over women. But this advantage is simply the one, which gives a man the right to end the marital relationship unilaterally, while a woman needs to prove a case of harm or seek Khula in order to get her marriage terminated.

In the light of the above statement, and looking at the way God makes His address in the Qur'an scholars have concluded that whenever an address is made by the Prophet, peace be upon him, or in the Qur'an, it simply applies to men and women equally. Excepted from that are the cases where women are addressed specifically as women. Thus, the address in the Qur'an, and Hadith applies either to women on their own, when the case is clearly so, or to men and women equally. This means that the order to men to take good care of women implies that women should also take good care of men. This is a pervasive rule that applies in all situations except where the context is clear that it applies to women only. There is no question that the relationship is that of a master and a pet. It is one between equals, governed by rights specified by God and elaborated by His messenger.

Now if we look at the examples the reader has pointed out, we begin with the Hadith about prostration. It is clearly misquoted by the reader, who makes it a special case for women, while it is not. The Hadith runs as follows:

Qais ibn Sa'ad [a companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him] says: I went to Al-Heerah [the capital of a puppet state in Iraq] where I saw people prostrating before the governor. I thought that God's messenger had a greater claim to people's prostration. When I met him I reported this and told him, “You have a better claim that we should prostrate ourselves to you.” He said, “Do not do that. Had I thought of ordering anyone to prostrate before another, I would have ordered women to prostrate before their husbands, because of the rights they have against them.” [Related by Abu Dawood].

When you look at this Hadith in full, you realize that it is a case of prohibition rather than encouragement. It is not permissible for anyone to prostrate himself before another, no matter what position that person occupies. In his own case, the Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered his companions not to do that. He then added that had



such prostration ever been possible, then women might have been ordered to do that for their husbands. But the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not order that. Hence, it is not right. The construction of the sentence makes it clear that the whole idea is unacceptable. It is stated in this way only to emphasize the matrimonial rights. According to Islam, however, these are equal between man and wife. Hence, we should never belittle women's rights in Islam.

Another misconception by the reader is that concerned with beating and divorce. The Qur'anic verse that mentions this speaks of women who are rebellious. Three methods of dealing with them are specified in a particular order, one after the other. No one may resort to the second step before the first or to the third before the second. The verse may be rendered in translation as follows:

***“As for those women whose ill-will you have reasons to fear, admonish them first, then leave them alone in bed, then beat them, and if thereupon they pay you heed, do not seek to harm them.”*** [Woman — “An-Nis'a” 4: 34]

In his translation of the Qur'an, Muhammad Asad writes a footnote in comment on this verse. He explains the case admirably well. It is useful to quote him in full.

“It is evident from many authentic traditions that the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself intensely detested the idea of beating one's wife, and said on more than one occasion. ‘Could any of you beat his wife as he would beat a slave, and then lie with her in the evening?’” [Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim]. According to another tradition, he forbade the beating of any woman with the words, ‘Never beat God's handmaidens.’ [Related by Abu Dawood, Nasa'ie, Ibn Majah, Ahmad & Hakim].

“When the above Qur'anic verse authorizing the beating of refractory wife was revealed, the Prophet, peace be upon him, is reported to have said, ‘I wanted one thing, but God has willed another thing. What God has willed must be best.’” With all this he stipulated in his sermon on the occasion of Farewell Pilgrimage, shortly before his death, that beating should be resorted to only if the wife ‘has become guilty, in an obvious manner, of immoral conduct’. And that it should be done “in such a way as not to cause pain.”

Authentic traditions to this effect are found in Muslim, Tirmithi, Abu Dawood, Nasa'ie and Ibn Majah. On the basis of these traditions, all the authorities stress that this “beating”, if resorted to at all, should be more or less symbolic — “with a tooth brush [miswak], or something similar, or even with “a folded handkerchief”. Some of the great Muslim scholars, e.g. Shaf'ie, are of the opinion that it is just barely permissible, and should preferably be avoided. They justify this opinion by the Prophet's personal feelings with regard to this problem. I will quote you one Hadith in support of what Asad says, Mu'aweya Al-Qoshairi reports: “I asked God's messenger about our women and what we may do and what we may not do with them. He said, ‘You may come into her when you wish. You may feed her when you eat and clothe her when you buy clothes. You must not insult her, nor may you hit her’.” [Related by Abu Dawood]

The relationship between man and wife in Islam is not one of obedience in a military sense, as some people would have us understand. It is a caring and loving relationship in which both try their best to take good care of each other. The reader speaks of unreasonable husbands, who demand obedience. This is not what is required of a woman. She is to obey her husband in what is fair and reasonable. He may not demand what is neither fair nor reasonable.

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### ***Women: Status — Of Rape Victims & Society's Attitude***

You have mentioned recently that a woman who faces rape is not required to sacrifice her life to escape the advances of the rapist. Your answer is well appreciated. May I ask for further clarification, what if the woman conceives as a result of this barbaric act? Who has claim to the child? Is she allowed to have an abortion? What should be the attitude of her husband and the community? Sometimes a victim of rape is rejected not only by her husband, but also by the community and even by her parents. In such cases, she is made to suffer endlessly. Please explain.

The considered ruling is that which I have explained in the past and to which you have correctly referred. If a man assaults a woman and she finds herself facing a real threat of death, she is not to be blamed for being raped. It is impossible to rationalize in advance the behavior and reaction of a woman who finds herself in such a situation. What we should say is that a woman who faces attack by a rapist should try to defend herself with all possible means. She should not and need not kill herself. If, however, she kills the rapist, she simply acts in self-defense and she is not to be blamed for killing him. If he kills her, she is a martyr.

If the rapist overpowers her despite her efforts to repel him, she cannot be considered guilty of anything. Neither her family nor the community should be too harsh against her even though she may become pregnant as the result of rape. It is unfortunate that some victims of rape are treated as if they are guilty. If we are to be candid about such situations, we have to admit that such attitude is the result of a subconscious suspicion that the victim have had a share of the guilt in the affair. In Islam, we do not judge people on the basis of suspicion. We only judge them on the basis of clear evidence.

If the victim of rape becomes pregnant as a result of being assaulted, she needs not have an abortion. Indeed, the same rules which apply to all cases of pregnancy apply to her with regard to the permissibility or otherwise of having an abortion. As I have explained in the past, abortion is allowed when the continuation of pregnancy threatens the life of the mother. Apart from that, a small minority of schools of thought allow abortion in very early pregnancy, but the considered opinion of the overwhelming majority of scholars, over many centuries, is that deliberate abortion is forbidden from the moment of conception, unless the continued pregnancy presents a danger to the mother's health.

There is a general rule, which applies to other cases of suspected parenthood. It states that "The child belongs to the man on whose bed it is born, while the adulterer bites the dust." On the basis of this rule, if a married woman is a victim of rape and she gets pregnant, her husband is the father of her child. If she is not married, she brings the child up and the rapist again "bites the dust".

A community, which casts a stigma on the victim of rape, must consider its attitude. If there is blame to be attached, it is not to the victim but to the community for failing to provide adequate protection to prevent crimes of rape altogether.

### ***Women: Status — Of Rape Victims In A State Of War***

With war and conflict happening in many areas, many women are raped by enemy soldiers and other people. If a rape victim is unmarried, can she be married to a Muslim man? If she is married, how should her husband treat her? Some find themselves having to commit suicide after they are deserted by their husbands. If a rape victim becomes pregnant, should the pregnancy be terminated? What is the status of the child?

By definition a rape victim is a woman who was forced into sexual intercourse by violent means that could include a threat to kill her, or in circumstances making her powerless. As such, the rule that applies to her is that stated in the Hadith: "My community are not accountable for what they do as a result of a genuine mistake, forgetfulness or compulsion." Rape is a case where the woman is the victim of the worst type of compulsion, where she is disgraced by force. What her family and the Muslim community should do to her is to help her overcome the trauma of what happened to her and lead a perfectly normal life. Of course she may be subsequently married to a Muslim. If she had no role in the matter, but merely was the victim, would it be fair that she suffers worse consequences? If she is held to blame, as suggested by the drift of the question, then she is treated as if she is responsible for what happened to her. This would be a similar case to that of blaming a murdered man for being murdered. This is a twisted argument that is inadmissible under Islamic justice.

While we cannot make a blanket judgment, a Muslim community where a case of rape occurs should look at the situation very carefully and determine its own extent of responsibility for failing to provide that woman with adequate protection to prevent her being raped. If the community is in a state of peace, then surely something must be wrong if a woman is raped. Measures should be taken to look after the victim and to prevent similar crimes. If enemy soldiers commit rape, the victim's family and community should treat it as part of the effects of war. Just like a building is destroyed, or land is laid to waste, or children are killed, women could be raped when enemy soldiers feel they can get away with such atrocities. We cannot blame a farmer for having his farm destroyed any more than we can blame the woman for being raped. A husband must take good care of his wife who has been raped, helping her overcome the trauma she suffers as a result, and trying to re-establish normal life in their home. If he deserts her, then he is helping the rapists against her. This is a very wrong attitude to take. If a woman becomes so distressed as to commit suicide, after being deserted by her husband or her family, the greater part of the blame for this new crime is laid on the deserting husband or family.

If the woman gets pregnant, the pregnancy should not be aborted. Abortion is not permissible in Islam. It is killing a life God wants to create. If the woman is married, the child belongs to her and her husband. If she is unmarried, the Muslim community should help her bring up the child when it is born. The Muslim community should learn not to attach any stigma to mother or child.

### ***Women: Status — Of Women In Islam***

What is the position of women in Islam? What are the rights of women?  
What are the duties of a Muslim woman, as a wife, mother and daughter?

Full size books have been written on this subject, particularly in the last few decades, because scholars have felt that it is their duty to clear prevailing misconceptions about the status of women in Islam. If I were to treat this subject fully, I would need to devote to it several pages of Arab News. One of the best books that I have read on this subject is the one written by the late Mustafa Al-Sib, former professor of Islamic Law in the University of Damascus. His book *Women in Islamic Fiqh and Law*, is a comparative study of the status of women in Islam and their rights and obligations under the law. I will summarize here his outline explaining the principles on which the Islamic view of the status of women is based.

1. Men and women are absolutely equal with regard to their human status. Allah says in the Qur'an:

***"Mankind, remain conscious of your Lord, who has created you all out of a single soul, and out of it created its mate."*** [Woman — "An-Nis'a" 4: 1]

The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Women are the sisters of men." [Related by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and others] Needless to say that brothers and sisters are equally treated.

2. Earlier religions used to put all the blame for man's fall from heaven on women. Islam repudiates that and makes Adam and Eve equally responsible for that. On the incident of their disobedience in heaven, Allah says in the Qur'an:

***"Satan caused them both to stumble, and thus brought them out of what they had been in."*** [the Cow — "Al-Baqarah" 2: 36]

Indeed, in some verses, the sin is attributed to Adam alone:

***"Adam disobeyed his Lord and thus he was astray. ...."*** [Ta Ha 20: 121]

Furthermore, Islam rejects outright the principle of the original sin. It considers everyone responsible for his or her actions. Thus, no woman is responsible in anyway for what Eve had done in heaven, in the same way as no man is responsible for what Adam did there.

3. A woman is susceptible to faith in the same way as a man is. Thus she deserves admittance into heaven if she does well in her life, and she is liable to punishment if she does badly. The same standard applies here to both men and women. Allah says in the Qur'an:

***"Whoever does well, whether male or female, having already accepted the faith, shall be made by Us to enjoy a goodly living. We will also administer to them their reward according to their best deeds."*** [the Bee — "An-Nahl" 16: 97]

***"Their Lord answers their prayer: I shall not loose sight of what any of you does whether man or woman; each of you is an issue of the other."*** [the Family Of Imran — "Aale Imran" 3: 195]

4. Islam denounces the practice of those who feel sad or adopt a gloomy posture when a girl is born to them. This used to be the case in Arabia prior to the advent of Islam, and it is still so in many communities. According to Islam, the birth of a girl should be celebrated in the same way as the birth of a son.

5. Prior to Islam, several Arabian tribes used to bury newborn girls alive. Islam has forbidden that practice and denounced it in clearest of terms, threatening those who kill their children with utter ruin in this life and in the life to come.

6. Islam issues strict orders to all Muslims to take good care of their women and look after them properly, whether they are their daughters, wives or mothers. In connection with looking after young girls, the Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "He who looks after two young girls until they attain puberty will be on the Day of Judgement with me like these two [and he pointed with his two fingers]." The Qur'anic verse and the Hadith which says: "The best blessing in this world is a good wife who pleases you when you look at her and protects you when you are away." [Related by Muslim and Ibn Majah] The verses which emphasize the importance of being dutiful to one's parents often highlights the role of mothers in order to stress the fact that a Muslim is always required to take particularly good care of his mother. A man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and asked him: "Who deserves my caring attention most?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered: "Your mother". The man asked: "Who comes next?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered again: "Your mother". He gave the same answer the third time, but when the man

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asked him the same question again, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Your father". [Related by Al-Bukhari].

7. Islam also encourages that girls be educated as well as boys. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "To seek education is mandatory on every Muslim." All commentators on Hadith emphasize that this applies to both men and women in the same way. It is well known that a general Islamic order applies to both sexes without distinction, unless there is a specific indication to make it otherwise.

8. Islam has made women entitled to shares in the inheritance of their parents, children or husbands, and Allah has apportioned shares of inheritance to women in all the situations. The right to inherit is given to females whether they are young or old, and indeed to a female embryo who has not been born.

9. Islam has regulated the rights and duties of husband and wife, outlining the rights and obligations of each. Allah says in the Qur'an: ***"In accordance with justice, the rights of women [with regard to their husbands] are equal to the [husband's] rights with regard to them."***

10. Islam has also regulated divorce in a way, which prevents its abuse by the man. No man can claim any arbitrary authority in matters that relate to divorce. [It is only when men or women overstep the Islamic regulations that injustices occur.]

11. Islam has also regulated polygamy, allowing a man to marry a maximum of four wives at any one time. In other communities, which allow polygamy, there is no maximum number of wives a man may have.

12. When a girl is below the age of puberty, she is placed under the care of her guardian who is required to take good care of her, educate her and invest any property she has in a way which ensures its growth. When she comes of age, she has the same legal status as a man. She undertakes all financial and business transactions at the same level as of any man.

To sum up, Islam gives woman the same status as man without any distinction. From the social point of view, it gives her a dignified status throughout her life. Legally, she has the same status as men and she does not need to defer to any authority to be exercised by a man whether he is her father, husband or head of clan.

Having said that, I should point out that there are some minor differences between men and women in certain aspects of Islamic law. These differences relate to a woman's position in her family and her rights, duties and obligations in the Islamic system. They do not reflect on human status.

A woman in the Islamic system is not required to work for her living. Her husband or her guardian is responsible to look after her. If she has none to support her, the state is required to undertake that task. At the same time, a woman is fully entitled to work either as a free agent or an employee. From the Islamic point of view, there is no decent job, which is restricted to or made the absolute reserve of men. Provided that the Islamic standard of propriety and morality is maintained, a woman may have any respectable job.

In pre-Islamic days, women were generally ill-treated and given a low status in society. In the Greek civilization, women started with a very low status to the extent that they were considered impure, and they were bought and sold in marketplaces. A woman could not refuse a husband chosen by her guardian and she could not disobey her husband in anyway. Later, they acquired a somewhat higher status, but they remained inferior to men. The same applies to many other old civilizations. Under the Roman Empire, women did not have the right to own anything. If a woman

had any property of her own, it was automatically transferred to the ownership of the head of the family. Later, in the reign of Justinian, women were given the right to retain what they earned through their own work, but any money given to a woman by the head of her family remained his.

Christian Europe was influenced by notions that prevailed in the days of paganism about the status of women. As recently as 1805, the English law allowed the man to sell his wife. In the year 586 AD. — That is when Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was still a young man — French elegies organized a convention in which they discussed whether women were human or not. They concluded that a woman was a human being created only to serve men. Even after the French Revolution, in the late 18th century, the French law continued to consider that an unmarried woman was totally unqualified to enter into any contract without the consent of her guardian. The French law of the time stipulated that those who did not have legal status were "young boys, idiots and women."

You ask about the duties of Muslim woman. In brief I can say that it is the duty of a wife to take good care of her husband and her family. Mothers must always be kind to their children, and daughters must always be respectful of, and dutiful to, their parents.

### ***Women: Status — Pilgrimage Without Mahrem***

I know very little about Islam. Could you please let me know whether Islam approves of slavery? Does Islam consider women inferior to men? Why cannot a woman go on pilgrimage without having a man relative? Doesn't this indicate discrimination?

We can say for certain that Islam does not approve of slavery. When Islam was revealed, slavery was a very common practice in all-human societies. Islamic legislation includes a variety of ways to ensure the reduction and eventual eradication of slavery. But this was to come gradually as Muslim society developed. There was an important reason for that, which is to help slaves cope with their new status. Had Islam issued an order to free all slaves straightaway, that would have created social chaos, as many would not have been able to cope. This happened in the US when slavery was abolished by law. Many former slaves went back to their masters to serve them, because they could not earn a living without them. The Islamic approach to the eradication of slavery is a better one. However, it should be said that slavery continued in Muslim society for much longer than what could have been expected because of historical factors. To go into these is beyond the scope of this column.

Islam gives men and women equal status in everything, except where their social roles diverge. In these situations it gives each what is most suitable for them. Indeed Islam takes better care of women than any other social order, including modern Western society. Where Islam differentiates between man and woman, it always gives the woman a more privileged position. Unfortunately women are not treated according to Islamic teachings in most Muslim countries. Therefore, you have different aspects of injustice. This is compounded when the blame is laid at the doorstep of Islam. It is totally untrue.

Islam requires any woman who is traveling on any journey that takes more than one full day, i.e. 24 hours, to be accompanied by a male relative who should be either her husband or a relative she cannot marry, such as her father or brother. This is an aspect of the care Islam takes of women. It is nothing to do with her ability to travel or what she may do when she travels. It is to do with the fact that people encounter difficulties when they travel. To be accompanied by a man ensures that a woman is

better taken care of. This is why Islam makes it a condition of travel. It does not apply to the pilgrimage only, but to all travel.

### ***Women: Status — Respect To Men & Slavish Obedience For Women***

Islam provides equal rights to men and women, but it is a fact of life that men dominate women. A woman must obey some men in all matters and she is never free to act according to her will. In young age, she lives in her father's house, obeying him. She must also obey the man in whose house she finds herself, whether he is her brother, husband or son (in her old age). In some cases she has to share her husband with other wives, which inevitably causes her mental torture. Moreover, why should a girl bring dowry to her husband? Is this fair?

May I begin by answering your question where it ended? I am with you. Why should a girl bring dowry for her husband? Why indeed, when it is totally unfair? Why when Islam has provided for the reverse type of action? Islam wants man to pay a mahr or a dower to his wife at the time when he gets married to her. This is something that she can claim by right, and she can determine its level. A woman can decide that her mahr, i.e. dower, is a large or small amount. When the man agrees to it, he must pay it at the time when the marriage contract is made. If she allows payment to be postponed, it remains due at any time she demands it. If the husband dies without paying it, it remains a preferred debt, which must be paid out of the man's estate. She has full right to do with it what she likes. Her husband may not interfere in that. Why, then, should a woman pay her husband a dowry?

I can tell you that this practice is un-Islamic. It is found in certain Muslim communities, but it is borrowed from other traditions from the pre-Islamic days of those communities. You will find it, for example, among Muslims in India, and you find the same practice in the Hindu society. Therefore, it can be said to have been borrowed from Hinduism.

May I suggest that this practice is not only unfair to the woman, but it is unfair to the man, because what happens in practice is that a father of moderate means starts to think about his daughter's marriage from the time she is very young. He starts saving for her dowry. A brother who travels abroad for better employment considers saving for his sister's dowry one of his main priorities. Indeed, he often delays his own marriage in order to see that his sisters are suitably married. They cannot have decent marriages unless he is ready to pay their dowries. This is certainly unfair and this practice cannot be sanctioned by Islam.

You speak of a woman being dominated by her men folk. And you cite her supposed obedience as evidence, supporting your claim. I do not think that Islam built its social order on the basis of women's obedience in the way you have mentioned. Rather the opposite. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has repeatedly said: "Take good care of women." It is clear that this order is given to men who are required, by Islamic law, to look after their women. In return, a woman has to be respectful. And that respect does not mean slavish obedience. Indeed, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has encouraged mutual consultation in family affairs between men and women. He himself practiced that. Moreover, he has given the best example of the proper treatment of women.

In an authentic Hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, is reported to be "in the service of his household", whenever he was at home. Now the Prophet's household consisted of his wives and daughters. He did not have a brother or a father to look after and his sons died in infancy. He never went about ordering his wives or daughters when he was at home. On the contrary, he looked after them and served

them. To follow his example is a duty required of all Muslims. There is in practical fact a difference between what people do and what Islam requires. Responsibility for that discrepancy should not be placed at the doorstep of Islam. It is people who either abide by what Islam requires of them or pay little regard to it. Hence, it is they who bear the responsibility. Equality between men and women is emphasized in numerous Qur'anic verses and Hadiths. To say that they are unequal because men want their women to obey them is to place responsibility for violating the law on the law itself, when that responsibility lies, fairly and squarely, on the person who perpetrates it.

You bring the question of polygamy. I have often explained that we have to look at the permission Islam grants to a man to marry up to four wives at the same time as a legislation to emergencies. The permission is granted in order to provide a solution to many social problems that may occur at the individual and social levels. If that solution involves some bitterness for individual members of the community, I can tell you that its absence will result in a much worse situation for individuals and the society as a whole.

### ***Women: Traveling Alone — By Taxi***

Is it acceptable for a woman to take a taxi or limousine or to be driven by the family driver when she is alone or with her young children? If not, how can women arrange their transport if they must go out to attend to an important duty during the working hours of their husbands?

What Islam censures is that a woman be alone with a man in a situation, which may lead to something forbidden. That happens when they are behind closed doors. This does not apply to traveling by car or taxi. Therefore, she and her husband must make sure that she is safe when she uses a taxi.

What we have to understand is that there are circumstances when a woman needs to go from one place to another when she cannot be driven by her husband in their family car. Consider, for example, the case of a nurse in hospital whose working hours clash with those of her husband. How is she to arrange her transport if the hospital does not provide with that facility? The practical thing is to make arrangements with a limousine company, which employs trustworthy drivers. If she makes such arrangements, she is not at fault. Once she is certain of her safety and that she will not be exposed to any harassment, she may have such an arrangement, or she may employ a regular driver.

### ***Women: Traveling Alone — Rules Reviewed***

An unmarried Muslim woman wants to travel abroad to take up a job as a journalist. The job does not carry any safeguards of observing Islamic teachings. It involves interacting with strangers and going on field assignments. Her parents have been trying to persuade her that it is not the right job for a Muslim woman, but she feels that it offers her a great opportunity, which she does not like to miss. Her prospective employer told her that some scholars allow travel of a woman by air if she is unaccompanied, and told her to do the Istikhara. We feel that it is wrong to do the Istikhara for something that prima facie is not permissible. Please advise.

There is no doubt that travel in the old days, when Islam was revealed, was totally different from present day travel. Nowadays we cross-continent in a matter of hours. Long haul journeys take a matter of 10-12 hours by plane to carry people distances of some six thousand kilometers or so. Should one travel, say, from Saudi Arabia to



the Philippines, he would complete the journey within such a time, if he flies non-stop. Such a journey, which would have taken months of continuous Traveling, was never contemplated in old days except by very few people, who would be either merchants or the odd person who wanted to study human communities and their different lifestyles.

Yet the religious rulings that apply to human practices remain the same, as long as the text which sets out a ruling is definitive in its meaning. Hence, when social modes and practices change, we need to look at the wording anew in an effort to learn whether it applies to us in a different mode to that understood by earlier scholars. Their understanding was inevitably within what was available in their societies. This means that the rule remains the same, but the way we understand it or implement it may be different.

The Hadith in which the Prophet, peace be upon him, makes it clear that a Muslim woman must not travel alone mentions a travel of one day and one night, i.e. 24 hours. On the basis of the Hadith, the woman must be accompanied by her husband or a close relative whom she may not marry, such as her father, brother, uncle, nephew, etc. Scholars also mention that it is permissible for a woman to travel with 'appropriate companionship'. By this they mean either a group of women, or a group that includes some suitable women.

What we need to understand is that Islam does not prevent women from Traveling alone because of any distrust of Muslim women. Definitely not. It simply wishes that a Muslim woman should not find herself in a situation of danger when she cannot call on any help. Travel in old days carried such a danger. Suppose a person traveled on foot or on camel back from Makkah to Madinah alone, the journey would need several days to complete. He would have to sleep on the road, and he may be exposed to danger from wild animals or unknown people who may be Traveling across his way. Should a woman put herself in such a situation, she may come to grief. Should she travel with strangers, she might be a victim of some scheming. Hence the insistence on Traveling with a close relative or appropriate companionship.

Today's travel is totally different. We use airplanes, trains and coaches. In any of these modes of travel there is a sort of appropriate companionship. It is impossible to imagine a situation in which there is any special risk to which an individual traveler, man or woman, is exposed in such travels. When one arrives, the immigration controls are also safe for all. Should a woman be Traveling from one country to another where she joins other members of her family, she may travel alone. She would be safe throughout and she would not have contravened the rule of not Traveling for 24 hours without a Mahrem.

In the case we are looking at, it is not the actual travel that is concerned, but whether the lady could live alone at her place of work. That comes under a different heading. Islam does not approve of a person living alone in a house or apartment. This is discouraged because something may happen to that person when he needs help or medical attention and he may not find that available. However people may be forced to do that for some periods of their lives. If a person is living alone, he or she should make arrangements, which would ensure that help is available when needed.

### ***Women: Traveling Alone***

1. A Muslim woman who is keen on abiding by the teachings of Islam is nevertheless very assertive of her freedom. She claims that there is nothing in the Qur'an to suggest that women cannot travel alone. To her, freedom means that she can travel wherever and whenever she wishes. Please comment.

2. Is it permissible for a Muslim girl to travel to another country without having a male relative with her? What about her travel alone when the flight may take six or seven hours? May I also ask how a woman should express her view in the defense of Islam? I agree that she is the weaker sex but God has granted her wisdom in equal measure to man. Please advise.
3. Can Muslim girls go to a non-Muslim country for study and enroll in a mixed institution of education?
4. As a woman, is it permissible for me to travel alone abroad for further study?

1. This lady is partly right. There is nothing in the Qur'an to suggest that women cannot travel alone. May I suggest, however, that it is also not mentioned in the Qur'an that we should pray five times each day. We are only commanded in the Qur'an to attend regularly to our prayers. The number of times we should pray every day, and how we should pray and the time range for each prayer and the number of rak'ahs included in each, and what part of our prayer is obligatory and what is voluntary are all matters that have no mention in the Qur'an. Nevertheless, every Muslim the world over and in all generations knows that we must pray five times each day, within a specific time range for each prayer, and our five prayers include 17 obligatory rak'ahs and some voluntary ones. Moreover, there is no disagreement among Muslims on the form our prayers should take or what should be included in it as a matter of duty. If anyone denies any part of these facts, he runs the risk of being considered a disbeliever, because he is denying something of Islam, which is essentially known, to all people. The same can be said about numerous aspects of the faith of Islam. Only a few regulations about pilgrimage are mentioned in the Qur'an, but there is little difference among scholars on what parts of pilgrimage are essential for the completion of this important duty.

What I am driving at is to emphasize that it is not necessary that something is specifically mentioned in the Qur'an for it to be obligatory to all Muslims. We have a general rule clearly stated in the Qur'an which tells us that we must obey the Prophet, whatever he commands us. Allah says

***"So take what the Messenger gives you, and refrain from whatever he forbids you."*** [Exile — "Al-Hashr" 59: 7]

This Qur'anic verse illustrates that the Prophet's orders have Allah's support. This is only right because, in whatever relates to the religion of Islam, the Prophet, peace be upon him, only conveys to us Allah's revelations.

In the Qur'an Allah tells us, referring to the Prophet:

***"This fellow man of yours has not gone astray, nor is he deluded, and neither does he speak out of his own desire: that [which he conveys to you] is but [a divine] inspiration with which he is being Inspired."*** [the Star — "An-Najm" 53: 2-4]

Therefore, what you should explain to this lady is that Islamic orders can be given by the Prophet, and all Muslims must abide by them. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has told all Muslim women not to travel alone, because Islam takes good care of women. When a woman finds herself in a foreign country, on her own, she may be vulnerable to a variety of risks. Having her husband or a male companion who is a close relative of her by side will ensure her safety and protection.

2. If we look at the restrictions on women's travel and carefully examine its purpose, we find that it is all meant as a gesture of honor for women and to ensure that good care is taken of them at all times.

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Besides, the travel on which she must have a male companion is that which takes at least one day and one night to cover. At that time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, that might have been a distance of 60 kilometers for the average traveler.

Does the restriction apply to this type of distance these days when we cover it in less than one hour by car or train? I believe that the expression of the restricted travel in time rather than distance is very significant. The Prophet, peace be upon him, could have mentioned distance, in accordance with its measurements of the time, but he did not because he did not wish to make things more difficult for Muslims.

The idea of the restrictions is that Muslim women should be well looked after during their travel. Hence, if a woman is traveling by bus, say, from Jeddah to Madinah which is a distance covered today in a few hours, but needed a few days at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, she may travel on her own, provided that she has the necessary care at her destination.

If this woman is traveling from her husband's home in Jeddah to visit her parents in Madinah, she may do so, without having to do the actual traveling with her husband. The same with air travel. The important thing is that she would have at her destination a close relative, or some arrangements, which ensure that she would come to no trouble.

Women may be physically weaker than men, but this does not mean that they are lesser in status than men. Indeed when we look at what Islam requires of men and women, we find that they are equal in every respect. Hence, the obligations God has imposed on both men and women are the same, and the reward for doing them is the same in both cases. It is not for any person, therefore, to claim that Islam gives women a lesser status, because such a claim is false.

In explaining the message of Islam men and women can do equally valuable work. Both need to make sure that whatever they say about Islam is accurate. This comes from proper study and clear understanding of the Islamic message. It is always important to be certain of one's sources. One should study in the best schools, be taught by the best teachers and make sure that what is taught is right. He or she is then able to express Islamic principles in proper manner. May God help you to achieve that.

3. What a Muslim girl should not do is to travel alone, whether to a Muslim or a non-Muslim country. She must be accompanied by a Mahrem who may be either a husband or a close relative whom she may not marry, such as her father, brother, son, uncle, etc. You must have noticed that here in Kingdom, when a woman signs a contract for employment, she is required to have a Mahrem coming with her. If she does not have a Mahrem she may not be issued a visa, despite her having a contract of employment.

Studying in mixed institution of education depends on how the students conduct themselves. That a woman attends a lecture in a university which is attended by both men and women is permissible. What is not permissible is to socialize in the way it is practiced in the West. Therefore, if a Muslim woman observes the standards of propriety then she may pursue her studies in any institute.

4. If you can do your studies in your home country, that is much better for you. If this cannot be done, and you cannot have a Mahrem to accompany you when you travel, this becomes a case of need, which is treated in the same way as cases of necessity, permitting you to travel alone. Besides, modern ways of travel ensure safe companionship.

The idea of a Mahrem traveling with a woman is required to ensure the woman's safety. A woman traveling on board a flight is safe, since the crew is required to ensure that no one molests any passenger.

### ***Women: Treatment — Unacceptable Treatment Of Women***

I am referring to a practice, which is found in many parts of the world. If a woman is walking alone, she is subjected to a great deal of teasing. If a woman is seen in the marketplace, many a young man try to touch or tease her. What does Islam say to this?

In the early days of Islam, when the Muslim community settled in Madinah and began to establish the first Islamic state, there were many non-believers, hypocrites and Jews in the city. Such people did not pay any heed to Islamic standards of propriety and decorum. On the contrary, they recognized that Islam placed very great emphasis on morality. All those people were hostile to Islam.

They wanted to have a go at it and tried to irritate the Muslim community. Some of them felt that one of the easiest ways to irritate the Muslims was to direct their abusive remarks at chaste Muslim women. The Qur'an takes such people to task, warns them that they must desist from such practices immediately, or they will be expelled from Madinah. At the same time, Muslim women were commanded to wear modest dress and to observe Islamic standards of propriety.

The following passage of the Qur'an refers to those events:

*"Those who malign believing men and believing women without their having done any wrong, will surely burden themselves with the guilt of calumny, and thus with a flagrant sin. Prophet, say to your wives and your daughters as well as believing women that they should draw over themselves some of their outer garments [when in public]. This will be more conducive to their being recognized and not annoyed. God is indeed much forgiving, merciful. Thus it is; if the hypocrites, and those who are sick at heart, and those who try to cause disturbances in the city by spreading false rumors will not desist [from their hostile actions], We shall indeed give you mastery over them, and then they will not remain your neighbors in this city except for a short while. Bereft of God's mercy, they shall be seized wherever they may be found, and slain one and all."* [the Clans — "Al-Ahzab" 33: 57-61]

I think the answer to your question is very clear on the basis of these Qur'anic verses. The action of those people whom you describe is certainly forbidden. It is not at all acceptable from them or from anyone else. There are three types of action to be taken in order to remedy the situations you describe. The first is by Muslim women who must always bring their behavior in line with Islamic teachings. They should appear in public in such a way, which will make them easily recognized as decent and chaste women. They must in no way do anything that may be understood as encouragement to such people.

Secondly, the local community must be on the alert to put an end to such actions as and when they are taken. If young people begin to annoy or irritate Muslim women, they must be taken to task immediately. Thirdly, the authorities should always be vigilant so that they can punish such behavior in a way, which deter anyone from trying to annoy or tease Muslim women.

### ***Women: Treatment — When A Wife Is Ill-treated***

May I put to you the case of a woman who is always insulted and ill-treated by her husband. Although she works hard as a physician and

contributes much to the family finances, still her husband demands more. He often says that a woman should give all her salary to her husband. He often laments his misfortune on being connected with his wife. What is she to do, when she practically has no family, as both her parents are dead and her brother and sisters are all married and live in a different country. She has two children.

Islam requires of every man to take good care of those whom God places under his care: his wife and children. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says that the best people are the ones who are best to their wives. Numerous are the Hadiths that encourage good treatment of one's wife. Indeed, a Muslim has a clear duty of taking good care of all women in his family, including wife, mother, sister and daughter. One such Hadith says: "Take good care of women. A woman is created from a rib. If you try to straighten a rib, you will break it. A break means divorce. Hence, take good care of women." [Related by Al-Bukhari] Note how the Hadith starts and finishes with the same wording, requiring men to treat women with kindness. The middle of the Hadith highlights a certain quality of women, which tends to create misunderstanding. Hence, the Prophet, peace be upon him, encourages us to be patient with our women so that family relations are maintained.

In return for such good care, a man stands to earn great reward from God. Needless to say, a person who turns a deaf ear to such Hadiths and instructions exposes himself to God's displeasure. Not only so, but we must always remember that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has only taught us what is good for us. If we refuse it, we are substituting for his good teaching something that is a lot inferior to it.

This man thinks that when he married he obtained for himself a slave whom he could ask to work hard to enrich himself. He thus treats her so badly, even worse than an animal. When people use animals for their purposes, such as a horse, ass, or cow, they take care of such animals because they want them to continue to give them the service they need. They feed their animals well and give them the rest they need. If they are ill, they have them examined; if they are hungry, they feed them; if they are tired, they rest them; and they show them care and often love. Unfortunately, some men treat their wives and families with less care than they would take of their animals. Such men are not worthy of having a family. They are ungrateful for the blessing God has given them in providing them with wives and children.

The lady in this case is offering far too much to a husband who is totally ungrateful. It is not her responsibility to support her husband and children. That is the man's responsibility. A working woman may do well to contribute to the family finances, particularly if her work means an increase in the level of spending, as in the case of having to employ a child minder or domestic help. Contemporary scholars, like Sheikh Yousuf Al-Qaradawi, make it clear that if a working woman is sharing in the family expenses, her responsibility does not exceed one-third. If this lady's husband is demanding to have all her salary, he is more than greedy.

Unfortunately, there are people like that in society. These are men who think that they have a divine privilege and that whatever a woman does for them, she is still short of what she should do. They are ungrateful, selfish and self-centered. When a woman gives in to their initial demands, they want more. They are never satisfied. The only way to deal with these people is to take a firm stand, and show them that they have killed the hen that lays golden eggs. However, before the woman makes such a move, she must look for support, either from her family or friends. She should know where she would go in case her husband does something very serious, such as beating her. But normally, such men are cowards. They fear for the privileges they receive from their wives. If this woman has a separate bank account into which she pays her salary, she may be able to refuse to give her husband any money unless he changes

his ways. She should steel herself so that she could stand much resistance on his part, but she must stand firm. When he is in a conciliatory mood, she should be ready with her terms. But if he gets nasty, she should be ready to seek outside help, even if she has to go to the authorities or to court.

Having said that, I stress that she should first make sure of what help she could get. But she should not think herself too weak, because she is not. She has resources, which she has not used, and it is time to use them so that she receives the kind treatment every wife deserves. May God help her.

### ***Women: Working Despite Husband's Objection***

If a woman wishes to work but her husband feels that she should not, is it permissible for her to work despite his objections? Suppose that her work does not interfere with her home duties, but her husband simply desires her to stay at home.

Islam encourages that all matters relating to a family should be sorted out by consultation within the family, when each party tries to accommodate the wishes and needs of the other. Both husband and wife should realize that the other party should have the fulfillment they need. Otherwise, the one who is dissatisfied will soon suffer, and this may rebound on the whole family and create friction and problems.

With regard to women's work, Islam does not put any impediments in the path of a woman who wants to work. However, the Islamic system does not require a woman to work outside her home in order to earn her living. Women should be looked after by their husbands or by their male relatives if they are unmarried. A husband must provide for his wife according to his means. She and their children are his partners in what he earns. This is characteristic of the type of society Islam builds. However, women are free to work if they wish to do so, provided that their work complies with Islamic teachings. This is not a restriction, but a requirement of all people. It applies to both men and women equally.

In the early period of Islam, women worked in a variety of jobs. We learn from a Hadith that a certain woman supervised the cultivation and harvest of her piece of agricultural land. In fact the Prophet, peace be upon him, allowed her to attend her work in the farm even though she was in her waiting period after her husband's death.

A husband is within his right if he asks his wife not to work, because of a legitimate reason, such as looking after their young children, but he must fulfill his duty of providing her with a decent standard of living. Nevertheless, he should not make his objection in an arbitrary way, without looking at her needs. Take the case of an educated woman who does not have young children to look after. Her husband spends all the day at work and comes in the evening tired, expecting to be looked after. He finds his wife, who had stayed all day at home by herself, bored and depressed. This is repeated every day. His wife will soon be totally uninterested in anything he says to her. When he tells her about his working day, she cannot sympathize with his problems. The case would be totally different if she utilizes her time in some gainful employment. If he prevents her from working, he may be causing her, and his family, real harm. The best thing in such situations is to discuss and look after each other's needs and wishes. Accommodation is always possible when the two parties try to work it together.

### ***Women: Working For No Financial Reasons***

At the time of my marriage I made it clear to my husband that I wish to be always in work. He did not object. However, now he is saying that I should

not work because it is 'un-Islamic' for a Muslim woman to work except in cases of financial difficulty. This has been a cause of friction in our family. Please advise.

If your husband had agreed to your working at the time of marriage, then he may not withdraw this commitment without a very good reason. To claim that it is un-Islamic for a woman to work is wrong. Some of the Prophet's women companions had their own work, and he did not object. A woman who was in her waiting period after her husband had died asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, whether it was permissible for her to supervise the work in her farm. Some of her relatives objected to her doing this. The Prophet, peace be upon him, told her to attend to her work, adding: "You may have a chance to give something in charity or do some other good."

If a man is married to an educated woman who has a good job, or to a skilled woman who does some skillful work, like dress making, farming, or some handicraft, it may be highly beneficial to the family if she continues with her work. Here the income is not of paramount importance. The fact that the woman enjoys self-fulfillment as a result is very good for a better family life.





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## ***Zakah: A Mutual Social Security System Devised By Allah***

Sometime back when I was on vacation, someone I know needed financial help. I gave her some of my Zakah, which was a substantial amount. I did not mention that what I gave her was Zakah money, but I told her not to return the money, as I had no need for it. Six months later, she came back with the money and insisted that I take it back. I was embarrassed and I could not but take the money back. I gave it to another person who approached me some while earlier for financial help. The same thing happened. That person brought the money back two months later. This was repeated several times over a period of 18 months, with the same amount coming back to me about 6 times. I finally gave it to someone who needed help badly and who could not return it. In all these cases, I did not mention that the money was from my Zakah. Many people in our area would not take help once they know that it is Zakah. Please comment.

You did the right thing in not telling these people that the money you were giving them was part of your Zakah. As you say some people feel too embarrassed to take Zakah funds, although they need not have such a feeling if they truly qualify as beneficiaries of Zakah. To accept Zakah does not degrade anyone, because the system of Zakah is devised by Allah to make mutual social security a characteristic of Muslim Society. Those who need help take it from those who can give it and both are rewarded by Allah. Perhaps it would have been better if you told the first lady when she brought the money back to put it to some charitable use. You should have insisted, as you probably had done, that you did not expect a return of the money and, therefore, you would rather have her retain it or give it away to poor people. She might still have preferred to give it back to you, but she would have had the chance to help in putting it to the right use.

The point I would like to make in commenting on your story is that perhaps you need to look again at the people to whom you give your Zakah. Are you certain that they qualify as beneficiaries of Zakah? Not every person who may be in urgent need of help may qualify as a Zakah beneficiary. Allah tells us in the Qur'an that there are eight classes of people who can benefit by Zakah. The first two are "the poor and the needy". The first woman in your sequence of payees might not have belonged to either class. She was simply passing through a period of difficulty but she was clear in her mind that 'that' difficulty was temporary and that she would be able to repay the money later on. Indeed, she came back with it a few months later. Probably her need was simply temporary. That in it does not mean that she does not qualify for Zakah, but you should have looked at her circumstances more carefully.

Perhaps the same applies to all those persons to whom you tried to give your Zakah. You say that one of them insisted that what he was taking from you was to be considered a loan. He certainly felt that he could pay it back. He would have refused it if he knew that you were paying him your Zakah, although he was in need of help at that particular moment. He might have explained that his circumstances were such that he did not qualify as a beneficiary of Zakah. You say that ultimately you managed

to give it to someone who was badly in need of help and could not return the money. Perhaps you should have made sure of such a selection in the first place.

### ***Zakah: Adjusting Charity Against Zakah***

A woman tried to burn herself after a quarrel with her husband. When she was taken to hospital, neither her husband nor her father was willing to pay the bill, because they blamed each other for the injuries she had suffered. I paid the hospital bill. Can I make that payment a part of my Zakah?

The woman was in desperate need of medical treatment and her family was unwilling to pay for that treatment. In her situation, she would qualify as Zakah beneficiary.

However, your intention at the time when you generously helped her is the deciding factor. If you had intended the payment as part of your Zakah, then it counts as such. But if you intended it as a charity to help someone in need, then that is what it actually is.

If you had intended it as a charity, without any thought of its being Zakah, you cannot subsequently adjust it as Zakah in order to avoid paying your Zakah in full. The point is that any action is treated as intended. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Actions are but by intention, and each person shall have only what he has intended."

### ***Zakah: An Act Of Worship & Tax Liabilities As Good Citizens***

In some Muslim countries, the only taxation collected by the government is Zakah. In others, governments levy tax on income, wealth, estate, etc. Is a Muslim who lives in such a society allowed to deduct his tax liability from whatever he has to pay as Zakah?

Many Muslims think that in a proper Islamic state they will not be liable to pay any taxation except Zakah. They are quite surprised when they learn that under Islam, they have to pay taxes in addition to Zakah. Their surprise is due to an oversight on their part, which makes them forget that Zakah is not meant to meet all the needs of the state and pay for all the services the government provides for the population.

Let us consider first of all who may benefit from Zakah, even when it is collected and spent by the government as should be the case in any Muslim state. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked by some people for a part of Zakah money, he answered that Allah has chosen not to delegate the sharing out of Zakah money, either to a trusted angel or to a Prophet, peace be upon him. He Himself has determined the expenditure, dividing it among eight classes of people. The Prophet, peace be upon him, told people who requested to be paid from Zakah that if they qualified for benefit by Zakah, by belonging to any of those classes, he would pay them. If not, they would get none. The verse he quoted from "Repentance," or "At-Tauba," states that Zakah may be paid to the poor, the needy, those who are employed [in the Zakah department], those whose hearts are to be won over, for the freeing of slaves, the insolvent debtors, for the serving of Allah's cause and to stranded wayfarers.

We published sometime back a series of articles on Zakah and its beneficiaries. If we think carefully about these classes of beneficiaries, however, we are bound to conclude that Zakah is supposed to meet certain social needs and to overcome certain problems in society. It is not meant to cover all what may be collectively needed by a Muslim community or society. Moreover, the Hadith which we have quoted above precludes any possibility of using Zakah money for such things as

building roads, hospitals, schools or similar services even when there is a surplus after the satisfaction of all the needs of its rightful beneficiaries.

When we consider that the services which the government of a modern state must provide for its citizens, we are bound to realize that large sums of money will always be needed by the state. Where will the money come from which is needed to pay for the police force, health services, schools, fire brigade, roads, sewerage, etc. If some of these services can be made self-financing, others cannot generate much income, although they remain absolutely vital for the community. Hence a state has no option but to levy taxes. We see clearly that the purpose for which Zakah and tax revenue are spent differ greatly. Consequently, the two cannot be made related to each other. Indeed, they must remain separate. In a proper Islamic system of government, Zakah will always have its own independent department. This may be self-financing because those who are employed for the collection and distribution of Zakah may receive their salaries from Zakah funds. But this total separation between Zakah and tax is sufficient to make it absolutely clear that the two cannot be grouped together at the official or individual level. No one who is liable to pay Zakah may deduct his payments from his tax liability, or vice versa. He must pay Zakah, which remains an act of worship for which he is to receive a reward from Allah. He must also pay his tax as a good citizen.

### ***Zakah: Assets Liable To Zakah***

1. I have invested a reasonable amount of money in a business. Do I have to pay Zakah on that investment and on the profits I receive from that investment?

2. I have also bought a house on mortgage, and I make substantial repayments in order to reduce the interest I have to pay as much as possible. This has resulted in my inability to pay Zakah last year. Is it permissible to defer Zakah payments for a couple of years, while repaying my mortgage?

1. It all depends on the type of investment you have made. If you are using one of the many schemes offered by banks or governments to participate in certain funds or through stocks and shares, or through an Islamic bank, and you have ready access to your capital, then both capital and profit are liable to Zakah in the normal way. The rate in this case is 2.5%. On the other hand, if your investment ties up your capital for several years and you cannot claim it back earlier without a considerable loss or a substantial penalty, then your Zakah is payable on profits only at the rate of 10%. If your investment is in a private project, the nature of the investment also affects your Zakah liability. Where capital assets are needed, such as a business premises or machines for production, these are not liable to Zakah. The circulating capital, which is used to buy merchandise for sale, is Zakahable together with any profits at the rate of 2.5%. This includes the value of any goods you are holding for sale, which must be valued at the current prices on your Zakah date. You have to confirm your case with a scholar, giving him or her the necessary detailed information.

2. A mortgage loan or a loan taken in the form of hire purchase of any item such as a car or machinery is not counted in the calculation of Zakah liability, because of the nature of the repayment agreement. If a person is earning SR100,000 a year, and spending 70,000 to meet his family's living expenses, including the installments he pays on his mortgage and hire purchase agreements, he cannot claim exemption from Zakah because he still owes a substantial sum on his house or other purchases. This is because the nature of such debts does not require immediate or short-term repayment. Such a person will be saving SR30,000 which is liable to Zakah. Only if he decides at the end of the year to reduce his outstanding loans by an additional repayment, using all this saved sum for the purpose, he does not pay Zakah for it.

It is wrong for anyone to defer the payment of one's Zakah, saying that he has some heavy commitments. Zakah is a debt owed to God and it must be paid on time. If one has heavy commitments, his Zakah liability will be proportionately reduced. But to say that Zakah is unaffordable when its rate is so low is to make a false claim. When the reader increases his mortgage repayments now, he will be saving on the total amount he has to repay. This means a direct benefit. He cannot make such a personal benefit through the failure to pay Zakah.

### ***Zakah: Beneficiaries — Eight Classes Designated By God***

We are running a charity girls school for the poor and needy students and the school is funded mostly by Zakah and Sadaqah. According to the Hanafi School of law, it is obligatory to put the beneficiary of Zakah in possession of what is given to him or her. Hence, it cannot be used to pay the salary of teachers, or purchase of a school building, etc. Could you please explain whether there is a way of relaxing this restriction, since we do not have sufficient funds to meet the school expenses.

The idea of putting a beneficiary of Zakah in possession of what is given to him or her is very important, because no one should be in a position of interfering with the freedom of a poor person on account of having given Zakah money to him or her. Poor persons are entitled to all their rights, including receiving Zakah benefit without losing any of their privileges. Otherwise, we would be exercising unjustified power over them.

Hence, when we pay Zakah to a poor person, we let him or her to decide the best use they can make of it.

When you read the Qur'anic verse specifying the eight classes of people who may benefit by Zakah, you note that God has used one preposition, "to", for the first four and a different preposition, "for" in the case of the other four. The first are the poor, the needy, Zakah workers, and persons who are to be won over to the cause of Islam. When these are given Zakah they should be put in possession of what they are given.

In the case of the other four, Zakah is given for particular purpose. Therefore, it is appropriate to ensure that the purpose is met, even if the person concerned is not given possession of the funds. Thus, it is acceptable that you pay Zakah to the creditor directly to reduce or pay off the debt. The beneficiary in this case may not even see the money being paid. Similarly, if you are paying Zakah to a stranded traveler, you may buy an air ticket for him and ensure that he boards the plane. One of these four categories, where Zakah is paid for a purpose, is "to serve God's cause." This could be in defending an Islamic state or helping pilgrims, or to increase the capabilities of the Muslim community.

In his priceless commentary on the Qur'an, Al-Manar, Muhammad Rasheed Redha, a scholar of high standing, says:

"Under this heading may be included the building of military or charitable hospitals, paving roads, building military, but not commercial railways, building armored vehicles, military boats and planes, fortified positions, etc.

"One of the most important purpose for which Zakah could be used under the heading in our modern times is the education and preparation of advocates of Islam to send them to non-Muslim countries where they could work for the spread of Islam.

"Also included is the expenditure on schools, whether religious or ordinary ones, which serve the general interests of the community.

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“In this case, teachers in such schools may be paid from Zakah, as long as they are fulfilling their duty full-time and are not earning their living in some other way. Zakah may not be paid to a learned scholar who has sufficient funds for his own and his family’s living, merely because of his learning, even though he uses it for the benefit of the community.”

I have made this quotation to show you exactly what may be done by Zakah money under the heading of “to serve God’s cause,” where no one is placed in possession of the funds, but they are used for public interest.

### ***Zakah: Beneficiaries — Expending & Choosing the Beneficiary***

My brother who used to be a Zakah-payer sent his son abroad for higher education. However, the rising cost of education had stretched his means. He is now borrowing money in order to pay his son. I do not know whether my brother is still a Zakah-payer. Can I help him or his son to meet his educational expenses and set off some of his loans against my Zakah liability? Which is better from the Islamic point of view: to give Zakah to my brother or his son for the completion of his study, or to give to other relatives who are poorer than my brother? May I also ask whether it is permissible to use Zakah money for the construction of a mosque or the renovation of an existing one?

It is perfectly possible that a Zakah-payer encounters difficulties and loses much of his money or his means of income, which eventually may turn him into a Zakah-recipient. The fact that he used to be a Zakah-payer should not prevent us from assessing his situation in the light of his new circumstances. Once it is established that he belongs to any class of beneficiaries of Zakah, he should be helped. We must not forget that the Zakah system is meant as a system of mutual social security. Therefore, if your brother's means have changed so markedly to make him one who is entitled to be given Zakah, you should pay your Zakah to him, because paying Zakah to a close relative is preferable to giving it to other people.

I am intrigued by your statement that you do not know whether he is still a Zakah-payer or not. A person who qualifies to pay Zakah is someone who owns more than the threshold of Zakah and continued to own that threshold for a year. If your brother is in that position, he should not find it difficult to pay for the education of his son. If the costs of such education are too high for him, then he could not be in the position of a Zakah-payer. You have first of all to be absolutely certain of the facts before you can decide whether to pay him your Zakah or not.

What I can tell you is that a person who has incurred debts, which he finds too difficult to settle, is a beneficiary of Zakah. We can classify in this position a person who has a good job and a decent income, but also has very heavy commitments, which make his income insufficient to meet his needs. If such a person has incurred some debts and finds it so difficult to settle them, he is to be helped by Zakah. Similarly, a person who has not incurred any debts but whose income is less than what is reasonable to meet his needs is also a Zakah beneficiary.

Let me explain a point of detail. Two government employees may be of the same grade and receive the same salary. Suppose that neither of them has any additional income. Still, one of them may be a Zakah-payer and the other may legitimately be a Zakah-recipient. The first would be one who has a very reasonable commitment. He may have inherited the house in which he lives with his wife. They may not have any children. As such their expenses are of a reasonable standard and the man is able to save a part of his salary every month. The other person lives in rental accommodation and has a large family. He may also be looking after elderly parents.

As such, his income falls far short of meeting his expenses. He deserves to be helped with Zakah money.

Another criterion to be considered is that a person who is pursuing studies and has no income of his own may be helped with Zakah money until he finishes his studies. In order to understand the wisdom behind that we should remember that when such a student completes his study he is able to benefit the community and himself. This applies to your nephew who does not seem to have any source of income of his own. You may help him directly with his expenses. What you have to ensure, however, is that your nephew is a serious student who is trying his best to finish his studies as soon as possible. Moreover, you have to consider how much does he need to have the higher degree he is studying for. Is it so important that he pursues his education to get a proper job? Or is it something that would give the family some pride? You may certainly have to balance these situations and determine whether to help your brother or his son. You may consider taking over your nephew's education, if you have the means to do so, and consider that you will be able thus to help your brother and help your nephew to finish his studies more quickly.

In considering to whom you pay your Zakah, you should bear in mind that the closer the poor relatives are, the more entitled they are to be helped. The only point to remember is that you do not give Zakah to a relative who is entitled to receive support from you. Thus you cannot pay your Zakah to your poor parents or poor children or to your poor wife. A brother or a grown-up nephew are not entitled to receive your support by right. Therefore, you may help them with your Zakah.

What I have to say after having explained all these considerations is that your brother's case should be considered on its merits, with due regard to all respects. I have touched on some of these. You have to study it very carefully to find out how much help your brother or his son needs. If you determine that your brother is now in a position of being a Zakah beneficiary, you should go ahead and help him with your Zakah.

Having said that, I should add that you could help your brother even if he is not a Zakah beneficiary. That help must not come from Zakah. Let us not forget that Zakah is what Allah has prescribed as a minimum amount of help, which we have to give to others. If we go beyond that, the scope is wide. We can choose whom to help and how to help them. You should consider helping your nephew or your brother with an open mind not restricting yourself to Zakah.

As for your question about using Zakah money to build a mosque, I remind you of the Hadith, which states that Allah, has not left the determination of how Zakah should be spent to His messenger or to an angel commanding a high position. He ruled on its distribution Himself. He has told us that Zakah is payable to eight classes of people. Building mosques or renovating them is not one of the purposes of Zakah. Therefore, Zakah money cannot be spent for this purpose.

### ***Zakah: Benevolent Funds***

Companies pay to their employees what is termed as 'end of service' benefit. This is normally kept with the company until the end of service by any of their staff, when they pay it up. In other cases, this benefit is paid annually to the employee. Should the employee decide to keep this benefit aside, intending not to use it until he retires from service, is it liable to Zakah? Is the same applicable in the first case, when the company holds the benefit?

Although the two cases appear to be the same, with the exception of who holds the benefit, they are highly different. In the first case, the employee has no access to the

benefit unless he leaves employment. In the second case, he is in actual possession of the money, but he chooses to set it aside. This situation is not different from that of holding any savings, intending not to use them unless one faces an emergency. Hence, such funds are liable to Zakah every year at the normal rate of 2.5%.

As for the first case when the funds are held by the company or the state, and the employee has no access to them, Zakah is paid on the whole amount, once only, at the normal rate of 2.5%. This Zakah is due on the day when the benefit is paid out. Whatever is held of that in future is liable to Zakah in the normal manner, every year on the Zakah date of the owner at the same rate.

### ***Zakah: By A Married Couple***

Should both the husband and wife pay Zakah separately if the woman is working and earning, or does the husband only pay Zakah? For instance, a woman has an amount of gold, say, 100 sovereigns, should she pay Zakah for that, bearing in mind that there is no income received by her from having them? Must she sell some of the gold for that purpose? Should her husband pay for her? What is the minimum amount of gold exempt from Zakah? Are diamonds Zakahable? Is it possible to defer the payment of Zakah, carrying it forward from one year to the next? Is Zakah payable at a particular time every year, such as in Ramadhan? Or could it be paid on monthly basis?

The basis of this question is a comparison between Zakah and income tax as it is operated by most countries of the world. In modern taxation thinking, the family is taken as a unit and a man starts the payment of Zakah after his income exceeds a certain threshold which normally has two levels: One for a single person and the other for a married man. If the wife is also working or earning, the taxation law, at least in some countries, gives the married couple the option of paying tax jointly or separately. Hence, they go to an accountant who advises them on the least costly way to pay income tax. He may point out for them a few methods or tricks, some of which may be devious which help them reduce their tax liability. All this is accepted as legitimate by everyone concerned.

This rationale cannot be applied to Zakah in any way. The basis of the Zakah liability is the fact that it is an act of worship. You need only look at the fact that the divine instruction given in the Qur'an to believers to attend to prayers is almost always coupled with the requirement that they must pay Zakah. In the early days of the Islamic state many Arabian tribes rebelled after Abu Bakr became the first ruler to succeed Prophet, peace be upon him, as head of state. The main thrust of the rebellion was that newcomers to Islam wanted to stop paying Zakah. As you are probably aware, Abu Bakr sent out 11 armies to crush the rebellion. All the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, endorsed his stand with hesitation. He declared, "By Allah, I shall fight everyone who differentiates between prayer and Zakah." The position he took was based on the fact that Zakah was a part of the Islamic faith. If one does not pay it, he is not simply withholding an amount of money, which is due to the state; he is actually refusing to fulfill a duty of worship. That is far from the Islamic thinking.

Scholars define Zakah as an act of worship, which is financial and must be performed by everyone who owns an amount of money or property, which exceeds a specified threshold. As such, a Muslim stands to earn reward from Allah for the payment of Zakah in the same way as he earns reward for offering prayer, fasting in Ramadhan and performing the pilgrimage.

It is in this light that we should approach Zakah. Since it is an act of worship, it applies to man and woman in the same way. Everyone who is familiar with Islam knows that our religion treats men and woman as equal. It makes the same requirements of both sexes, making special allowances for women and giving them some special responsibilities in return for commensurate privileges, because of the different abilities and roles of each of the two sexes. It goes without saying that in respect of Zakah, both men and women stand on equal footing. Every one of us, man or woman, is liable to pay Zakah, once he or she owns what is above the threshold of Zakah and everyone, man or woman, is responsible to make sure that it is paid on the time and given to its beneficiaries. Thus, a married woman is responsible herself for the payment of her own Zakah if she is liable to pay it. She may appoint an agent, her husband, or anyone else to look after her affairs, including the payment of Zakah. It is her responsibility; however, to see that her agent does as she requires him to do. It may happen that a woman is much richer than her husband. Consequently, her Zakah is much bigger than his. Indeed, she may be a Zakah payer, while he may qualify as a Zakah beneficiary. In this case, she may pay her Zakah to her husband if he is poor, while he cannot pay it to her in the opposite circumstances. This is due to the fact that a man is required to provide his wife with what she needs for her living, even if she is much poor and he pays her his Zakah, he is actually paying it to himself. Since a rich woman is not required to support her poor husband, then paying him Zakah means simply paying it to a poor Muslim.

It is clear from the foregoing that Zakah is an individual duty. No two individuals can put their resources together in order to pay Zakah together, even though they may be closely related: a man and wife, two brothers, a father and a son, etc. Each is accountable for fulfillment of his or her own duty. It follows that this lady about whom the question is raised, and who owns 100 sovereigns of gold, must pay Zakah for that amount and the rest of her property in the normal manner. The fact that there is no income generated by keeping that gold is immaterial. Zakah is not levied on income, but on the total property of a person, i.e. capital and income together. The proper procedure for the calculation of Zakah liability is for every individual to mark the date when he or she comes in possession of the threshold of Zakah which is equivalent to the value of 634 gm of silver. If you become an owner of that amount over and above what you require for your immediate needs of living, on tenth Muharram, then that date is your Zakah date. Every year, on the same date, you calculate all that you have. If it is still in excess of the threshold of Zakah, you pay Zakah on all that you have at the appropriate rate. You include in your calculation any flock of cattle you may have, the agricultural produce of your land, the stock in your shop, the production of your factory, the value of the shares that you own, as well as any gold or liquid cash you may have. You need not include the house in which you live, the machines in your factory; the agricultural land you plant, and the tools of your trade, etc.

There is no such thing as a minimum amount of gold, which is exempt from Zakah. Only the threshold determines who is liable to pay. In this respect, you have to remember another point of difference between Zakah and income tax. In taxation the threshold remains exempt from the payment of tax. In Zakah, when you become liable to pay it is payable for all you have, including the threshold of Zakah itself. [Another difference between income tax and Zakah is that income tax is levied on the income during a period, even though you may have spent away that income while for Zakah you do not calculate income that you have spent away.]

There are, however, a few exemptions, some of which we have already mentioned. A woman's jewelry which is kept for her own personal use, is also exempt from Zakah provided that it remains within the limits of what is considered reasonable for a woman of her social status to have. This gold which this lady has does not seem to fall in this category. It is a form of saving which is liable to Zakah. It is certainly above the threshold. If she has not paid Zakah for it over the past few years, Zakah



remains owed by her and she must pay it as soon as possible. Diamonds are in the same category. If they are part of a woman's jewelry, the same rule of exemption applies. When it is kept as a form of saving, the whole amount is Zakahable.

It is not necessary for this lady to sell some of the gold in order to pay Zakah. She could pay it from any part of the rest of her property. She can pay in liquid cash. If she does not have that and her husband decides to pay Zakah on her behalf, he is simply making her a gift, which she may accept.

Zakah should be paid as soon as possible after it becomes due. One should keep the Zakah money aside, ready at all times for payment and he should seek its beneficiaries to pay it to them. In an Islamic state, the government collects Zakah and supervises its distribution. It is perfectly appropriate for a person living in such a state to pay all his Zakah to the Zakah Department in the government. It is possible, however, to accumulate Zakah, carrying it forward from one year to another, only in one situation, namely, the non-availability of beneficiaries. As you realize, this hardly happens these days. In fact, it happened for a short time in the early period of Islamic history. Zakah was offered in the market place in many cities of a Muslim state, but there was no one to take. Everyone felt that what he or she owned was sufficient for their needs. These days, there is no place on earth where Zakah beneficiaries are not available. Moreover, if it is difficult to find beneficiaries in a place like Saudi Arabia, Zakah could be sent to one's hometown for payment to beneficiaries there.

As I have already said, Zakah should be paid when it is due, immediately or shortly after one's personal annual date. However, people prefer to pay it in Ramadhan because good actions done in Ramadhan are more generously rewarded. It is appropriate to pay most of the Zakah you estimate will be due of you on the next Zakah day in the preceding Ramadhan. It is equally appropriate to pay Zakah in installments, over the year. On the proper day of Zakah, you make your calculations, deduct what you have already paid from what is due, and pay out the difference. If what you have paid exceeds your liability; you cannot adjust it against next year's Zakah unless you have made the intention at the time of payment that it is Zakah for the following year.

### ***Zakah: Calculating Assets & the Due Date***

I should be grateful if you kindly explain how to calculate Zakah on different sorts of property, including land held for investment, rented and commercial buildings, buildings owned in another country, local shares in companies.

The important thing in the calculation of Zakah is that every person should have a Zakah date when his or her Zakah becomes due. This date is the one when that person comes into the possession of the threshold of Zakah, which is the equivalent of 85 grams of gold in excess of his or her living needs. If a person begins saving when he starts his first job, then the day when his savings reach an amount equal to the threshold of Zakah is his Zakah date. The following year, and every subsequent year, on the same date, he should calculate what he has. If it is still in excess of Zakah point, then he or she should pay Zakah immediately on all that they have. This means that part of what that person has might have been acquired very recently, may be the day before, and that it would not have been held for a year. Still Zakah is payable on that. What we have to remember is that Zakah is an act of worship, which is rewarded by God. When we realize that we have been holding more than we need by a minimum equal to the threshold of Zakah, then we should be grateful to God for giving us such plenty, and our gratitude should be demonstrated by paying out Zakah on all that we have.

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Let us assume that a person has had very little over the threshold of Zakah for practically the whole year, and one week before his Zakah date he received a large sum of money, say, one million Riyals. We tell him to pay Zakah on that amount in addition to whatever else he has had. It will only mean that he will have to pay 2.5 percent of what he received recently in addition to the same rate on the rest of his money. Will he not still be rich? He will indeed be richer because the Zakah, which he pays out, will earn him generous reward from God. That Zakah will be his savings for his future life. It will be paid back to him multiplied by a minimum of ten times. Moreover, when we treat Zakah as an act of worship, we will be better able to give more than the exact amount due from us, in the same way as we pray Sunnah, which is voluntary prayer in addition to the obligatory prayers that God has imposed on us.

When land is purchased as a form of investment, it should be treated like any commercial commodity. It is Zakahable and the amount of Zakah due from it is calculated on the basis of its market value on the Zakah date. If it generates income, then that income is also Zakahable.

A building that you rent out, whether it is residential or commercial, is liable to Zakah on the rent you receive, after deducting any expenses you may incur, whether by way of maintenance and repair or taxes and other fees. However, if one uses the building for one's own business, as in the case of an office, a store, a warehouse or a factory building, then the building itself is not liable to Zakah, whether the business is one's own or belongs to a company. If you let your building to a company, the company does not pay its Zakah, but you pay Zakah on the rent you receive.

The reader here asks about a building held on another country. The same rule is applicable. Zakah is a duty owed to God, Who is the Lord of the whole universe. Hence, geographical location is of little consequence. Zakah is not a tax people try to avoid; it is an act of worship which earns reward from God. Hence, we should be keen to pay it out, and pay in excess of the required amount.

Shares in companies are also Zakahable, whether they are held on the basis of long- or short-term investment. If they are held for more than a year, then Zakah is payable annually, on one's Zakah date, and the amount of Zakah is calculated on both the market [not nominal] value of the shares, and the profit or dividend they earn. If one buys and sells shares frequently on the stock market, then those shares are treated as commercial commodities. On one's Zakah date, one calculates the amount of money and other property one holds, including the value of the shares one happens to be holding on that date, and pays its Zakah.

The shares are treated here as the goods one has in one's shop. It is easier in all this to make one's calculations on the basis of a financial year, as companies do for the calculation of their profit. That financial year starts on the Zakah date. But I must add here that in all Zakah calculations we have to take the lunar year, not the Gregorian calendar.

If a person puts money into a troubled company to help to put it on a steady course, that money is liable to Zakah, both the capital and the profit in the same way.

I would like to add here that Zakah is due on all one's money, whatever its source. Thus money received as dividends, rent, salary, income from business, etc. is all Zakahable. If one has a current bank account into which he pays in all such money and from which draws one's living expenses, one adds the balance of this account on one's Zakah date to all the amounts on which one must pay Zakah. As I have explained, there is no need to wait for a year for every payment one receives. The year is deemed to have passed as long as one has more than the threshold of Zakah on one's Zakah date.

### ***Zakah: Calculating On Monthly Savings***

A person adds to his savings every month. Please comment on how he should calculate his Zakah.

Everyone should have a Zakah date, which is the date when he first owned an amount equivalent to the threshold of Zakah, determined at 85 grams of gold. Every year, on that date, you calculate what you have. If it is over this threshold, you pay your Zakah on the entire amount, even though some of the money might have been with you for only a few days.

Suppose that last year you had a saving of 10,000 riyals, and you paid your Zakah for this amount. During the year you added to your savings different amounts, ranging from 50 to 300 riyals every month, and on your Zakah date this year you have 12,000 riyals, you pay your Zakah on this amount, even though you added your last savings only one month ago. Do not forget that by making this addition, you are a little richer and you have paid all your living expenses. You are in a much better position than many people. To express your gratitude to God for giving you this much, you pay your Zakah to help those who are less fortunate than you.

### ***Zakah: Calculating the Liability & Disbursement***

In our province, there are no Zakah collectors. What should a Muslim do? We can identify only six of the eight types of beneficiaries of Zakah in our locality. How much do we pay to each? Is it lawful to pay Zakah to Muslims who may not attend regularly to Their prayers, although they fast and offer Friday prayers? How do we allow for the depreciation of fixed assets in the calculation of due Zakah? Could you advise on how much Zakah I should pay, on the basis of the information I am supplying herewith?

It is true that Islam considers Zakah a duty of the community, in the sense that the community must organize its collection and distribution. However, if the state or the government or the community does not undertake such a task, the duty of paying Zakah remains incumbent on individuals. Everyone should see to it that his Zakah liability is properly calculated and distributed. If the state undertakes the collection and distribution, it should see to it that all classes of beneficiaries receive their shares. However, in our modern times, one class has disappeared, namely slaves. In Islamic legislation, a portion of Zakah funds should be allocated for the freeing of slaves. When an individual pays out his own Zakah, he should concentrate, in the first place, on the poor and the needy. He may pay others, such as insolvent debtors or stranded travelers, but he needs to be very careful with these in order to make sure that they really qualify as Zakah beneficiaries. As for the class of people "whose hearts are to be won over", individuals should leave this item to the state. The payment to such people is not made in order to bribe them into becoming Muslims. They may be fair-minded people who are ready to give support to the Muslim state when it has to confront its enemies.

Any Muslim who qualifies under any of the eight headings of beneficiaries may be paid Zakah funds, either to satisfy his or her immediate need or to cure that need altogether and enable that person to become self-sufficient. People are not to be questioned on how regular they are in attending to their Islamic duties before we pay them Zakah. If they are deserving people, then they should be helped. The mere payment of Zakah to them could soften their hearts and encourage them to be more diligent in attending to their Islamic duties.

It is not up to me to calculate your Zakah liability, although you have sent a detailed statement of account. Before any person other than yourself can do such a

calculation, he needs to be satisfied that what you have entered into your statement includes all your property that is liable to Zakah. You have, for example, entered only cash receipts, but you have not included the value of any goods you have in your business. When a businessman calculates his Zakah, he should add the value of all the stock he has, because his stock is part of his assets. Moreover, some items need clarification. For example, under the subheading, "Jewelry", you have entered a value, which you described as "for personal use", and another which you describe as "excess". What does all that mean? In the case of jewelry, a man does not have any allowance. It is a woman who may have gold jewelry exempted from Zakah if it is for personal use and within what is reasonable for women in her social status. A man either has articles for personal use, or property that is liable to Zakah.

You ask about allowances in the calculation of Zakah against depreciation of fixed assets. Fixed assets may be either Zakahable or not-Zakahable. For example, the building where a factory is located is not Zakahable, nor are the machines used to produce whatever that factory makes. The same applies to all types of business. For example, the shop fixtures and furniture are not taken into account when Zakah is calculated, nor is the value of the animals a farmer uses in connection with his business. But if an asset falls under the Zakahable heading, its value is calculated every year. If it is of the depreciating type, we add its value on the day when Zakah becomes due. But the production of a factory or a farm or a business must be calculated with the rest of a person's property. For example, if you have a factory which makes cloth material, its output is entered into your Zakahable assets. Some people may suggest that these may be liable to Zakah when they are sold, but this is not right. These are assets owned and have value. They may be exchanged for money at any time when a customer is willing to pay appropriate price. Therefore, Zakah is due on them.

### ***Zakah: Children & Their Zakah Liability***

We are three children; the eldest is 15 and the youngest nine. Our parents give us pocket money, but we save some of it. Are we supposed to pay Zakah?

Your attitude in trying to know what duties you have to fulfill with regard to your money is highly commendable. Apparently, you have been raised in a religious family. May Allah enable you to grow as good servants of Islam. Zakah is payable by a child of any age, provided that the conditions which make any person a Zakah payer are met. A child may be very wealthy, if he has received his property through inheritance or as a gift. His father or guardian is required to ensure that this religious duty is fulfilled. According to some scholars, the role of the guardian is to calculate the Zakah which is payable by the child in his care, without paying it. When the child comes of age, his guardian should inform him of how much Zakah he is supposed to pay for the years that have passed. It is up to that child, now a grown-up, to pay it or not. Other scholars say that the child's guardian pays the child's Zakah liability in the same way as he pays the child's other commitments.

Zakah is payable by every Muslim, man or woman, boy or girl, who owns more than the threshold of Zakah which is equivalent to the value of 634 grams of silver. That is probably in excess of SR. 3000. If your savings is less than that, then you are not liable to pay Zakah. If they have reached that amount, you should remember when exactly, or approximately, your savings reach that figure. Next year on the same date, you calculate how much you have. If it is still in excess of the threshold of Zakah, then you pay Zakah on everything you have, at the rate of 2.5 percent. This is how every Muslim calculates his or her Zakah.

### ***Zakah: Cumulative Liability Of Zakah***

Several years ago I bought a flat through a contractor who was building a residential block. My intention throughout was to resell the flat for profit, although I have no house or flat of my own. As you have replied to a reader that in such a situation, the flat is Zakahable every year at market value, I have started to pay Zakah. But with the lapse of time, its value has increased greatly, that when I calculated the Zakah amount due, I find myself unable to pay it. It is nearly half of what I have paid so far for the flat. May I add that the building is not yet complete? I have taken possession, but there is still work to be done, and will cost a lot more money. Yet the flat has always been easy to sell. Should I sell now, I will be able to pay my Zakah liability easily and make good profit. This situation has been causing me problems, particularly when I need to buy something for my family, which is not absolutely essential. I feel that I should clear my Zakah first. Beside, I have no means to pay all the cumulative Zakah liability until I have sold the flat. How should I resolve this problem?

My reader is clearly not a businessman, because a businessman does not tie up his money in a single article and leave it to appreciate in value. It is certainly wise business to have a real property like the one he bought, because it brings handsome profit, but this should not be all the business he has, particularly if he has little else to rely on for his living needs. Had he had other business ventures which were bringing him good profit to lead a comfortable life and pay all his dues, including his Zakah liability, it may make good business sense to hold on to a flat for several years, as long as it appreciates in value. But even in the property market, there are periods of stagnation when prices may drop or at least stand at a certain level. Hence it is not good business to hang on to a piece of property, which is meant for resale.

Property dealers would tell our reader that he would have made much more profit, had he sold his flat, bought another and sold it, and continued to do this every now and then. Moreover, he would have found the liquidity to pay his Zakah and improve his standard of living. But our reader is not that sort of dealer. Hence, he is caught in dilemma, which is real indeed.

I cannot find a way, which would reduce his Zakah liability. He must pay his Zakah every year. It is a large amount now, but he should consider whether the price of his flat is increasing the amount of Zakah every year or not. If it is not, then that is bad business.

My advice to my reader is that he should sell his flat and be grateful to God for the profit he has made. He should look for another way to invest his money, either by buying another flat under construction, or putting his money in a profit-and-loss-sharing account in a bank that operates such an Islamically acceptable account, or in a unit trust scheme. That should guarantee him reasonable returns and enable him to pay his Zakah and look after his family.

Of course the problem would not arise if the flat is bought with the intention of using it as owner's place of residence. If he changes its purpose now, he will still have to pay the Zakah that has already accumulated while it was meant for investment. But there will be no additional Zakah liability. However, I emphasize that the change must be serious, and that it is decided upon after considering the family's circumstances.

Since my reader has the possession of the flat, he will need to start making his flat habitable and to move in as soon as he can. If he does that, he does not have to pay any fresh Zakah. He will need to pay the outstanding Zakah only. If he changes his

purpose and uses the flat for his family's residence, there is nothing to stop him selling it after a period of time, if he decides that he wants to change it for any valid reason, such as buying a bigger or smaller one, or one in a better area, etc. [These are the honest options available to be resorted to in letter and spirit and not for any kindly of manipulations.]

If he still wants to hold it as an investment, he should be more practical and sell it. He will then be able to clear his Zakah liability and make good use of the profit. If he does not do that, and continues to hold it, he must find a way to pay his Zakah. He could pay what he can as he goes along, and then pay whatever is left outstanding once he sells it.

He does not need to deprive his family of a comfortable standard of living. Nor does he need to sell some articles that he or his family use in order to pay his Zakah. He can continue to look after his parents and give them gifts, but he must be reasonable in all that.

### ***Zakah: Deduction By the State On Savings Accounts***

In Pakistan, government deducts Zakah directly from bank deposits of Sunni Muslims. Those who are Shi'a or Ismailis are exempt from this provided they submit a statement signed under oath and witnessed by two persons of their religious affiliations. Is our government allowed by Islamic law to make this deduction? Is it permissible for any Sunni Muslim to submit the required declaration that he belongs to another group because he has relatives who qualify as beneficiaries of Zakah and he wants to make sure that this Zakah is properly spent.

Under the Islamic system, it is the government, which is required to administer the collection and distribution of Zakah. A Zakah department should be established in the government of any Muslim country for collecting Zakah and distributing it to its beneficiaries. This department is self-financing, because salaries of its employees can be paid directly from Zakah funds. Had such a department been operating in Muslim countries for the past 30 or 50 years, we should not have suffered the sort of poverty, which many Muslims areas suffer today. The answer to your first question is; therefore, that the government is not merely allowed but required to take Zakah from people and spend it as Allah has specified its methods of spending.

I should point out that this option should not be limited to bank savings. It should be expanded to ensure that every Muslim in the country pays his or her Zakah to the Zakah department and also to make sure that those who qualify for Zakah benefit actually get the payments to which they are entitled. It is wrong to operate a Zakah collection and distribution agency and limit its revenue to one or two sources of Zakah. That will create a bad example of how Zakah operates in practice. I realize that the task is enormous, but every Muslim government which wants to operate this system can spread its full implementation over a period of time and it will soon realize the benefits of establishing this system in the actual betterment of the fortunes of the lowest earning section of its population.

I appreciate the motives of any person who has poor relatives and who wants to pay Zakah to them. This is a noble motive, which should be encouraged. However, I cannot accept the method suggested to achieve this. If anyone makes a false statement, whether under oath or not, he lies. This is forbidden in Islam. We cannot tell lies except in specific, well-known situations. This is not one of them. What should be done, instead, is for depositors of such savings to bring pressure to bear on the government to allow them to make a similar statement to the effect that they

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pay their Zakah to those relatives. How this should be formulated is a matter, which the government can decide.

***Zakah: Does It Encourage Begging?***

***“Charitable donations are only for the poor and the needy, and those who work in the administration of such donations, and those whose hearts are to be won over, for the freeing of people in bondage, and debtors, and to further God’s cause, and for the traveler in need. This is a duty ordained by God, and God is All-knowing, Wise.”***

[Surah Taubah — Repentance 9: 60] Commentary by Sayyid Qutb — Translated & Edited by Adil Salahi

Zakah, which is referred to here as ‘charitable donations’, occupies its important position in Islamic law and the Islamic social system. It is not given as a favor by those from whom it is due, but is rather an incumbent duty. Nor is it given as a gift in an amount determined by the one who distributes it, but rather its amount is properly calculated. It is a major Islamic duty collected by the state in order to fulfil a particular social service. The one who gives it does not hold a favor for doing to, and the beneficiary does not have to beg for it. No, the Islamic social system could never be based on begging.

The basis of the Islamic system is ‘work’, in all its various ways. It is the duty of the Muslim State to make sure that anyone who is able to work has a job. It should provide training opportunities, and it should take the necessary measures for job creation. Furthermore, it should ensure that those who work receive fair wages. Those who are able to work have no claim to Zakah, because Zakah is a social security tax that functions between those who are able and those who are deprived. The state administers its collection and distribution when any society runs its affairs on the basis of Islam, putting God’s law into effect, seeking no law or social system other than that devised by God.

Abdullah ibn Omar quotes the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: “Charity is not lawful to be given to anyone who is rich or to anyone who is strong and fit.” Two men came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and asked him to give them a share of Zakah. When he looked at them carefully, he found them strong and able. He said to them: “If you wish I will give you, but you should know that no one who is rich or able to work and earn has any claim to a share in it.”

Zakah is a branch of the Islamic system of social security, and this system is far wider and more comprehensive than Zakah, because it works along several lines that comprise all aspects of life and all sides of human ties. Zakah is only an important one of these lines.

Zakah is collected at the rate of one-tenth, or a half, or a quarter of one-tenth of the principal property, depending on the type of property held. It is collected from everyone who owns more than the threshold of Zakah when a year has passed since he or she has had that threshold. This means that most members of the community make their contribution to the Zakah Fund. The proceeds are then spent according to the system outline in the verse we are discussing. The first groups of its beneficiaries are the poor and the needy. The poor are those who have less than what they need to live on. The needy are also in the same position, but they do not show their need or ask for help.

Some among the people who qualify as Zakah payers and pay their Zakah one-year may find their position has changed the following year. Their property may have decreased and they may not have enough for their needs. Thus they qualify as Zakah

beneficiaries. Some may not have ever paid any Zakah but they nevertheless qualify as beneficiaries. In both these cases we see Zakah as a means of social security. However, it is first and foremost a duty imposed by God. A human soul is purified as one pays Zakah as a form of worship. It is purged of all traces of miserliness, and it triumphs over its love to retain money and property.

Let us now look at the groups who should benefit by Zakah. ***“Charitable donations are only for the poor, and the needy and those who work in the administration of such donations.”*** We have already explained who the poor and the needy are. The third group of beneficiaries are the people who actually work in the collection and distribution of Zakah.

***“And those whose hearts are to be won over.”*** This applies to several groups of people. Among them may be people who are newcomers to Islam and it is felt that they may be helped to consolidate their conviction of its truth. Also included in this category are those who we hope to win over to the faith. Similarly, we may include here people who have already become Muslim, but we may give them Zakah money to win over some of their colleagues and friends who may start to think about Islam when they see that those who have become Muslim are being given gifts.

There are differences among scholars as to whether this category of beneficiaries still exists; given the fact that Islam has firmly established itself. The fact is that, given the nature of the Islamic system and the various situations in which the Muslim community may find itself, there may often be a need to pay Zakah to some individuals or group of people under this heading. The purpose may be either to strengthen their resolve to follow Islam, if they are being subjected to discrimination on account of having adopted Islam, or to help them formulate a favorable idea about Islam. This may apply to people who are not Muslim themselves, but may render some service to Islam by speaking favorably of it in their own circles. When we consider this we recognize how God’s wisdom takes good care of the Muslims in all situations.

***“For the freeing of people in bondage.”*** In olden days, slavery was an international system where captives of war were enslaved. There was no escape from this system where it had to be applied on the basis of ‘an eye for an eye,’ until the world could get rid of that system and replace it with something that does not involve enslaving anyone. This portion of Zakah funds was used to help anyone who could buy his own freedom in return for a sum of money, which he would pay to his master. Alternatively, slaves would be bought with Zakah funds and then set free by the Muslim authorities.

***“And debtors.”*** This category includes anyone who has incurred debts for a purpose that does not involve committing a sin. They are helped in the repayment of their debts, instead of forcing them to go bankrupt, as happens in a materialistic civilization where business people who are unable to repay their debts have no other option. Islam is a system based on social security, where no honorable human being is left to go by the wayside, and no honest person is lost. Under man-made law, or should we say the law of the jungle, people are allowed to eat one another like fish, although they give the process a legal guise.

***“To further God’s cause.”*** Under this heading any activity which brings benefit to the Muslim community and serves the advancement of God’s cause may be included.

***“And for the traveler in need.”*** This includes anyone who might have spent or lost his money while on a journey. He is given what will see him home, even though he may be rich in his hometown.



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This is then the Zakah system that some people criticize today as a system of begging and handouts. It is simply a social duty, discharged in the form of an act of Islamic worship, to purge people's hearts of all traces of miserliness and a grudging love of money. It establishes a bond of mutual care and compassion between all people in the Muslim community. It gives human life an element of loving care while providing a comprehensive system of social security. It retains at the same time its essential nature of being an act of worship which strengthens the bond between man and God, as well as the social human hand.

It is after all: "***a duty ordained by God,***" who knows that is good for humanity and who provides the best system for it based on His wisdom. For, "***God is All-knowing, Wise.***"

### ***Zakah: Financial Requirements & Zakah Liability***

As I understand it, Muslims are required to pay Zakah on their wealth that is in excess of their real requirements. The question here is what constitutes real requirements? If I have not bought a house for some logistic problems and have not transferred any money to pay for the education of my children, may I consider these as part of my real requirements? Can I set aside funds for these needs, and pay my Zakah on the rest of my savings? How is Zakah paid on contributions to pension schemes? May I also ask whether taxes paid to the governments may be considered as part of Zakah payments, particularly in countries where the government in countries where the government pays social security benefits to those who are poor or unemployed?

If we were to consider prospective needs, real as they may be, and try to adjust our Zakah in a way, which allows us to cater for these needs, we will end up with a situation where people hardly pay any Zakah at all. You have spoken of housing and child education. Someone else may consider pressing needs to be buying a car, or a lorry for his business, or a tractor for him farm, while another may feel that he needs to replace his old furniture, etc. Can we really take any of these needs into consideration in calculating the Zakah liability? The answer is in the negative.

To start with, if you have not bought a house, then you either do not have the money to pay for it, or you do not consider buying a house to be among your top priority. In either case, the question is somewhat academic. If you do not have the money to buy a house, then you have some savings, which you have earmarked for the purpose and these remain Zakahable because they constitute wealth in excess of your immediate needs.

If you have the money but you have opted not to buy a house at present, then you feel that buying the house at present is not in your interest. Why should your savings be exempt from Zakah in such a case? Moreover, if you are not living in a house of your own, then most probably you are paying rent. By doing so, you are adding to your expenses, and, in consequence, reducing your Zakah liability.

What we need to understand is that Zakah is an act of worship, as well as a system, which ensures social security for the deprived ones. Furthermore, it generates social cohesion within the community and creates an atmosphere of love and peace within.

Moreover, we are given everything that we have by God, who is able to take it away from us at any time. Zakah is an act, which demonstrates our gratitude to God for giving us plenty. It is also a way to give us rich reward both in this world and in the life to come. Why should we begrudge our less fortunate brethren their share in what God has given us?

It is not possible to adjust our Zakah liability against income tax or other taxes we are required to pay, protesting that the government is paying social security benefits to those who are in financial difficulty. The system that operates in any country with regard to social security is different from Zakah system. However, we should encourage those of us who are entitled to receive benefits under the laws and regulations of social security to do so. When they do, their needs are less and the Zakah funds may be diverted to others who do not receive such help. If Zakah funds are plentiful, and poor people are few, Zakah money could be put to other uses defined by God. What we have always to remember is that we must not confuse Zakah money with any contributions we are required to pay to the state under the law. Only when we live in a Muslim country where the government collects Zakah and distributes it can we take into account what we pay to the government Zakah fund in the calculation of the rest of our Zakah liability.

While you are contributing to a pension fund and your money is tied up, your contributions to the fund are not Zakahable, because although the money is yours, you have no access to it. When you retire and receive a lump sum from your pension fund, this sum is liable to Zakah on the day you receive it, once only. What remains of it to the following year is liable to Zakah again with the rest of your money.

### ***Zakah: Gifts From Charitable Funds***

If a person receives a gift from a charitable fund, say the Red Cross, is such gift liable to Zakah, should the recipient hold it for a year? What if the recipients are children under the age of 10.

The important point to remember about Zakah liability is not that a sum of money should be in one's possession for a year before it becomes liable to Zakah. It is that the individual concerned should be in possession of the threshold of Zakah for a year or more. This threshold is the equivalent of 85 grams of gold. This means that one does not need to hold the gift in question for a year. If he is a Zakah payer in the first place, then the gift he receives is Zakahable on his next Zakah date, be it in 10 months time, next month or tomorrow.

Any money that becomes one's own is liable to Zakah when a person is a Zakah payer, i.e. one who has more than the threshold of Zakah. A gift is one lawful way of acquiring things. Since the charitable fund gives you a gift, then you should pay its Zakah, if you are a Zakah payer.

The same applies to children. Each child is treated on his or her own. They should each have the threshold of Zakah before they become liable to paying Zakah. A child's guardian is required to pay out that child's Zakah on time. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Whoever is in charge of a child's property should take measures to cause it to grow so that it is not consumed by Zakah." Hence, the overwhelming majority of scholars agree that a guardian should make sure that a child's Zakah is paid out on time. [It also requires the guardians to take measures to cause the property to grow so that it is not consumed by Zakah.]

### ***Zakah: Gold In A Joint Family***

It is said that the amount of gold exempted from Zakah is 85 grams. Does that exemption apply to the whole [joint] family or to each woman in the family, i.e. one's wife and daughters as well as unmarried sisters?

There is confusion here between the threshold of Zakah, which is equivalent to the value of 85 gm of gold, and Zakah on jewelry. A woman's jewelry which she keeps for her own use is exempt from Zakah, if it is within what is considered reasonable for women in her social status. For this I cannot give a figure, because what is

considered reasonable in one place may be excessive in another or too modest in a different situation.

When we speak of Zakah, we are talking of a duty of worship. As you know, acts of worship may be physical, financial or both. They are determined on an individual basis. No one thinks of prayer or fasting or pilgrimage as a collective duty of the whole family. Why should Zakah be considered differently?

It is indeed required of every Muslim man or woman who owns more than the threshold of Zakah and remains in that state for one year. When a Muslim owns that amount, he should take a note of that date. On the same date next year and every following year, he calculates what he owns. If it is still more than the threshold, he pays out Zakah on all his property, normally at the rate of 2.5 percent.

### ***Zakah: Income Tax & Zakah***

I pay income tax on my salary, as it is deducted at source. The income tax is more than the Zakah due on what I have. Am I still required to pay Zakah?

Zakah has nothing to do with income tax. The two are incomparable either in the amount due or the purposes for which they are used. Nor can they be compared with regard to the authority that supervises and administers them. Moreover, income tax has different rules of assessment. The law also permits what it calls tax avoidance, but not tax evasion. Zakah, on the other hand, is an act of worship, and with worship one does it because he is a believer who wishes to do his duty. He resorts to neither evasion nor avoidance. Rather, he pays more than his duty in order to earn greater reward from God.

Income tax pays for the government's expenditure, including the salaries of employees, the services the government provides, such as education, roads, health services, police, rubbish collection, transport, etc. Many of these are outside the domain of Zakah, which is payable only to eight classes of beneficiaries, numbered in Verse 60 of Surah 9. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has made it clear that no one other than these eight can benefit by Zakah in any way.

On the other hand, Zakah is payable on capital and income, while income tax is levied only on income. The two cannot be compared.

It is often that people ask whether they can adjust their Zakah against income tax. The answer is always: No. However, income tax must still be paid, because the Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "A different claim is levied on wealth other than Zakah." He did not specify it, leaving it to the relevant authority to determine.

### ***Zakah: Insolvent Debtor With Assets & Savings***

Some three years ago, the business I had in my home country failed and I was left with considerable debts. The following year I was able to secure a job in Saudi Arabia for a reasonable salary. I used half of my salary for my own living expenses and to pay for my family's living back home. I bought some household articles and used the balance to pay about one-third of my debts. At the end of the year, I was left with a few hundred Riyals. May I ask whether I must pay Zakah, considering that I still have outstanding debts? If so, where should I pay this Zakah?

It is very good of you to be thinking of your Zakah liability while you still have substantial commitments. The important point to remember while considering Zakah liability is that Zakah accrues on money and property that a person owns over and above his needs, provided that this money is in excess of the threshold of Zakah.

That threshold is equal to the value of 85 grams of gold, or 634 grams of silver. When we consider a person's debts in relation to his Zakah liability, we have to take his total property into account in order to determine whether he is a Zakah payer or not. Suppose a businessman claims that he owes his creditors something like SR. 100,000. He may say that all the money he has in the bank or in his business is well below that figure. That may be so, but if he calculates what other people owe to him and the value of his stocks he has in his business, he comes up with a figure of SR. 150,000. This person should make this calculation and work out his Zakah liability on the basis that his net property is the added sum of the difference between the assets and liabilities of his business plus what he has of other property. He may not claim that his business is in debt without taking into account what is owed to the business by its customers.

Your case is totally different. The business is no longer available, and you have a net deficit that you must repay. When you are making your repayments, you are actually using your income to settle some of your liabilities, without having anything in credit against such liabilities. If you are continuing this practice of paying out regularly what you save of your salary in order to settle your debts, you actually do not have anything to pay Zakah for. Settlement of your outstanding debts is a priority and you are so good to consider it as such and try to repay such debts. If you continue with this practice, then you do not have any Zakah to pay until you have settled all your debts.

On the other hand, if you allow money to accumulate in your hands without payment of your debts, because you may have agreed on a certain timetable for repayments, then once your assets are in excess of your debts, you have to watch out. If what you have is in excess of your outstanding debts and the threshold of Zakah, then you become a Zakah payer. I feel you do not intend to do so. Therefore, you may continue with your practice and you have no Zakah to pay until you have settled your debts.

When you become a Zakah payer, owning more than the threshold of Zakah, then the normal case is to pay Zakah in the place where you live. But if poor people are hard to find in your area, or if they are abroad, or in your home country, people who do have a stronger claim to your Zakah then you transfer your Zakah to them. Such people are poor relatives. Suppose you have cousins or nieces who are poor, living in your home country, then you may transfer your Zakah to them.

### ***Zakah: Investing Zakah Funds To Enhance Distribution***

I plan to establish a trust out of Zakah and charity (i.e. Sadaqah) money and invest such funds in some profitable business. My plan is to distribute the annual earnings of the business to deserving students on merit. How far is this acceptable, taking in view that this will serve the community for a longer period?

The idea of setting up a trust fund and investing the proceeds to ensure annual returns, which can be given to the poor, is a very sound one. However, Zakah money cannot be used for such a purpose. The reason is that Zakah money must be paid to its beneficiaries when it is due. Once you set aside your Zakah liability, it no longer belongs to you. How, then, do you allow yourself to dispense with it in a way which you determine? This money belongs to Allah and He has given you instructions on how to distribute it. It must be distributed straight away. Moreover, its beneficiaries must be put in possession of it. When you put it in a trust fund, you are taking it away from its beneficiaries without their consent. May be they need it for a more immediate use. How can you, or indeed anyone for that matter, deny them that privilege.

Moreover, when you invest Zakah money, you are actually putting it at risk of loss. This is not acceptable from the Islamic point of view. It may be true that the likelihood of loss is very slim indeed. But as long as there is a risk, then no human being can claim the authority to expose Zakah money to such a risk.

You may, however, put the voluntary donations for charitable purposes into such fund and invest that money, provided that the investment is a very low risk one. You may consider in this respect buying some property and letting it out. This is indeed a very low-risk investment. Moreover, the returns are sure. If you opt for such an action, the charitable donation you make will earn you more reward as long as it is in operation.

### ***Zakah: Investment — Forgotten & Zakah Liability For Gone Period***

Some 27 years ago, I invested SR 1000 in the shares of a real estate company. After a few years I lost contact with them only to meet them now. I found out that they have maintained a full record of my investment and gave me figures for what my investment was worth every few years. I want to calculate my Zakah liability for this investment. Is it appropriate if I take the average between each two figures and multiply it by the number of years in that stage and calculate Zakah for that period on this basis.

It is very good of you to be thinking of your Zakah liability once you have come to know that a forgotten amount of money is not only available to you, but has made some income and become larger than its original amount. That is the mark of a good Muslim who is eager to ensure the fulfillment of what God has assigned to him of obligations, so that he may earn God's reward and win something even greater, namely, God's pleasure.

It is the conscientious payment of Zakah by all Muslims that ensures social justice in Islamic society. Under Islam, every individual is required to ensure the fulfillment of his own duties, while society or the government is responsible for putting in place the facilities that ensure such fulfillment and the most beneficial utilization of its results. In Zakah, this means a proper self financing Zakah department operates this system which collects Zakah from those who are liable to pay it and distributes it to those who may benefit by it. Zakah liability is not waived by the lapse of any period of time after it has become due. While every Muslim is required to pay his Zakah once he becomes liable and to ensure that what is due from him is set aside right away, negligence of this requirement does not give a person any benefit, no matter how much time passes before he attends to his duty. In your case, some of your Zakah has been due for 26 years, or so it seems. If that was a tax liability and it was not detected and you did not pay it for such a long time, it would be forgone by the tax inspector. In fact, its records would no longer be maintained. With Zakah, the case is different, not only because in Zakah God is the one who made it obligatory, but also because Zakah is the right of the poor. That right must be given to them. No one may say that their right could be forgone.

You certainly have some accounting to do in order to determine the exact amount of Zakah you should pay for those 27 years.

I am not particularly keen on the method you have chosen. It gives a final figure, which may be close to your actual liability, but it does not aspire to any degree of accuracy. What is important is to make sure of the exact liability for each year for the whole period. The best method is to go back to those people with whom you made the investment. They must have kept their records for the whole period.

How else did they come up with the figures they gave you for those random years? If they could give you a figure of what your investment was worth at the end of each

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year then you can make an easy calculation, paying Zakah at the rate of 2.5 percent and adding up the amount for each year to determine your total liability.

If you cannot do that, and the detailed information is not available to you, then you should take the average yearly increase for each period and add it to the capital.

You add this amount to your original investment of each year and calculate the amount of Zakah payable. You carry on with this method of calculation, taking the average increase for each period and add up the total liability. You should pay that without delay. You will find that the total amount is higher than what you worked out on the basis of a mean figure. But that should give you more reward from God and you will be happier with that. May God increase your reward for every good action you do.

The above advice assumes that you have been a Zakah payer throughout this period. If the case has not been such, then you need to revise these calculations accordingly.

### ***Zakah: Investment — Holdings When the Liabilities Are In Excess***

In order to deal with a financial crisis that befell my father, I had to borrow a lot of money, which reduced my financial capacity drastically. I have been paying Zakah for many years, and adding some extra percentage on top of that. Now, I have barely what I need for my living expenses with my family and a small amount for emergency. When I calculate what I have against what I owe, my position is negative and is likely to continue to be so for a few years to come. May I ask whether I am liable to the payment of Zakah on what I hold? Am I also required to pay the extra amount, which I have felt to be my duty?

Scholars have expressed different opinion on this question, on the basis of their view of Zakah. Those of them, who think of Zakah as a right owing to the poor in the money held by those who are better off, say that a person who is a net debtor does not have any Zakah to pay. The money that may be in his hand does not actually belong to him. His creditor owns it. The right of the creditor predates and precedes the right of the poor.

Other scholars tend to view Zakah as an act of ownership. Hence they make it a duty of any person who holds the money, because the fact of holding makes Zakah payable. Those scholars find in this situation a conflict of claims between what is due to a human being, i.e. the creditor and what is due to God which is the act of worship which takes precedence over what is due to a human being.

These are the two points of view advanced by scholars. However, when we weight up the evidence supporting each view, we are bound to conclude that the first view is weightier. For one thing, the ownership by a person of whatever he holds in hand is a weakened and defective ownership, because his creditors can demand it in repayment of his debt. Indeed the creditor can take it away despite the objection of the debtor, if it is of the same type as the money he had lent to the debtor. It is important to remember that complete ownership is a prerequisite for the duty of Zakah to take effect. Secondly, the creditor is required to pay the Zakah for the money owing to him because he is the owner. If the debtor is to pay Zakah for it as well, the same sum of money would have been Zakahable twice. This sort of duplication is not endorsed in Islam.

Thirdly, a debtor who owes an amount that reduces his money to below the threshold of Zakah or takes it all up is a poor person who qualifies as a beneficiary of Zakah, both as a poor person and as a debtor. How is it possible to require a Zakah beneficiary to stand in as a Zakah payer?

Fourth point is, Zakah is required only of those who are well off. The minimum level of being well off is to own the threshold of Zakah and to have that amount for a year. A debtor cannot be described as being well off when he has a debt to repay. Besides, Zakah is meant to help those who are in need. A debtor is certainly a person who has an urgent need to repay his debt. If a debtor were required to pay Zakah, he would be leaving the need of his creditor for another person. This is not appropriate.

We conclude that a net debtor who has not enough to repay his debts is not required to pay Zakah, provided that what he holds in excess of what he owes remains below the threshold of Zakah which is an amount of money equivalent to the value of 85 grams of gold. Let us suppose that the threshold of Zakah is today equivalent to SR. 3500. If a person has in hand the sum of SR. 8000, but his debts amount to SR. 7000 which is less than the threshold of Zakah. He need not pay any Zakah, because he does not qualify as a Zakah payer. Another person, who has the same amount of debt but owns the amount of, say, SR. 13000 should pay Zakah for what he owns after the deduction of his debts.

### ***Zakah: Investment — In PLS Accounts***

I realized that when a person runs a business, He pays Zakah on the income he receives from it. He does not pay Zakah for the value of his factory, his lorry, machinery, etc. Now if one invests some money in an Islamic bank, should he pay Zakah only on the income he receives from that investment?

What the reader says about exemptions from Zakah is largely correct. A manufacturer does not pay Zakah on the value of his factory, machinery or other means of production. A property owner does not pay Zakah on the value of a building he rents out, but only on the rent he receives. There are many other examples. However, it is not true to say that the value of the business is wholly exempt from Zakah. A trader does not pay Zakah on the value of his shop, but he pays it for the merchandise he keeps in stock. On his Zakah date, he should calculate the value of all the goods he has in stock and pay Zakah for these. Similarly a shares owner pays on the value of his shares on the market on the day when his Zakah is due.

There are two different views on how to pay Zakah on investment in profit-and-loss-sharing accounts in Islamic banks and in shares and stocks. One view equates it with commercial merchandise, saying that Zakah is due on the value of the investment and its profits at the rate of 2.5 percent. Another view says that Zakah is payable on the profit only at the rate of 10 percent, equating it with Zakah on land produce if the land is irrigated wholly by rain water, without need for any effort. I find the first view closer to the spirit of the Zakah system.

### ***Zakah: Investment — Profit On Investment***

Zakah is payable once a year in a particular month. May I ask whether Zakah is payable on the capital amount or on the profit derived from it. Suppose a person invests his money with a bank and receives something like 8 percent profit annually: should he pay Zakah on both the original amount and the profit or on the profit only?

Zakah is normally payable on both capital and profit. Thus, if a shopkeeper who invests, say, 100,000 in stocking his shop and generates profits should pay his Zakah on his Zakah date. He calculates the value of the goods he has in addition to other assets he has, together with his net profits, and pay Zakah on the total amount. He does not pay any Zakah on the capital assets, such as the value of the shop if he owns it, or on the rent he pays for it, if it is rented. Nor does he pay Zakah on the value of the necessary things he needs to run his business. Thus, a person who uses ten computers in his office to provide a service to his customers does not pay Zakah

on the value of these computers. The fixtures and fittings of the shop are also exempt. The goods in stock are not exempt. What he owns of these is Zakah able. As for the profits, he pays on his net profits. Obviously a person runs a business in order to earn his family's living. What he uses throughout the year for his living and his family's expenses is not entered in his Zakah liability. It is the saving that remains with him after he had met his needs that is Zakah able.

A condition for liability to Zakah is that the money or the property in question should be liable to grow. Money that is not liable to grow is not Zakah able. This is the reason for exempting from Zakah what is essential for a person to conduct his business.

Taking all this into account contemporary scholars have ruled that when a person invests money with an Islamic bank, the money invested forms his assets. As such it is not liable to Zakah, but the profits he receives are Zakah able at the rate of 10 percent, not the normal rate of 2.5 percent.

They say that the higher rate is charged here on the basis of comparability with Zakah required when agricultural land is irrigated only by rainwater, requiring no effort or expense by the farmer. This means that if a person invests 100,000 and receives profits at the rate of 8 percent, he pays in Zakah one-tenth of his profits, making his Zakah liability 800 only. This makes things much easier for people, because had such a person been required to pay for both capital and profit at the normal rate, he would have had to pay 2700. This would have left him with little over 5 percent net profit for his investment.

### ***Zakah: Investment — Shares & Face Or Market Value For Zakah***

1. Where people are shareholders in companies, what is the proper way to calculate their Zakah liability? The legal requirement in Pakistan is that wherever a company pays annual dividends to shareholders, it must deduct 2.5 percent of the face value of the shares and send it to the Zakah Department. The market value of the shares is not taken into consideration. Whereas in Saudi Arabia, the basis for calculation is the "net current assets increased by the profit for the respective year." In the first case, should shareholders make their own calculation and make up for any shortfall? May I also ask whether the calculation will be the same for shares bought as long-term investment and those held for trading? Is there any difference if the investment is in non-Muslim countries?

1. Let me first of all make it clear that, like all Islamic duties and obligations, Zakah is the responsibility of the individual. Even where the state makes the calculation of a person's liability and deducts Zakah at source, that person's responsibility is not discharged until he has made his own calculation and paid out his full liability. The reason for that is quite clear. The state may know a great deal about a person's finances, but the full picture remains the one known to him or her.

The fact remains, however, that no system of government can know the full details of what people own. This is why governments of all countries make it a duty of every individual to fill their tax returns every year. In the case of Zakah, the duty is imposed by God and to Him we are accountable for discharging it as best as we can. That means that we have to do our own calculation and pay Zakah willingly, in full, as an act of worship because that is what Zakah really is. [It is not a tax liability.]

When we approach Zakah in this way, we will have nothing similar to the tax evasion or tax avoidance that all governments try to overcome. People will pay their Zakah hoping to be rewarded for it. They will also be keen that if there is an error in their calculation then it would be toward paying more, not less, because when they pay



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more than their liability, God will count that extra amount as voluntary charity and give them a rich reward for it. They will be winning in either case, but the only case where they end up as losers is that when they try deliberately to reduce their liability knowing that they should pay more than they actually do.

Besides, a Muslim knows that whatever he has is actually a gift from God. It is He who gives us whatever we have, and it is He who either increases it or takes it away. Now we know that God says: ***"When you are grateful [for the bounty I have given you], I will give you increase."*** The payment of Zakah is an aspect of showing our gratitude to God for having given us more than what is sufficient for our needs and having kept us with such a surplus for the past year. That is not a small favor from God and it is only right that we should show our gratitude in the best way God likes, namely, the fulfillment of the financial duty He has made obligatory to all individuals which is Zakah.

There is only one proper way of knowing the Zakah liability on the company shares we may be holding. That is by basing our calculation on the real value of these shares. A government may devise a certain system, which it thinks fair to all people, but eventually we are responsible for what we should pay. A shareholder is the one who knows the value of his shares best. He may not know their value at a certain point in time, but that is the same as a person not knowing how much he has in his bank account or at home, or not knowing the total value of the goods in his shop. Suppose that he decides to sell his shares for whatever reason, do you think he would give instructions to his bank or to his agent to sell without finding out first the market value of each share and what amount of profit he is likely to make out of such a sale?

Any person who owns company shares must include the shares in his calculation of his assets and the amount of Zakah he has to pay. This applies to men and women alike, because the duty of Zakah is obligatory to both. It does not matter whether the company in which a person holds shares makes a profit or not, pays dividends or not, or even makes a loss, still the current value of the shares must be entered in a person's calculation of his Zakah liability. This is the normal situation for all Muslims.

A person who has any sort of business needs to work out his Zakah liability even if, at the end of the year, he finds out that he has made a loss. This is because of the simple fact that, despite his loss, he still owns more than the threshold of Zakah. Here we find an essential difference between Zakah and tax. When you show that you have made a loss during a particular year, you will not be required to pay income tax. But with Zakah, you pay on capital and income. So you may incur a loss and still pay Zakah to show your gratitude to God for having given you more than enough to live on.

I would like to emphasize that when calculating Zakah liability we take the market value of our shares, not the face or nominal value. There are companies, which start with a very low face value of their shares. When they are successful and well established those shares acquire a value which is far in excess of their face value. It is that value for which they are sold on the market on any particular day that represents their real value. It is the value to be taken into account when we want to find out our Zakah liability. We add to that any profit we receive from those shares. This applies whether we hold our shares for long-term investments or we trade in shares buying and selling whenever the transaction makes business sense. It also applies whether our shares are in companies that trade in a Muslim country or in international companies.

God Who has given us everything we have has also given us our property whatever form we hold it and wherever in the world it happens to be. Since He has imposed on

us a financial act of worship called Zakah, we have to fulfill that duty wherever we or our finances happen to be. It may be said that this calculation may be easy for people who hold shares in well-known companies, large or small. However, it is difficult for people who invest in mutual funds or unit trusts. This is because the investment is split into units for fractions of shares of a larger number of companies, which may not be known, to the investor. It is possible; however, to find out from the company that runs the scheme of unit trusts in which you invest the market value of your investment. Indeed, these companies have to declare the results of their performance on a regular basis. An investor in this type of fund should make a proper effort to determine the value of what he owns and include that in his calculation of Zakah. Again, he should try to keep his error on the side of caution, i.e. pay more rather than less, to ensure that he has discharged his liability in full.

### ***Zakah: Investment — Shares & Stocks***

1. Earlier this year I liquidated my investment in interest-bearing accounts and placed them in a sort of investment, which is locked for several years. I do not have any access to this money for the duration of the fund, but I expect to receive profits at the end of this period. Could you please let me know what Zakah will be due from me on this investment.

2. You mentioned that Zakah is due on the market value of shares in companies. May I ask whether this applies to all stocks and shares or there is a difference between shares held as an investment in the form of dividends and shares held to be sold when their price gets higher.

1. Money that is locked in an investment of this type is liable to Zakah when the investment matures. So, when you receive your money back on its date of maturity, both capital and profits are Zakahable at the rate of 2.5%. To say that it is liable to Zakah every year is to place an undue hardship on the owner who may have little else to pay Zakah from while the investment is locked.

2. There is a difference between the two types of investment in shares. If one is trading in shares, buying and selling according to the fluctuations of the market, then such shares are treated like other commercial commodities. Their market value is calculated on his Zakah date and he pays Zakah for that value every year. These shares are not different from the merchandise a businessman has in his shop, supermarket or other outlets. The rate of Zakah payable is 2.5% of the market value every year.

By contrast, a person holding shares in a company for the income they generate does not pay Zakah on the value of his shares, but on the profits or dividends he receives. His Zakah becomes payable on the day of receipt of such returns, whether they are paid annually or every six months, or shorter or longer periods. He does not wait for a year after receiving his payment. Rather, he pays his Zakah straightaway at the rate of 10% of the amount of returns. This ruling is based on analogy with agricultural land irrigated by rain only. Its produce is liable to Zakah on harvest day at the rate of 10%.

### ***Zakah: Investment — Shares, Their Value & Profit***

1. I have invested a sum of money in shares and the present market value is now higher than what I paid for them. Should I pay Zakah on the increase in value, which has not yet materialized or on the capital?

2. The market price of certain shares may not give any real indication of their true value. It is more or less a notional value, which is of no benefit to the investor unless these shares are realized. May I give the example of

shares bought for SR 5000, giving an annual return of about 20 percent, or 1,000? The market price of these shares has gone up tremendously and it stands now at SR 250,000. If Zakah is to be paid on the market price, then one would have to pay SR 6,250, which is above the starting investment and its annual return. Please comment. Suppose a person invests in a newly established company with the main capital going into buildings and machinery. The company is still struggling to break even. Is he supposed to pay Zakah on his investment, which is to bring no returns yet?

1. Shares are bought as investment. Hence, they are treated in the same way as commercial commodities are. When a shopkeeper or a merchant calculates his Zakah, he has to include the goods, which he possesses. He estimates the market value of these goods on the day when his Zakah is due, and if he owns more than the threshold of Zakah, then Zakah is payable on the total amount. Assuming that you have more than the threshold of Zakah and that you have invested 100,000 in shares, and the market value of these shares on the day when your Zakah is due is only 85,000 then you calculate your Zakah on the basis of their value on that day. You have to include 85,000 in your capital and pay Zakah on them as well as the rest of your money at the rate of 2.5 percent. Similarly, if the market value of your shares is 110,000, Zakah is payable on that sum.

You say that difference has not materialized. That is true, but on the other hand the loss has also not materialized in the other case either. The same applies to any commodity you may have. It is an investment subject to the forces of the market and liable to incur a loss or make a profit.

2. The second part of the question has a very simple answer. Let us take the relevant example of a businessman who comes at the end of the year having incurred a net loss with the total sum of his business. He may have started the year owning, say, 3 million Riyals, and finished with 2 million. This means that all his living expenses were paid out of pocket. All the effort he put in his business has come to nothing and he ended much worse off than he started. Is he liable to Zakah?

Let us also imagine an employee who a few years ago inherited a large amount of money. His only income is his salary. As his commitments had increased recently, his salary is no more sufficient to meet his living expenses. He pays out of his wealth in order to support his family. Is he supposed to pay Zakah on the remainder of his inheritance?

The answer in both cases is that the person concerned must pay Zakah on what property he has which is liable to Zakah. The fact that he is not making money in the true sense of the word, and that he is out of pocket on his living needs does not alter the fact that he is still well off and he is required to pay Zakah, unless what he has at the end of the year drops to below the threshold of Zakah.

The person who has invested in this company may not be able to get his money back if he sells all his shares, but he will get something. So if he still in funds which make him a Zakah payer, he has to pay Zakah on his shares in this company according to the Zakah of shares.

It may be true that the value of the shares in the first example no longer bears any comparison with the original investment, but their value is very much true. The proof is there at all times to look for. He needs only to offer his shares for sale and look how much they would bring him. Perhaps it is the fact that the price of his shares has gone up by 50 or 100 times that tempts him to keep his investment.

Why should he not express his gratitude to God who has enabled him to make this investment which has brought him so much benefit? That gratitude is not expressed by saying 'thank you.' Its expression is in paying the right amount of Zakah, which is calculated on the basis of the value of the shares and the return they bring.

There are two views on how much Zakah is payable on shares. One calculates the Zakah due on the basis of the returns made on these shares.

It argues that the Zakah payable is 10 percent of the net annual returns. The other view requires that the market value of the shares is calculated at the end of each Zakah year when a rate of 2.5 percent is paid in Zakah on that value as well as the returns they yield.

The only condition for this to be payable is that the total sum of the value and the profit, together with any other money liable to Zakah the person owns, is equal to, or more than, the threshold of Zakah.

The reader worries that in the example he gives, the Zakah payable will be more than the original investment and the profit it yields.

The original investment is 5,000, and it yields 1,000 a year, but since the market value is now 250,000, the Zakah payable amounts to 6,250. So what? Is it not true that the person concerned owns now this large amount, because if he sells his shares today, they would fetch him that amount? Should he not be grateful to God for giving him all this profit and pay its Zakah? May I correct him on one point?

His Zakah liability is SR 6,275. The additional 25 is the Zakah due on his profit which is SR 1,000.

### ***Zakah: Investment — That By Nature Does Not Grow***

When my husband died, he left me some money, which I have invested in a government scheme. It pays a dividend every six months which is the income I live on. I have been paying Zakah on the total amount, but then the income is decreasing and I am finding this difficult to maintain. Please advise.

As this is a new type of investment, scholars have looked at it carefully and issued a ruling or Fatwa that defines the amount of Zakah to be paid. The point to be remembered here is that Zakah is liable on every type of property or money that, by nature, is subject to growth. The capital you are investing is not liable to growth, but gives a share of profits. Hence, you should pay Zakah only on the income you receive at the rate of 10%. Suppose you have invested 100,000, which gives you 8,000 every year. You pay in Zakah 800, which is much less than what you would have had to pay if Zakah was liable on both principal and profit.

### ***Zakah: Investment — Various Types Of***

On retirement, I received from my company a lump sum in lieu of my service. As I do not know how to start a business, I invested a certain amount in a government saving scheme that gives fixed profits every six months. The rest I invested in a fund that matures after 10 years, although it can be surrendered at any time. Could you please explain what Zakah I should pay on these two types of investments

For the first type, which pays profits or dividends, the Zakah you pay is 10% of the amount you receive in profits, and it is payable on receipt of the money. You do not have to wait until your Zakah date. This is payable straightaway.

The second type is payable on maturity, once only, on the original outlay and the profits you receive, at the rate of 2.5%. When we say once only, this covers the duration of the investment. However, when you have paid its Zakah on receipt, the money you now hold is treated as part of your money and it is subject to Zakah in subsequent years, together with what you may have of money that is liable to Zakah.

### ***Zakah: Is Zakah A Yearly Obligation?***

You have mentioned that Zakah is payable every year, but scholars in India say that this is not true. Zakah means purification, and once money is purified with the payment of its Zakah, then no more Zakah need to be paid for it. Please explain.

To say that Zakah is payable once only, and that no money is to be Zakahable twice, is a claim that needs to be proven by either a Qur'anic verse or an authentic Hadith. There is definitely no Qur'anic verse to suggest this, and to my knowledge, there is no Hadith to support such a claim. Zakah is an annual duty, payable on the same date every year, and its calculation is well known. Besides, this is the normal practice in all Muslim communities, right from the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, up to this day, and it will continue to be the practice for the rest of time. It is inconceivable that all this practical evidence should be mistaken, and those people you are referring to in India are correct. Besides, I cannot imagine that anyone making such a claim could have done any serious study of Islamic Fiqh, let alone be classified as a scholar.

Zakah is paid annually, on every property one owns other than what he needs for his own and his family's living. It is levied on capital, profits and income, provided that one owns more than the threshold of Zakah, which is equivalent to 85 grams of gold. When a person, male or female, owns this amount, he becomes a Zakah payer. He should make a note of the date, and then the following year, and every subsequent year, on the same date, he should calculate what he owns. If it is still over the threshold of Zakah, he must pay Zakah at the rate of 2.5 percent, except for money that incurs a higher rate. This holds true even if at sometime during the year he dropped to below the threshold of Zakah before recovering and going over the threshold once again before the Zakah date.

It should be remembered that Zakah is an act of worship, which does not only purify one's money, but also ensures the eradication of poverty in the Muslim community. Therefore, it must be paid every year. Besides, it is an act of showing our gratitude to God for giving us more than what we need for our living.

### ***Zakah: Loan Not Reimbursed By the Borrower***

If someone lends another a large sum of money which the borrower does not repay for sometime, who is required to pay Zakah for this amount. There are 4 different views in books of Islamic Fiqh. Can we apply any of these views?

If the loan is a short term one, and it is repaid on time, Zakah is due on the amount of the loan normally, paid by the creditor who owns the money on his normal Zakah date. If it is given for a long period, such as a couple of years or longer, and the borrower is of sound financial position and able to repay it on demand, at any time, then it is treated as if the amount is in the creditor's keeping. In other words, he pays its Zakah every year, in the normal way.

If it is given for a long period; or it is originally for a short period but remained unpaid for sometime; and the owner is unsure that it will be paid in the near future, then Zakah is paid for the amount when it is repaid. It is once only, even though the

loan remained with the borrower for several years. In this last case, the creditor actually lost control and was unsure whether the money would be repaid, or when it will be repaid. He is not required to pay Zakah for what he does not have under his control

### ***Zakah: Loan, Investment & Zakah***

I have invested my end-of-service allowances in a government scheme, which gives an income I use toward covering my family's living expenses. Is the capital amount liable to Zakah? I also have another amount of savings, which I have earmarked to cover the marriage expenses of my children, but against it I have taken a loan. The income I receive from this saving pays off the loan installment. I also have invested some money in establishing a small business, but so far, the business is making a loss. Which of these amounts is liable to Zakah?

When a person has savings that give him an income, even though it may be only a small amount, he should reflect that he is in a much better situation than others who cannot earn enough to pay for their living. Therefore, he should be very grateful to God for having enabled him to make such savings and pay Zakah on what he has. To try to justify non-payment on the basis that if he were to take out the amount of Zakah, his savings and, in consequence, his income will be reduced is not a strong argument. The fact is that he owns the invested money and he can do with it what he likes. In the situation of our reader, he meets most of his living expenses from the income he receives on his investment. This means that the amount invested is liable to Zakah, every year, at the rate of 2.5 percent.

We look at such an investment in a different light from looking at a business. Had the reader used his money to build a factory or buy a business premises, or a farm, or a house for rent, then these assets would not have been liable to Zakah. The income from them would be. But in his case, the certificates he bought are available to turn into cash at any time. Hence, they are treated as liquid money.

Having said that, I may add that some scholars feel that Zakah on such investment should be considered differently. They say that the capital invested is not liable to Zakah, but the dividends received are Zakahable at the rate of 10 percent. Thus, they compare it to the Zakah charged on agricultural produce that grows without need of any care or irrigation, relying only on rainwater. The reader may take this view if he so prefers, but once the investment changes, and he cashes any part of it, it becomes part of his ready money, which is Zakahable in the normal way.

The amount saved for his children's marriages is also liable to Zakah, even though it is earmarked for this purpose. He has full access to it and can change its usage at any time. It is part of his assets. Then liability to Zakah cannot be waived. Although he uses the income to repay his debt, the principal is Zakahable.

The business, which does not generate any income, has a different status. The reader has not told me what business it is. If it is a trading business, then his stocks, which he owns in full, are liable to Zakah. He should calculate the value of his stock and pay Zakah for it, as long as it is paid for. If his business is one of providing a service, with no trading commodities, then he would have no Zakah to pay on that.

What the reader should do is to calculate his assets on his Zakah date, and deduct the amount he owes, and pay Zakah on the net assets.

***Zakah: Makes Capital Dwindle***

My wife has more than 100 sovereigns of gold, which she received as a marriage gift from her parents. We have two daughters and it is our custom to divide the mother's jewelry between our daughters at the time of their marriage. That is the only way we can get suitable husbands for them. If my wife has to give about nine sovereigns as Zakah for the amount every year, by the time my daughters are of marriageable age, my wife would have lost more than three-quarters of her gold. As the gold is neither earned by me or by my wife, should we give Zakah for all the 100 sovereigns?

It appears that this gold, which your wife has, is not in the form of jewelry that is the custom for women to keep. It is gold currency. Therefore, it must be calculated with the rest of your wife's money, when she comes to pay her Zakah. Your own financial position is irrelevant to this calculation, as your wife pays her Zakah separately as an individual Muslim. This amount of gold, which she has, may make her richer than you are. It may be the case that you are not liable to pay any Zakah if your income is just adequate to meet your family's living expenses.

It is obvious that your wife keeps this gold as a form of saving, and for the future event of marrying off your daughters. That purpose does not alter the situation in any way. This gold is subject to Zakah, if your wife owns more than the threshold or Zakah [85 gm. of gold or 634 gm. of silver], which appears to be the case.

I wonder where from you get the figure of nine sovereigns to be paid each year for the 100 sovereigns owned by your wife. The rate of Zakah in this case is 2.5 percent. That brings the amount of money to be paid for 100 sovereigns of gold to 2.5 sovereigns.

Moreover, assuming that your wife does not have any increase in what she has of gold, then in, say, four years time she would be [left with around 90 sovereigns and would be] paying about 2.25 sovereigns as Zakah. This is due to the fact that over those four years, her gold has decreased as a result of the Zakah she has paid. So, it will not be the case that in ten years her money would have dwindled a great deal.

Having said that, I should add that Islam does not like money to stand idle without being invested. It may be the case that neither you nor your wife likes the element of adventure, which is involved in business. It may be the case that you have no one whom you could trust with this money in order that it generates some income. You should, therefore, consider the possibility of transferring this gold into something that appreciates in value, such as buying a house.

If you have a house of your own and your wife buys a house with this money and then she lets it out, then she pays Zakah only on the rent which she receives, after deducting whatever expenses she incurs in looking after the house and maintaining it. If your daughters are now young, then at the time of their marriage, the house may either be divided between the two of them or sold in order to buy them gold.

I should, however, add that Zakah is liable to be paid in this case because the gold is not in the form of jewelry. Had it been in the shape of jewelry then that is treated differently? When a woman keeps jewelry for her own use, it is not liable to Zakah as long as it is within the reasonable limits of what is normally owned of jewelry by women in her social status. If it is far in excess of that, then it becomes liable to Zakah.

### ***Zakah: May Not Be Paid To —***

Please describe the classes of persons to whom Zakah may not be paid.

There are certain groups or classes of people who may not benefit from Zakah. These are: the rich, the strong who can earn their living, the atheists and unbelievers who oppose Islam, the immediate relatives of the Zakah payer and the Prophet's household and descendants. I will dwell briefly on each of these groups.

No rich person may benefit from Zakah by way of personal gain. That is, a rich person may be given Zakah money only if he himself works for the Zakah Department i.e. he may be given his salary under the heading 'Zakah' officers. There are other circumstances in which a rich person may be given money from the Zakah fund, such as his being a stranded wayfarer and cannot get hold of his money, which is in his hometown. In such a situation, he may benefit from Zakah.

Nor is it possible to pay Zakah to the wife or the young child of a rich man. Young children and wives are automatically considered rich if their fathers or husbands are rich. This is due to the fact that a person has a duty to support his young children and his wife. To give Zakah to young persons or wives is in effect, to give it to the rich man himself.

Zakah may not be paid to a person who has the physical ability to earn his living. The Prophet, peace be upon him, says; "Zakah is not lawful to be paid to a rich person or to one who is physically strong, suffering no handicap." If, however, an able-bodied person is unable to find work or employment despite his determined efforts to do so, then he may be paid from Zakah. His entitlement to it is on grounds of his poverty.

Some schools of thought exclude non-Muslims from the list of beneficiaries of Zakah. They deduce from the pronouncement by the Prophet, peace be upon him, which says that "Zakah is taken from the rich among them [i.e. Muslims] and paid to their poor." So the poor Muslims of any community have the foremost claim on Zakah, which is collected in that community. According to Dr. Yussuf Al-Qaradawi, a leading contemporary authority on the subject of Zakah, the normal situation is to pay Zakah to poor Muslims only. If, however, Zakah funds are plentiful and poor Muslims can be easily satisfied with what they receive from it, then it is proper to include among the beneficiaries of Zakah the poor of other communities, which live side by side with the Muslims. Such non-Muslims as may benefit by Zakah must be either poor or needy. The question of whether to pay some non-Muslims a portion of Zakah money in order to win over their hearts is decided by an Islamic government. In the absence of such a government in any Muslim community, an Islamic organization may take such a decision.

It should be pointed out that those scholars who exclude non-Muslims from Zakah also state that help may be given to the poor among non-Muslims from the treasury of the Islamic state. They are only excluded from benefiting from Zakah in particular. It is proper to quote in this connection the example of Ommayid caliph, Omar ibn Abdul Aziz, who wrote to the governor of Basra. "Find out those who have attained old age and are weak and cannot earn a living from amongst our protected minorities [i.e. followers of other religions]. And provide for them an income from the general treasury of the Muslims to meet their needs." It is worth pointing out here that the caliph asked his governor not to wait until such non-Muslim people ask for help. It was his duty, as defined by the caliph, to examine their condition and their needs and to provide them what would help them through the rest of their days.

Scholars also differ on whether Zakah be paid to Muslims who indulge in sinful practices. There is no question that the poor who are also pious and righteous have a higher claim to benefit from Zakah. The transgressors, or *Fasiqs* in the Islamic



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terminology, may be classified into two groups. There are firstly those who do not indulge in sinful practices in public, in careless contempt of the feelings of the Muslim majority, but cannot resist the temptation of the sin. Such people may be given Zakah money, if they are poor. Especially if by paying them from Zakah, we encourage them to mend their ways. If the sinner, on the other hand, commits his sins in public in blatant defiance of the feelings of the Muslim community as a whole, then he must not be given any help from Zakah; provided that he declares his repentance and stops being such an affront to the rest of the community.

The families of such transgressors need not suffer as a result of the attitude of their breadwinners. It is possible to pay Zakah to the families of such people, as long as the family concerned does not help the transgressor to carry on with his sinful practices.

We have already mentioned that a child is considered rich if his father is rich. Similar, a woman is considered rich on the grounds of her husband being well off. It is, therefore, not permissible for a person to pay any part of the Zakah dues from him to his own children or to his wife, if they themselves are poor. The reason for this prohibition is that a man is required to support his young children and his wife. According to Islam a man maintains his wife even if she is much richer than he is. She is not required to contribute to the expenses of the family, unless she freely chooses to do so. Hence, if a rich person pays out his Zakah to his children or his wife, he is, in effect, paying it to himself. If a person pays the Zakah due on his wealth to the Zakah department of an Islamic state and it so happens that the distribution agency of that department pays it to the son or father or wife of that person, then this is perfectly legitimate. As soon as the man himself pays his Zakah to the Zakah department, he is no longer responsible for putting it to its proper use. His relatives are allowed to take it because they do not receive it from him directly, but from an authority which is responsible for the distribution of the whole Zakah fund.

Islam makes it obligatory on any adult child to support his parents if they are poor. Only if he himself is poor or if his income can just about meet the expenses of his own family, he is not required by law to support them. Thus, in cases where such a child is required to support his poor parents, he may not pay them directly the Zakah due from him. If he did, then he himself is the beneficiary of his own Zakah.

A rich wife may pay the Zakah due from her to her poor husband. There is no restriction in this case, because no wife is required to maintain her husband, even if she is rich and he is poor. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, made it clear that the Zakah regulations apply to women in the same way as they are applied to men, several women went to him. And they asked whether they could pay Zakah to their poor husbands and to some orphans they were bringing up. The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered that they would have their reward doubled because they would be doing a kindness to a relative, in addition to paying their Zakah.

Similarly, if one is distributing his own Zakah himself, and he has poor relatives other than a child, or a parent or a wife, it is preferable that he pays Zakah to such poor relatives. They should be given a priority on his list of beneficiaries. The permission is granted here because we are not required to support or maintain our poor relatives unless the funds of the Islamic state treasury cannot provide for them or the government does not collect Zakah in order to provide social security for the poor. In such a case, when the matter is left to the individual, we are required to maintain our poor relatives, if we can. There is no harm if we do so with the Zakah payable on our wealth. This means that we may pay Zakah to our brothers, sisters, uncles, or aunts, even when they are in employment provided that they are poor. That also applies if their income is not sufficient to meet their expenses.

The last group of people excluded from benefiting from Zakah is the Prophet's household. According to Islamic scholars, these include the descendents of the Hashemite clan of Quraish. Some scholars include also the Muttalib clan as well. Dr Al-Qaradawi discusses this restriction at length and comes out in favor of the view taken by some of the main schools of thought that this restriction applied only to the Prophet's household during his life. The restriction, however, also applies to the members of the families of the Muslim ruler at any particular time. This is because the ruler is supposed to oversee the administration of Zakah. Hence he may not benefit from it and members of his family should be spared all that may result from their taking Zakah money.

### ***Zakah: Monthly Payment On Salary & Adjustment At Due Time***

I have been putting aside 2.5 percent of my salary as Zakah and giving it to the poor. Should I pay Zakah again at the end of the year?

It is perfectly appropriate to pay Zakah in advance. If you pay to the poor an amount equal to, or in excess of, your annual Zakah liability as you receive your salary, intending such payments as your Zakah for that year, all you need to do at the end of the year is to make sure that what you have paid is equal to, or in excess of, your entire liability. On your Zakah date, you should calculate your Zakah liability and adjust it against what you have already paid. If your liability is greater than what you have paid, then you pay out what remains outstanding. If you paid more than you need to, then the excess is counted as voluntary Sadaqah, or charity.

Having said that, I should point out to you that if your income is all that you have, then you are paying more than you need to. Zakah is payable on all money you have that is liable to grow. Thus, it is payable on savings, investments, capital, profits and other money. It is not merely the salary you have that may be Zakahable. If you do not have much of these other types, then what you have been doing is more than enough. If you have much of the other types, then you may need to add to what you pay monthly.

### ***Zakah: Not A Tax Liability***

I live in a rented accommodation, since I do not have a house of my own. I have earmarked a certain amount of my savings for the purchase of a plot of land to build a house. Since I have not been able to get the plot of land, which meets my requirement, that amount of money is lying in the Bank. Am I supposed to pay Zakah for it? I have also purchased some gold ornaments with the intention of giving them to my two sisters when they get married. In the meantime, the jewelry remains with me. Is it liable for Zakah? If so, is there any way I may be exempt from paying Zakah? I have given an amount of money to a relative of mine. I want that amount to be adjusted against my payment of Zakah, fearing that he will not be able to pay it back. Can this be done? If so, am I supposed to inform him of the same?

What worries me in this letter is the clear desire to reduce one's liability of Zakah to the minimum possible. In other words, the writer's approach to Zakah is the same as any ordinary person's to taxes imposed by secular governments. I realize that in many countries, tax avoidance is accepted as legal while tax evasion is considered an offense. There are differences between the two, but the point here is the recognition by legal authorities and the desire and attempt to reduce one's tax liability are legitimate.

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The case is totally different with Zakah. One must never forget that Zakah is an act of worship. It is true that it is a financial transaction, but one pays it out when it is due, because of the reward one expects to receive from Allah for having paid it. One may say that since Allah has given us our money and He has imposed on us a duty to pay Zakah, we do nothing to deserve any reward when we pay it out. That is not Islamic view. When one does what Allah has bid him to do, he is rewarded for his compliance and obedience. Quite apart from all the social benefits which the payment of Zakah brings to an individual and a community, the fact that Zakah payment is an act of worship which is rewarded by Allah, should make every one of us keen to pay it when it becomes due. Moreover, a person who does not have enough funds to be liable to pay Zakah feels that he misses out on a source of reward, which enhances his standing on the Day of Judgement.

All this goes to show that we should not look for ways and means of reducing the total sum of Zakah which we need to pay out, but we should pay our Zakah willingly, hoping for reward and expressing our gratitude to Allah for having given us enough to satisfy our need and to be able to hold some savings which put us above many of our brethren. When we do that, Allah is sure to give us more and He rewards us.

Although you have earmarked some of your savings for the purchase of a piece of land, and despite the fact that such a building plot is not added to your possessions, these savings are not exempt from Zakah. When you have bought the land and constructed the house, you pay nothing in Zakah against either the land or the house, unless you let it out. In that case, you pay on the rent you receive from it. If you use it for your own accommodation, it is not liable to Zakah.

That applies, however, when the land is bought and the house is constructed. It cannot apply in advance. You may be totally committed that you will not use savings for any reason other than your house construction. But you realize that, faced with a pressing emergency, you may find these savings handy and spend them without waiting for the house or the land. There is no way that cash in the bank, held as savings, can be exempted from Zakah, when you own more than the threshold of Zakah, for any reason. Whatever purpose one intends to use the money for, the liability remains the same.

The jewelry you have purchased for your sisters is your own. It is true that you have no use for it except to give it to your sisters when the occasion arises. But until then, the jewelry is yours. Therefore, it must be calculated as part of your property. Women's jewelry, when they are within reasonable limits, are exempt from Zakah. That is because they use the jewelry and they do not hold it as savings. However, a woman must pay Zakah for her jewelry if she considers it a method of saving.

However, if you give that jewelry to your sisters, without waiting for their marriages to take place, the situation becomes different. It becomes part of their property. Zakah liability is applicable to each man and woman separately. Therefore, each of your sisters is treated on her own. Each of them has to look after her own Zakah. If you pass on the jewelry to them, they need not pay Zakah for it, as long as it is within what is considered to be reasonable for women in their social status.

Having said that, I must explain that when you give this jewelry to your sisters, the transaction must be a serious one. They must know and you intend that the jewelry becomes their own property, which they use, as they think fit. You will have no further claim to it, except inasmuch as you have a claim to any sum of money which either of your sisters has earned or inherited. While the jewelry remains with you, you know that you can sell it to meet an emergency. You may decide that facing such an emergency is more important for the present, and that you will be able to buy something else for your sisters when their marriages are to take place. But if you give

them the jewelry, you cannot do that. If that is clear in your mind and theirs, and you actually give them the jewelry, then you need not pay Zakah for it.

Had you, when your uncle asked you to lend him some money, made a quick calculation and came out with a portion of your expected Zakah liability and gave it to him as a gift, that would have been fine. It is permissible to pay Zakah in advance. Therefore, if you pay it to someone in need when he actually needs it, which is well and good. Similarly, giving someone a loan to meet certain needs is a highly commendable act. As Muslims, we do not expect to receive interest on such loans, and actually refuse to take it when offered. Lending to someone in need is an action, which cements social relations. Allah rewards us for such actions.

Scholars differ as to when the Zakah for loans is paid. There is no disagreement that the creditor is the one who is liable to pay Zakah for the amount of the loan. However, he should pay it out regularly if he knows that the debtor is sound financially and that he will undoubtedly pay his loan. If one has some doubts about being paid back what he has lent, then he commits no sin if he does not include the amount of the loan in his calculation of his liability for Zakah. When he is actually paid back, he immediately pays out the Zakah due for the amount of the loan, if the date of his payment of Zakah has already passed. You can certainly do that if you fear that your uncle might not be able to pay you back for a long time to come.

However, what you cannot do is to make a set off of the loan against your Zakah. You cannot say to your uncle that he need not pay you back because you intend that what you have given him constitutes a payment of Zakah. Here you are paying Zakah to yourself. What you can do is to pay your uncle some or all of your Zakah as a gift, without giving him the slightest hint that you expect him to use the money to pay you back your loan, that is well and good. If not, you must not have any hard feelings because he actually commits no offense if he uses it for other legitimate purposes.

### ***Zakah: Not Known Whether Donation Is Zakah Or Charity***

If someone gives me some donation, and I do not know whether it is Zakah or Sadaqah, can I take it and give it to needy people in my home country?

If you know the person who gives you such donation, it is infinitely better to tell him that you do not need the money yourself, but you will put it to good use, which fits with the purposes for which Zakah is paid. You give him the choice of either approving this or taking the money back.

If you do not know the person, you may still tell him, or take the money and give it to those whom you know to need it. In such a case, take the extra precaution of paying it to legitimate Zakah beneficiaries, just in case the money was part of that person's Zakah.

### ***Zakah: On (Employment) Savings Plans***

Our company deducts ten percent of the salary of its employees and invests the amount and gives profits or deducts losses and it also gives an accrued reward as well as earning on that reward. This makes the money we have in the plan fall under several items: Savings balance, which an employee takes as a loan or withdraws at any time. The other amounts will be paid to the employee only if he resigns or retires. Similarly, if his contract is terminated, the savings balance will be paid in full but the other amounts may be withheld totally or partially according to the severity of the offense which has caused termination. Which of these funds are liable to Zakah?

I understand that the savings balance refers to the ten percent deducted from the salary of each employee. As such, it is part of his own money. According to the terms and conditions you have outlined, he is liable to withdraw this amount or take a loan not exceeding its total. The other items which you have mentioned, such as profits; rewards and earnings on the reward are withheld. An employee cannot make a claim against them and cannot withdraw them partially or totally [while still in service]. They are there until he reaches retirement or leaves the company. Therefore, they cannot be described as his property although the company acknowledges his right to them when the time comes. In other words, they are promised to him and there is no reason to suppose that the promise will not be fulfilled.

It is a condition for any property to be liable to Zakah that it should be fully owned by its proprietor. Full ownership means ability to benefit by it and dispose of it in a legitimate way, such as selling it or giving it as a gift or exchanging it for some other property. In the savings plan, which you have outlined, only the "savings balances" seems to be fully owned by the employee. Therefore, this part is Zakahable, provided that the employee is liable to Zakah. To be so liable, he has to have more than the threshold of Zakah which is equivalent to [the value of] 634 gm of silver. A person who has this amount in excess of his normal expenditure should make a note of the date when he came in to the possession of this amount and on the same day of each following year, he calculates what he has.

If it is still over the threshold of Zakah, then he has to pay Zakah on all that he owns of Zakahable property at the normal rate of 2.5 percent. When he makes his calculation, he should include the savings balance, which is fully Zakahable. As to the other items in the plan, they are not fully owned by the employee.

Therefore, they become Zakahable only when full ownership is realized, i.e. when they are paid to him. Upon his retirement, or resignation, he receives them. On the same day, he should pay Zakah on that amount for one year, provided of course that he is liable to Zakah.

If it is in excess of the threshold of Zakah, he has to pay Zakah on this amount. If it is not, no Zakah is payable.

### ***Zakah: On Jewelry For Personal Use — the Confusion***

1. You have mentioned more than once that a woman does not have to pay Zakah for her jewelry. I have recently come across a Hadith in which the Prophet, peace be upon him, asks a woman wearing two gold bangles whether she paid their Zakah. When she answered in the negative, he told her that she runs the risk of having to wear two bangles of fire on the Day of Judgment. Please comment.

2. You have stated several times that women's jewelry is exempt from Zakah. Yet I have come across three Hadiths which are clear in making such Zakah obligatory. Could you please tell me what is the basis of the opposite view?

1. People are often confused when they see a Hadith that runs contrary to a Fatwa, or to a ruling they know to be widely common. They should not be so confused if they are certain of the knowledge of the scholar giving the ruling. There may be several factors for the discrepancy. The Hadith in question may not be highly authentic, or a later Hadith might have abrogated it, or there may be other Hadiths that outweigh it, or the Prophet, peace be upon him, might have elaborated on some aspects of it. More than one of these factors apply in this case. There are other Hadiths that make clear that women's jewelry is exempt from Zakah. The general ruling is that the jewelry should be intended for personal use and that it should be within what is

reasonable for women who are similarly placed socially. Another Hadith explains that the Zakah of jewelry may take the form of a woman lending her jewelry to another woman when the latter requests it to attend a wedding or a similar occasion.

Sometimes you find opposite rulings on the same point given by different schools of Islamic law, or Fiqh. Indeed, the case of jewelry is one such case, with one particular school requiring Zakah to be paid for it. However, when we look at the supporting evidence for these opposite rulings, we find that the view is that says that jewelry is not liable to Zakah is far weightier. This is perfectly in line with Islamic purposes. It is often the case that a woman owns very little apart from her jewelry. She would have no means to pay its Zakah, had it been Zakahable, unless she sells some of it. Islam does not require us to do such a thing with other personal items. Why would it do it in this case?

Having made an in-depth study of this question, I have no hesitation in reiterating my earlier ruling that a woman does not pay Zakah for her jewelry, provided it meets the two conditions mentioned earlier. It should be for her personal use, and it remains within what is reasonable for women in her social status.

2. Yes, these three Hadiths are often quoted in support of the view that women's jewelry are liable to Zakah. They are given in similar wording. Asma bint Yazeed reports one of these Hadiths, and she says: "I went with my maternal aunt to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and we were wearing gold bracelets. The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked us if we gave Zakah for them, and we answered in the negative. He said: "Do you not fear that God should give you bracelets of fire? Give Zakah for it." [Related by Ahmad]. Another Hadith is reported by Ayesha: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, came to my room and found me wearing silver rings. He asked: "What is this, Ayesha?" I said: "I have obtained them to adorn myself for your sake." He said: "Do you pay its Zakah?" I said that I did not. He said: "This is sufficient for a share of fire." [Related by Abu Dawood, Al-Daraqutni and Al-Bayhaqi]. It should be noted that none of the three Hadiths is related in the authentic collections of Malik, Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Nevertheless, the Shaf'ie, Maliki and Hanbali schools of Fiqh give the ruling I have often stated that women jewelry is exempt from Zakah. The basis is similarly valid. Al-Bayhaqi reports: "Jabir ibn Abdullah was asked whether women's jewelry is liable to Zakah, and he said that it is not. He was asked, Even if its value is a thousand Dinars?, He said: And even more." Al-Bayhaqi also reports that Asma, bint Abu Bakr gave her daughters gold jewelry worth 50,000 and did not pay Zakah for it. In Al-Muwatta, which is rated as equal in authenticity to Al-Bukhari and Muslim, it is reported that Ayesha was looking after her nieces, who were orphans, and they had jewelry but she did not pay Zakah for it. Similarly, Abdullah ibn Omar gave his daughters and servants gold jewelry and paid no Zakah for it.

All these reports show the basis for the ruling I have repeatedly published. In addition I may say that a main principle in Zakah is that it is liable on property that is, by its nature, liable to growth. Needless to say, women's jewelry is not liable in this way. Hence, it is not subject to Zakah.

### ***Zakah: On Jewelry For Personal Use & For Gifting To Kin***

I understand that each family is allowed 85 grams of gold. However, a middle class Muslim family possesses about 200 grams of gold in jewelry, which is used by the mother and her daughter. They need more for their own use, i.e. for the marriage of the daughter and her brother. What is the practical solution to this problem?

You confuse two separate issues. It is not true that a family is allowed 85 grams of gold. Indeed, any family or woman may have as much gold as she wants. There is no upper ceiling on how much of jewelry a woman may have. The figure of "85 grams of gold" has nothing to do with a woman's jewelry. It is the threshold of Zakah which means that if a person, a man or a woman, owns more than the equivalent of 85 grams of gold, or 634 grams of silver, and after the passage of one year, he still owns more than this basic amount, he is liable to pay Zakah on what he has, at the rate of 2.5 percent. Indeed, he need not have any amount of gold whatsoever to become liable to Zakah, if he owns more than the equivalent of that amount. All his possessions may be in ordinary currency.

As far as the jewelry used by a woman is concerned, it is exempt from Zakah, as long as its amount is considered to be reasonable for women in her social status. A woman who is very rich may have jewelry amounting to much more than the 200 grams owned by this middle class family, and she need not pay a penny in Zakah for that jewelry. Another woman may have half as much in jewelry, but that would be much more than reasonable for women in her social status. Therefore, she pays Zakah on what is considered to be excessive. This is a totally different matter.

I should explain that in determining if Zakah is payable for gold or jewelry, or indeed anything else, we do not take the family as a whole. Every individual has to look after his or her own Zakah. For the purposes of Zakah, there is no such thing as joint ownership. If something is owned jointly, each partner has to calculate his or her share of that particular item and add it to his or her belongings in order to determine how much Zakah he or she should pay out. What we pay in Zakah is obviously determined by the relevant rules of Zakah. [Added: A woman is not required to pay any Zakah for her jewelry provided that two conditions are met: 1. The amount of jewelry she has should be considered reasonable for a woman in her social status; and 2. It is bought for her personal use, not as a means of investment. While some women are very fond of jewelry, the amount they have must not be excessive in order that it be exempt from Zakah. As you realize, no exact figure can be given here. What is excessive in one case may be reasonable, or low in the case of another. It all dependent upon the financial means. On the other hand, if the woman buys jewelry because she hopes to be able to sell it later at a profit, then it is no longer personal ornament.]

### ***Zakah: On Jewelry In Relation To Social Status***

I have heard that women need not pay Zakah on jewelry, if it is within the limits of their social status. Is the above criterion not ambiguous? How does a woman quantify her jewelry in relation to her social status? She may feel that whatever she has is still below her social status. Please explain.

What you have said about Zakah on jewelry is correct. A woman need not pay any Zakah for her jewelry if it is within what is considered to be reasonable for women in her social status. Now this is not as vague as you are saying. What a woman should consider is whether her mother, her sisters, cousins or other people who enjoy the same standard of living as herself have a more or less similar amount of jewelry. If so, then what she has is within what is reasonable for her. If she has what other people like herself, or her sisters, etc. consider to be very excessive or luxurious, then this is certainly not reasonable for her. In this case she should consider whether it is truly excessive and, therefore, liable to Zakah.

We must not forget that in this question we are dealing with Allah who knows everything and who knows our intentions. Persons, who do not care about their religious duties, may not bother about the payment of Zakah. But that will turn eventually to their detriment. They have to answer to Allah about their failure to meet

their religious duties. That sort of question is not the kind one looks forward to. It is much better to be able to say to Allah that we have fulfilled our duties. He will then forgive us our sins. Unfortunately, many people do not behave in this way. On the Day of Judgement, they will realize that they have much to regret.

### ***Zakah: On Jewelry Sold***

You have explained that women's jewelry kept for personal use is exempt from Zakah. I understand that the jewelry should be held with no intention of re-sale. Suppose that a woman decides to sell some of her jewelry in order to buy new articles, or to replace the old ones with a new model, will she have to pay Zakah, and from what date?

I have repeatedly said that when a woman's jewelry is held for personal use no Zakah is due on it. The only jewelry that is Zakahable is that held as investment or as commercial commodity. Suppose that a woman runs a jeweler's business, she treats all the jewelry in her shop, or in her keeping, as commercial commodity and pay Zakah on it in the same way as any businessman treats the stock in his shop or office. If she has jewelry of her own, which she holds for personal use, those articles of jewelry are exempt from Zakah. If she later decides to sell some of these, for whatever reason, no Zakah is payable on the proceeds of the sale. How ever, it becomes part of her property that is liable to Zakah on her next Zakah date in the normal way. If she uses the money to buy new jewelry and she spends it all before her next Zakah date is due, she does not pay Zakah on it.

What should be clear is that the important point is the intention, not the re-sale. While the woman held the jewelry, the intention was that it was a personal article. Hence, no Zakah. If circumstances change leading to a new intention, we deal with this new intention when it takes place. Changing an article of jewelry is like changing an article of clothing. However, if the cash received is still held in cash on the next Zakah date, it becomes liable to Zakah. If the new article of jewelry is intended as an investment, then it is Zakahable from the moment it is acquired according to the rules of Zakah and when it becomes due.

### ***Zakah: Payer Or A Beneficiary?***

My friend has a sister who owns more than the threshold of Zakah in gold. Her husband has only a meager income, which is not sufficient to maintain his family. Can my friend give part of his Zakah money to his brother-in-law? My cousin has a piece of agricultural land and he pays out Zakah at the rate of 5 to 10 percent of its produce. However, his income is not sufficient to meet his family's needs. I give him part of my Zakah without informing him that it is Zakah money. I have learned that one cannot be a payer and a recipient of Zakah at the same time. How can this situation be remedied in order to help this cousin of mine look after his family?

The first point to clarify in connection with the payment of Zakah and who may benefit by it is that there is a threshold of Zakah which serves to identify who is liable to Zakah payment. That threshold is determined at what is equivalent to the value of 634 grams of silver. If any person has more than this amount above what he needs for his immediate living expenses, then he qualifies as a Zakah payer. He should remember the day when he came into the ownership of this amount and on the same day of the following year, he should calculate what he owns. If it is still above that figure, then he is liable to pay Zakah for all that he owns, according to well-defined and detailed rules. In subsequent years, he does the same on the same date. It is well known that a Muslim does not pay Zakah for the house he owns and uses for his living, or his means of transport, or the tools and equipment, which he



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needs for his work, etc. He pays Zakah for the income he receives from any real property he owns and he lets out. He does not pay for the value of such property. Those rules are too detailed to list in this answer.

A person is considered to qualify as a beneficiary of Zakah if he does not have enough to meet the needs of his family and dependents with regard to their food, clothes, accommodation and transport. Anyone who may be in this category can be helped with Zakah money, but if he is a relation of ours, he has a stronger claim to benefit from our Zakah. This rule applies to both people in the two cases cited by our reader. But the question is do they qualify to benefit by Zakah?

In the first case, it is the husband who is of limited means and cannot make ends meet. That is a clear example of a person who may be helped with Zakah. He is working and trying his best, but he is one of the low-income people. If he has another income to supplement his wages, he may lose his claim. But does he? We are told that his wife has an amount of gold, which is above the threshold of Zakah. How does this effect his claim?

What we should understand is that Islam takes the case of every individual separately. Islamic duties are assigned to men and women in their individual capacity. In order to appreciate this point, we need to remember that Zakah is not a duty on the family. It may happen that a boy or girl who is only about 15 years of age, or maybe younger, has much more money than their parents. They qualify as Zakah payers while their parents may benefit by other people's Zakah. Though a man cannot pay his Zakah to his father, because it is his duty to support his father if he is in need, the father does not lose his beneficiary status simply because his son is richer than him. What happens if his son does not look after him? Each aspect is looked upon in every individual case in order to determine who may benefit by Zakah.

A woman is assigned of her Islamic duties separately from her husband. She is entitled to be supported by her husband, even when she is richer than him. She need not pay anything for the expenses of the family. It is true that people in practice do pay for such purposes, and rich women often support their families. The fact remains that they are not required to do so. If they decide to withhold payment, they are in no breach of Islamic rules.

What we have to look in this case is whether the man actually is in need of help. According to the information you have supplied, he is. His brother-in-law may pay him a portion or all of his Zakah in order to enable him look after his family.

An important point to clarify here relates to the gold the wife possesses. Is this her own jewelry, which she uses in the normal way? If so then it is not liable to Zakah. Only when its quantity exceeds what is considered to be reasonable for women in her social status to have, it becomes liable to Zakah. The amount is, therefore, not related to the threshold of Zakah, but what is normally agreed to be reasonable. If the gold is not in jewelry, or if it is jewelry but bought as an investment, then she is liable to pay Zakah for it. She may help her husband with her Zakah, since he is poor. That, however, does not cause her to forfeit her right to be supported by her husband.

As for the second case, there seems to be a little confusion over how much your cousin should pay out of his land produce in Zakah. I guess that he follows the Hanafi school of thought, which maintains that the whole amount of land produce is liable to Zakah. However, there is a much weightier opinion, which states that there is a threshold of Zakah for land produce. Anyone who owns a piece of land which gives him less than this threshold need not pay any Zakah for that produce, except by joining the income he receives from it to the rest of his money. Land produce is liable to Zakah at the time of harvest, not after a year as some people may imagine.

The threshold of Zakah is determined in a certain measure, which applies to such produce as wheat, barley, corn, rice, etc. There is a highly authentic Hadith, related by both Al-Bukhari and Muslim as well as others: "No Zakah is payable for less than 5 wasqs." A wasq used to be measure, which constitutes the threshold of Zakah, which is equivalent to 653 kilograms in weight. Therefore, if the land produce exceeds that weight or measure, then it becomes liable to Zakah at the rate of 10 percent, if the land is irrigated by rainwater only, and at the rate of 5 percent, if it is irrigated by machines. Also not included in the Zakah of land produce is what the farmer or the owner and his family used in the period leading up to the harvest.

Agriculture land is also used for other products, which cannot be measured in volume in the same way as normal grain produce, but they may have a much higher value. Two examples, which come readily to mind, are cotton and saffron [cash crops.] Certain plants, which are used in the manufacture of perfumes, fetch very high prices because the land does not give a high yield of them. The threshold of Zakah with regard to such produce is estimated on the basis of value. It is best to take the amount, which would fetch a similar price to that of 653 kilograms of average grain produce such as wheat, corn or rice. If it is determined that only 25 kilograms of saffron or narcissus fetch a price equivalent to that of 653 kilograms of rice, then the land owner who produces more than this amount must pay Zakah for what he gets out of his land.

If your cousin calculates the produce of his piece of land on this basis, deducting what he and his family use of its land produce for their food or to give as presents to neighbors and relatives before the time of harvest, and deducting also his expenses which he incurs in looking after his land, with the exception of its irrigation, [because the nature of irrigation determines the rate of Zakah he pays] and deducting also any debts he may have incurred in looking after his land, then he has to consider whether he is liable to pay Zakah or not. That is determined by the amount of produce he gets out of his land. If it exceeds the threshold of Zakah, then he pays Zakah for it. If not, he pays no Zakah.

The idea of leaving a threshold before imposing Zakah on a certain type of money is to allow a person to have the minimum for what he and his family need before requiring him to pay Zakah, which is intended to help others. We have to remember that the Prophet, peace be upon him, defined Zakah as a duty "which is taken from the rich among them and paid to their poor." Nobody is considered "rich" if he earns less than what he needs to provide a reasonable standard of living for his family. The point you have raised is very valid indeed: that a person cannot be a payer of Zakah when he himself is in need of help with Zakah. I suspect that either the land of your cousin is too small or that his family is too large [or may be he has assumed liabilities of a wider family umbrella which are in fact not his; a practice so common in certain societies.] If his land yields more than the threshold of Zakah, what he gets out of it should be sufficient for his needs. If not, his income may be supplemented from Zakah. It is possible that this particular case is so special that it merits careful consideration on its own.

### ***Zakah: Payment Delayed For A Purpose***

1. Can we retain a portion of our Zakah so that we can help in financing the marriage of a poor Muslim girl, as and when it occurs during the next year?
2. Can I hold payment of Zakah for some time - say a couple of years in order to accumulate the funds sufficient for a health care project that will be of greater use to the beneficiaries.

3. Can we retain a portion of our Zakah so that we can help in financing the marriage of a poor Muslim girl, as and when it occurs during the next year?

4. I am allocating a fixed amount of money to a bank account on a monthly basis hoping to utilize it for some good project for the needy. I do not use this money except for a purpose commensurate with how Zakah should be used. My question is whether I need to actually spend the Zakah amount of 2.5% of my income per annum. I mean I am separating it so as to raise a sufficient amount for something that provides continuous benefit, such as education for orphans. What it means in practice is that I am holding part of my Zakah for use in the long term. Please comment.

5. May I ask whether it is permissible to save one Zakah for a few years so as to finance a project that helps the community, or an individual family? Can I hold my Zakah for a couple of years so that I use it to establish a health care unit for the poor in my hometown?

1. When Zakah becomes due, the amount to be paid is no longer owned by the person concerned. He can only set it aside and pay it to its recipients, as indicated in the Qur'an.

Therefore, it must be paid out without delay. The payer may retain it while making inquiries as to whom he should pay it, or while arranging its transfer. But no delay is permissible. The sooner it is paid out, the better.

However, if one has paid out his Zakah and some situation occurs which requires financial help, he should do so in any way he can.

If the help required is financial and the purpose is a legitimate Zakah purpose, then he can pay some or all of his Zakah for the current year, even though it is not yet due. He can deduct it from his Zakah liability when he calculates at the appropriate date. It is permissible to pay Zakah in advance, but not to retain it in order to cater for unforeseen emergencies.

2. You cannot hold your Zakah for a couple of years. Zakah should be paid out as soon as possible after it becomes due. What you can do is to estimate your Zakah for the next couple of years and add this amount to your Zakah liability for this year, and pay for the health unit now. This means that you pay your Zakah in advance for a couple of years in order to establish the health care unit for the poor in your area.

Alternatively, you can get some of your friends to join in this effort and all of you pay your Zakah into this project, establishing it as soon as possible after you pay in your Zakah money.

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due. He can deduct it from his Zakah liability when he calculates at the appropriate date. It is permissible to pay Zakah in advance, but not to retain it in order to cater for unforeseen emergencies.

4. You should not hold Zakah from one year to the next, even if you intend to use it for a good purpose which serves the very objectives of Zakah. This is because when Zakah is due, its amount is no longer your property. It belongs to those who may benefit by Zakah.

I understand the nobility of your purpose, but you have to devise your project in line with what Islam requires. By making Zakah payable every year, Islam provides a substantial fund for the alleviation of poverty and other similarly urgent purposes. If people start to withhold some of their Zakah for a future purpose, there will be a shortfall, which entails suffering by the poor in the short term. This is not acceptable when the money to relieve such suffering is available.

You can still achieve your purpose by different methods. You can, for example, agree with a few friends to draw plans for some project and club together to start it soon. Each one pays his Zakah or other donation so as to raise the money straightaway. If need be, you can pay next year's Zakah now in order to finance the project. You should remember that when you use Zakah for a project, it has to be one for which Zakah money can be used.

One more point, Zakah is not paid on all income, but on what is left after attending to one's responsibilities. It is not an income tax; it is rather a wealth tax, but used for certain purposes and paid to specified groups.

5. You cannot save Zakah for a period of a year or more, even though the purpose is very useful. The point is that when Zakah is due, it no longer belongs to the person liable to pay it. It belongs to God and it has to be spent as He directed. What you can do is to pay your Zakah for more than one year in advance and finance your project in this way, setting off your Zakah for the next year or two against what you have already paid. But your intention should be clear at the outset. A better alternative may be to persuade a few people to join up with you, paying their Zakah for the same project. You could agree on financing a project every year.

Another point which should be considered is that when you hold your Zakah for a couple of years, you cannot be sure that you will live long enough to see your project being fulfilled. If you die in the meantime, your heirs might not know of your intention, or might not carry out your instructions, which means that you would have fallen short on your Zakah payments.

### ***Zakah: Payment For Supporting Wedding Expenses***

1. Can we spend Zakah money to help a poor girl to get married?
2. Marriage is normally very costly and numerous are the cases when the marriage is delayed for a year or more because the family is unable to meet the expenses. Is it permissible to pay Zakah in order to help with the marriage of a girl?

1. When the Prophet, peace be upon him, set one of his companions as governor of the Yemen, he instructed him to tell the people there that God has imposed on them a financial duty, namely Zakah, "which is taken from the rich among them and given to the poor." There is no doubt that the poor are the class, which is given priority as beneficiaries of Zakah. They are mentioned in the first and second positions among the eight classes of beneficiaries of Zakah. God says in the Qur'an:

***“Zakah collections may be given only to the poor, the needy, officers in charge of Zakah, those whose hearts are to be won over [to Islam]. And [may be used] for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and for those who are overburdened with debts, and for the struggle in God's cause, and for [stranded] wayfarers.” [Repentance — “At-Taubah” 9: 60]***

There is an important element with regard to Zakah, which we need to keep in our minds. Zakah is not given such a great importance in Islam, which makes it third among the five pillars upon which the structure of our faith is built, simply to provide a palliative, which enables the poor to have a temporary or short relief of the burden of poverty. The main concern of Zakah is not to give money to a hungry person for a meal, or give him enough money to last him a day or two and to abandon him in order to start suffering the effects of his poverty. Zakah is intended to make the poor self-sufficient. Indeed, a central concept of the Islamic economic system makes the whole social structure of the Muslim community geared to bring about a transformation, which makes those who receive Zakah now rich enough to pay Zakah in the near future. It is on the basis of this concept that many Muslim scholars argue that a poor person may be given enough of Zakah funds to last him for life. That does not mean giving him a large amount of money, of which he draws a small portion week after week or month after month. What is meant is to provide him with the means of earning enough money to cater for his needs and those of his dependents. It is well known that a poor student may be given Zakah funds to enable him to finish his studies. A poor person should be helped to get married, in order to avoid falling in sin. This applies to both men and women, as there is no distinction in Islam between the sufferers of poverty. They all must be helped.

On the basis of the foregoing, Zakah money may be spent to help the marriage of a poor girl. That is stating a principle. However, when it comes to what is actually needed for the marriage of a poor girl in a particular society, some restrictions may be operative. In certain countries, it is the tradition that the bride gives the bridegroom a dowry in the form of gold and other articles. Indeed, the amount of gold, which will be given, is subject to negotiation and it is finally agreed upon between the two parties or their families. Islamic marriage has no such tradition. It is indeed the reverse because it is the bridegroom who must pay his prospective wife a dowry, which becomes her own property and no one has the right to interfere with how she spends it. Because the payment of a dowry is necessary for the marriage to be valid, a poor person whom we want to help get married may be given some money from Zakah to pay such a dowry. The reverse payment i.e. the dowry is not one of the essentials of Islamic marriage. Therefore, paying it from Zakah fund may be questionable. The only way to justify such a payment is to consider it part of the expenses of a marriage. Such expenses must be reasonable in order to pay them out of Zakah funds. When there is a poor girl who qualifies as a beneficiary of Zakah, there is a chance of getting her married to someone who will be able to look after her. This means that the marriage will take her out of the list of Zakah recipients, and then to help her meet the reasonable expenses of her marriage is acceptable.

However, this must not be interpreted as an approval of buying gold to give poor girls in dowry to their prospective husbands. Such a practice must be discouraged.

2. You ask whether Zakah may be paid to help with the expenses of marriage. I cannot answer such a question. What I can tell you is that if Zakah is paid to help with the expenses of a grand reception, then this is a wrong way to spend your Zakah money. On the other hand, if the family of the bride or if the bridegroom cannot afford the reasonable expenses of marriage, they can be helped with Zakah funds, because they qualify, in this case, as poor people.

### ***Zakah: Payment In Advance***

My three brothers are unemployed. Two of them are married and their wives have received some gold from their parents at the time of their marriages. Since my brothers are poor, is it permissible for me to pay my Zakah to them? Moreover, is it open to me to pay them my Zakah for several years in advance to help them establish a business of their own, through which they may have an income to look after their families?

The general rule is that Zakah may be paid to close relatives who are not entitled to be supported by the Zakah payer. For example, Zakah may not be paid to poor father, because it is obligatory to support the father if he does not have the means to look after himself financially. The reason for non-payment of Zakah to such a poor father is that the payer would be actually paying his Zakah to himself. It would simply reduce his duty to support his father. This is not permissible.

You are not required by right to support your poor brothers, although you will be greatly rewarded if you do so. Therefore, you may help them with your Zakah and you will be rewarded for that, Allah willing. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was asked whether Sadaqah, or charity, can be given to relatives. He answered: "If it is paid to a poor person, it is Sadaqah, but if it is paid to a relative, it is both Sadaqah and kindness." This means that there is more reward to be gained by paying one's Zakah and Sadaqah to poor relatives.

Many leading scholars agree that Zakah may be paid in advance. Therefore, you may go ahead and pay your brothers your Zakah for the next few years in order to help them establish their business. By doing so, you may achieve the very important objective of making your brothers self-sufficient. This is indeed the purpose of Zakah.

What you should do is to calculate approximately how much Zakah you will be paying each year. If you know that you will average a saving of say one hundred thousand a year, your Zakah liability will be 2500. You may pay your brothers ten thousand now making your intention clear in your mind that you are paying 2500 of Zakah for each of the following four years. At the end of each Zakah year, which is the date when you first owned an amount of money equivalent to the threshold of Zakah, you have to calculate your Zakah liability. If it is more than 2500, you have to make up the difference. If it is less than that, you cannot go to your brothers and claim the difference from them or consider it as a loan on account of your Zakah for future years. Allah will credit the extra amount to you as charitable donation or Sadaqah. You will be rewarded for that undoubtedly.

### ***Zakah: Payment To A Political Party***

Is it permissible to pay Zakah, Fitr, ordinary donations or give the hides of the sacrificial animals to political parties, which may be involved in terrorism, killing and misappropriation? If a person donates these or other things to such a party, does he share in the responsibility of their sins?

This is a rather strange question and most probably the reader knows the answer, but he wants the information shared with our readers.

The first point to make is that Zakah, Fitr and ordinary Sadaqah or charity have their rightful beneficiaries and they must be paid to those beneficiaries only. Two people came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and asked him to give them out of Zakah money. He answered, "God has not entrusted the distribution of Zakah to a prophet, given a message to convey; or to an angel who has a favored position with God. He himself has ruled on its distribution and divided it between eight groups of people. If

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you belong to any of these, I will give you Zakah money. If not, then you may have none of it."

Of course, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was referring to Verse 60 of Surah 9 which lists the beneficiaries of Zakah, and may be rendered in translation as follows:

***“Zakah collections may be given only to the poor, the needy, officers in charge of Zakah, those whose hearts are to be won over [to Islam]. And [may be used] for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and for those who are overburdened with debts, and for the struggle in God's cause, and for [stranded] wayfarers.”*** [Repentance — “At-Taubah” 9: 60]

The Fitr or Zakat-ul-Fitr, is a special charity obligation, which requires every head of a family to pay a specific amount on behalf of himself, his wife and children, as well as every one of his dependents. According to leading scholars, it is payable even for an unborn child, once pregnancy is confirmed. It is paid in Ramadhan, just before the Eid is due, and its purpose is to make the poor self-sufficient so that they can also celebrate the Eid without having to worry about their food or clothes. Charitable donations or Sadaqah is paid for a cause similar to those of ordinary Zakah and Fitr.

An animal sacrificed on the Eid of sacrifice is divided among the family offering the sacrifice, neighbors and relations, and also poor people. Its hide may be either kept by the person offering the sacrifice, or given to a poor person.

These are the proper beneficiaries of such charitable acts. Political causes, of any color, do not figure at all among the beneficiaries of such charity. It is certainly forbidden to pay Zakah or Fitr to a political party, if its only aim is to gain power. But if the political party is Islamically oriented and it has established some charitable activities, such as opening schools in poor and deprived areas, and if such activities have an Islamic orientation, then voluntary charity may be paid to such a political party, provided that it is earmarked for such activities. On the other hand, if the political party functions in a largely non-Muslim country and its program aims to ensure that the rights of the local Muslim community are protected, then it may be helped, provided that its means and tactics are acceptable from the Islamic point of view.

The reader asks about political parties, which resort to terrorism, misappropriation and killing. Islam does not approve such actions. Therefore, charity cannot be paid to an organization, which engages in such actions.

### ***Zakah: Payment To Clear External Debt***

If a Muslim nation is heavily indebted to the international financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, can its citizens deposit their Zakah in the government treasury in order to repay the international debt? This amount of Zakah will be strictly used for the repayment of the principal amount not the interest.

This is a highly valid questions that should be tackled by a group of scholars who should be assisted and advised by some expert economists to reach a collective verdict. I can only give some observations, which may be of help in such a study of the question.

Firstly, Zakah is taken from the rich in the Muslim community to give to the poor so that they can have a comfortable living standard. Secondly, Zakah is payable in a Muslim community to maintain its identity of submission to God alone. It is imposed by God, and not by the government. A Muslim government is required to put in place the machinery to collect and distribute Zakah, so that it goes to its beneficiaries.

Thirdly, the beneficiaries of Zakah are determined by God, and no other than the eight classes of beneficiaries may be given any part of Zakah. Fourthly, a Muslim ruler who implements Islam can exercise discretion in the payment of Zakah to these beneficiaries, but he may not deprive any of the classes of their fair share.

The situation the reader mentions is a product of our modern times. Unfortunately, it applies to many Muslim countries. It is not discussed in books on Islamic jurisprudence, because earlier Muslim communities never faced any such difficulty. Moreover, it should not be allowed to happen, because it disables any Muslim state, which finds itself heavily indebted.

Before a Muslim state allows itself to be under a heavy burden of debt, it should try to manage its resources in a way which can meet its needs, relying on its own resources and applying some austerity measures which aim at avoiding debt. Unfortunately, the forces that control world economy implement capitalist theories, which make debt an essential component of the economy. However, in a state, which consumes more than it can produce, like many Muslim states of today, this tends to lead into a situation of escalating debt, as we see in many countries.

If a Muslim state wants to get rid of this difficulty, it should not turn its thoughts to using Zakah money for this purpose. I am weary of this, because Zakah money seems to be an easy target. Muslims like to pay their Zakah on time, so there will be no problem of evasion. If Zakah money is going to the treasury to pay for national debt, then what will happen to the beneficiaries of Zakah? How will poor and needy families, insolvent debtors, and stranded travelers be helped?

There is a huge problem to tackle here. Therefore, I prefer that no Zakah money should go into the payment of national debts. Zakah should remain for the purpose of helping individual Muslims in need. If the government needs to raise money to pay its debts, it should have a well-planned strategy. Muslim populations are always willing to help to ease the national burden when they are sure that the strategy is meant to serve the best interests of the community in the long run.

### ***Zakah: Payment To Employees For Education Of Their Children***

Can we spend Zakah on the education of our employees' children?

You may pay your Zakah to meet the education expenses of a poor student, but the student or his parents should qualify as Zakah beneficiaries.

It is better to give your employees a decent wage so as to live comfortably than to give them a small wage and then help them with Zakah funds.

### ***Zakah: Payment To Help Dependents***

My father is about to retire, but his pension is hardly sufficient to pay for his own expenses and those of his family. Moreover, he has a loan to repay over a long period of time. That gives him much worry. As his daughter, can I pay him monthly from our Zakah money, either to repay his loan or to support his family?

Your desire to help your father is commendable. It is indeed the sort of attitude, which Islam develops in children towards their parents. The relationship Islam establishes between parent and child is too well defined to leave the question of financial help in situation of need to personal preferences or within voluntary actions. When a child is young, needing every type of help, his parents must bring him up and look after him well. They should provide him with food, clothing and shelter of a decent standard, according to their means. Although Allah rewards



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parents for taking good care of their children, parents cannot dodge their responsibility. They cannot hold it as a favor that they bring up their children; it is their duty.

Similarly, when either or both parents are old and they do not have an income sufficient to meet their needs, it is the responsibility of their grown-up children to look after them and pay for their needs. They do not do this as a favor but in fulfillment of a duty imposed on them by none other than Allah. If they fail to look after their parents, Allah will question them about their failure and may punish them severely for that. The guiding principle in all this is that **"Allah does not charge any soul with more than it can tolerably bear"**.

Since your father has more commitments than can be possibly met by his pension, therefore it is the responsibility of his grown-up children to supplement his income to enable him to lead a comfortable life. This duty is incumbent on all his children who are working or able to work, according to their means. So, if you have brothers and sisters, you should join with them in looking after your father. It may be that some or all of your brothers and sisters do not enjoy the sort of circumstances you do. It may be that they have heavy commitments or a modest income. In such a situation, you may have to bear the largest share of the help your father needs. That should not disappoint you in any way, because to have the chance of helping one's parents is indeed a privilege and an honor. Moreover, it earns generous reward from Allah. In short, you should look at your father's situation and determine the best way of helping him. If you are the only daughter of his that can help him, then you have to undertake that help yourself.

There is a general rule, which governs the payment of Zakah to its beneficiaries. No one may pay Zakah to a poor relative who qualifies as beneficiary, if that relative is entitled to be supported by the Zakah payer. This means that a man may not pay Zakah to his poor wife or his poor children, although they may be grown-ups. This is due to the fact that his wife and children are entitled to receive his help. This is his duty, which he cannot shirk-off. Similarly, a poor parent must be looked after by his children. As such, they cannot pay him their Zakah. If they do, then they are actually paying Zakah to themselves in order to reduce their own liabilities. This cannot be done.

Having said that, I should add that this applies to you personally, not to your husband. If both you and your husband are Zakah payers, you may not pay your Zakah to your father, but your husband may do so. The reason is that your husband is not required by way of duty to help your father. Hence, if he pays him his Zakah, he is not benefiting in any way. It may be that you do not wish to involve your husband in helping your father. This is commendable. However, this places on you the duty of looking after your father properly. May Allah help and reward you for that.

### ***Zakah: Payment To Help Replacing Burgled Jewelry***

While my sister was staying with our parents, thieves broke into our house and got away with most valuables, including her jewelry. Neither our parents nor our brothers are in a financial position to replace this loss to her. Is it permissible if I replace her jewelry using my Zakah, in order to save her from embarrassment and further problems with her in-laws?

It is a commendable feeling that you wish to replace your sister's loss. She must be in an embarrassing situation because the loss took place in your parents' home. It is certainly embarrassing, though true that when such a loss took place in the home of a wife's parents, her in-laws may be suspicious; and what is more, they may even express their suspicion to the person who has suffered the loss. In so doing, they

add insult to injury. Such an attitude is contrary to Islamic teachings. [On the other hand none of this may happen.]

Whether you can give some of your Zakah money to your sister depends on whether or not she qualifies for receiving Zakah and how much of a need the lost jewelry represents. Zakah may be paid to eight classes of people whom God has specified in the Qur'an as recipients of Zakah. These are: "the poor, the needy, the Zakah officers, those whose hearts are to be won over [to Islam], and for the freeing of slaves, for settlement of debts [of insolvent debtors], struggle in the cause of God and to stranded wayfarers."

To start with, if your sister qualifies under any of these headings to receive Zakah, then you may help her with your Zakah money. Most probably she does not, because she has her husband to support her and he is most probably in a position to do so. We cannot equate her loss with settling a debt because the loss is of her own. The jewelry does not belong to any one from her husband's family. Even if that were the case, she would not be required to replace the jewelry, if she has taken reasonable care to keep it safe. Nor is it possible to claim that the jewelry is important for her living.

Take by contrast the example of a carpenter whose tools are stolen. He needs them to earn his living but he cannot afford to buy new tools. If the tools are in his hands, he can work and support his family. If not, he will remain without work. In such a case, we can buy him a new set of tools with Zakah funds. I do not think that the same applies to your sister.

The only way out is perhaps for you to buy her the jewelry with your own money, if you will. This will certainly reduce your Zakah liability, but then you are not paying Zakah directly to her.

### ***Zakah: Payment To Hospitals***

Is it appropriate to pay Zakah money to hospitals? Some people claim that this is not acceptable even if the money is utilized for the treatment of destitute patients. Please comment.

If we are certain that the Zakah we pay to a hospital will definitely be used for the treatment of poor and needy people, who themselves qualify as beneficiaries of Zakah, then that is a legitimate use of Zakah money. But if the hospital will mix Zakah money with its overall revenue and use it toward the payment of salaries and administrative costs, then Zakah cannot be used for that purpose.

If people in a poor locality want their local clinic or hospital to benefit by the Zakah of rich people who may be approached for help, they have to persuade the hospital to have a separate account, which it uses for the treatment and food of very poor patients. When this is done, it will be perfectly appropriate to pay their Zakah into that account of the hospital, [and be] assured that its use is legitimate.

### ***Zakah: Payment To Needy With Considerable Assets***

1. We have a relative who is looking after her own children. Although she has a small house and jewelry, she has no regular income, and she is poor. Can she be helped with Zakah money?

2. A relative of mine has a plot of land worth SR. 100,000 but the income of this property is too small to cover the ordinary expenses of her family. My relative's husband is handicapped and unable to earn a living. Does she qualify as a beneficiary of Zakah?

1. If this woman looks after her children, she is not required to sell her jewelry. She may be helped with Zakah if she is poor. You say that she does not have a regular income. It may be that her income, though irregular, is sufficient for her needs. In this case, she does not need help. She may be really poor, but sometimes she receives good income, which may provide for her needs for a few months and then she is back to poverty she may be helped during her periods of need. In fact, she must be helped, if not from Zakah then from other charity, or Sadaqah.

2. What may worry people in this question is the fact that your relative has a plot of land worth a considerable amount of money. Had she had the value of her land in cash, she would have been considered rich and there would have been no way that she could benefit from Zakah. Indeed, she would be a Zakah payer. The fact remains that the land does not give your relative enough to live on. Should she put her case to people for advice, most of them will tell her to sell the land and invest its value. That may ensure for her a decent income which could look after her expenses, particularly if she lives in a country where the value of her land represents a large sum of money and would generate an income far in excess of what she may need monthly. But this may not be a sound advice. Before she does anything of that sort, she should look into the investment alternatives available to her. I am sure that if she would only express a desire to make a better use of the value of the land many people will come to her offering their services in investing the money. She may enter into partnership with someone who offers her a project that sounds very attractive. It may so happen that in [a period of] two or three years, she should find herself without money, having lost the land as well. Therefore, she should be very careful about how she proceeds. Islam does not require her to sell her land in order to live on the proceeds of the sale. An Islamic state will definitely include her among those deserving help, until her situation is sorted out properly, to ensure a good, steady income.

You have not told me whether the land is usable for cultivation or building or some other use. If it is an agricultural land, your relative should look into the possibility of using better methods of agriculture or changing the crops she uses it for. She may have to invest some money in order to increase the income of her land. You could help her doing that by speaking to bank managers or reliable farmers. If it is a land, which could be a building site, then again an amount of money may be needed to increase your relative's income. Maybe developers would be willing to buy it off her in return for two or three floors in a building, which she could then rent out and live comfortably on the rent she would receive. But she must not make any step in any direction unless she is certain that it serves her interests.

Meanwhile, she deserves to be helped since she does not have an income sufficient to meet her needs and those of her family. If she or her husband have a relative who is required to support them, in their present circumstances, and he is well off, then he must be made to understand his obligation and fulfill it. If not, then she qualifies as a beneficiary of Zakah. Her family should try to sort out her affairs so that she can receive the maximum benefit of what she has, such as the land she owns. Until that takes place and she begins to receive an income, which is sufficient to continue indefinitely, because the means to improve it are present and the needs are real, proper, and well considered action is necessary.

### ***Zakah: Payment To Non-Muslims***

By the grace of God, my parents converted to Islam and I was born in a Muslim family in a country where the majority is non-Muslims. Many of our relatives are non-Muslims, but they maintain good relations with us. Is it permissible to give them a portion of our Zakah after distributing the larger share to poor Muslims?

The general rule is that when there are needy Muslims who qualify as beneficiaries of Zakah, it may not be paid to non-Muslims. But that does not mean that a Muslim state should not look after the poor among its non-Muslim citizens. They should be helped, but from sources other than Zakah. Zakah is a religious duty, and an act of worship. Hence, it should be used for the benefit of the Muslim community. When we reach a stage where the Muslim community is well looked after that there remains no one in need of Zakah money, Zakah may be paid to the poor who follow other religions.

Having said that, I would like to encourage you and your family to maintain good relations with your relatives who are not Muslims. You may help the poor among them and show them every kindness. But such help should not come from Zakah if there are other Muslims who need it.

### ***Zakah: Payment To One's Close Relatives***

1. Is it permissible to pay one's Zakah to one's own brother or sister?
2. A father, who spent a lot of money on the education of his son, stopped his support after realizing that the son was not serious about his studies. Indeed, the son was practically stopped from pursuing his studies. However, he is married and has no means to support himself or his wife. Is it permissible for his father to pay Zakah to his son?
3. Is it appropriate to pay Zakah to one's parents, sisters, brothers, other relatives, or to one's wife's parents?
4. I have a younger sister in my home country, which is still a minor. I am working here as a head nurse, while our three brothers are all working at home and looking after their families. I feel responsible for our younger sister. Should I pay her my Zakah money to spend on her education? Our father has left some money for her but she is not allowed legally to withdraw from it until she comes of age. Is that money liable to Zakah?
5. My son-in-law has died, leaving behind a few children with no income whatsoever. Can I give my Zakah to those children, considering that they are the responsibility of their father's relatives, while I should take care of my daughter — i.e. their mother? May I also ask until what age is a child considered an orphan?

1. The rule that governs such matters is that Zakah may not be paid to a person who is, or may become at any time, one's own dependent. A dependent in this sense is a person whom we must support if he cannot support himself. Thus Zakah may not be paid to one's poor son or daughter, or one's poor father or mother or grandparents or grandchildren. If the relationship is such, then when we pay Zakah to such people we are actually paying it to ourselves, as we are reducing our liability.

It is not obligatory to pay all the living expenses of one's brother if he is poor which means that a brother may be given one's Zakah. However, if one supports one's own poor brother one will receive a rich reward from God.

I would recommend anyone in this situation to make his support to his brother a voluntary support rather than from one's own Zakah, although the latter is permissible. In the case of one's own sister, one should support her if she has no one to take care of her such as a husband, a son, or a father. In this case, one may not give her one's own Zakah. But if she has someone to look after her, and the means of that person are very limited, then one may support her with his Zakah.

2. No, it is not permissible to pay one's Zakah to one's son or one's father. That is due to the fact that a Muslim is required to support his father or his son if the latter is poor. If he were to pay him his Zakah, he would be paying it to himself, as it would reduce his own liability. In this particular case, it is perhaps right that the father should stop supporting his son who has not responded properly to his father's kindness and support by trying to obtain a university degree. Perhaps the son always has had it easy, having always received what he needs from his father. The father's action may cause him to come to his senses and begin to look for a job in order to support himself and his wife. If the father wants to achieve this result, he would not be looking for other means to support his son. He has to let him face the situation squarely.

3. If one has poor relatives who qualify as beneficiaries of Zakah, one should pay his Zakah to them. He does not have to tell them that what he is giving them comes from Zakah, because some people are too sensitive on this issue. However, one must not pay his Zakah to a relative whom he is duty-bound to support under Islamic law. Such relatives include one's children, parents, grandchildren and grandparents, as well as one's wife.

To these one must not pay Zakah, because if one does that, one would be the actual beneficiary. Needless to say, no one can pay his Zakah to himself.

It is perfectly permissible, indeed better, to pay one's Zakah to one's poor brothers and sisters, because one is not duty-bound to look after them. As for one's parents in law, they may be supported with one's Zakah, as they are more distant relatives than brothers and sisters.

4. It is your three brothers who are jointly responsible for the upbringing and living expenses of your younger sister, since your parents have passed away. Your feeling that you are responsible for her is commendable, particularly because you are looking at the circumstances of your brothers who all have their own families to look after. However, they may not duck their responsibility because their elder sister is prepared to look after the younger one.

Having said that, I may add that it could be that your brothers are barely able to support their own families, particularly if they live in one of the poorer Muslim countries. In this case, for you to take over the responsibility is an act of kindness, not only to your sister, but also to your brothers who should be looking after her. Since you are not required by Islamic law to look after her, you may pay her your Zakah, spending it on her living and education expenses.

What I have just said applies if she qualifies as a beneficiary of Zakah. That means that she has no income of her own to cover her expenses. If she cannot draw any money until she has come of age [as is often the injunction from court of law in legal succession cases], then you may go ahead and support her from your Zakah. The money she has tied up is also liable to Zakah if it is over the threshold of Zakah, which is the equivalent of 85 grams of gold. Her Zakah may not be used to pay for her own expenses. However, if the money is so tied up that she cannot use it for her own living expenses, then probably she cannot pay her Zakah. No one is responsible to pay her [minor sister's] Zakah from his or her own money. When she has access to her money, she should pay out her overdue Zakah.

5. What you have said is true about your grandchildren having a claim against their own relatives, such as the father and the brothers of their late father. Your daughter, i.e. their mother, is the one who has a claim to your help. It is a rule that a person may not pay Zakah to a relative who has a rightful claim to his help. Hence, it is not permissible that a father pays his Zakah to his poor son or daughter, or a man pays his Zakah to his poor father. Other relatives may be helped with Zakah. Therefore,

you can certainly help in the upkeep of your grandchildren, but not their mother, with your Zakah money.

A child is considered an orphan until he has attained puberty. However, after an orphan comes of age, and he is no longer an orphan, he may still need to be helped, particularly if he is still pursuing his education, or if he does not have a job or any means of income. In this case, he will be in the same position as any person who deserves to be helped with Zakah money.

### ***Zakah: Payment To Relatives In Preference Over Others***

I have a poor relative. Can I give preference to him in paying Zakah or should I treat him like other needy people?

If you have a relative and you do know about his financial condition and are convinced that he deserves your Zakah more than any other person, in that case your payment to him will be both payment of Zakah and fulfilling your duty toward your relative. There is no doubt that paying Zakah to such people is better than paying to others.

### ***Zakah: Payment To Support Buying A House***

You have once stated that a person incurring debt to buy a house may be helped with Zakah funds. May I ask what sort of a house he may buy and how big a loan he can incur? I find it difficult to accept that such a person can receive Zakah funds because he is a house owner. What if the house is luxurious and the debts are very heavy?

I stand by what I have said. I gave the example that if a person has only 7,000 Riyals which is his total savings and he buys a house for SR. 10,000, and he borrows the difference, he may be helped by Zakah funds. The fact that he has become a house owner and if we calculate the price of his house as part of his property, he will not qualify to be helped by Zakah is not a cause to change that ruling. Having a house where one wants to live with one's family is an essential need and there is no harm if one has to borrow a portion of the price of the house in order to make sure of meeting that need.

The same applies to a person who borrows some money in order to buy clothes for himself or his family, or to get married or to be medically treated or to buy furniture or to marry his son or to compensate another person for a damage he may have caused to his property, whether intentionally or not. As long as borrowing is not considered to be unreasonable, then the debtor qualifies to benefit by Zakah. It is needless to say that a person who borrows money in order to face an emergency or someone who suffers a loss of his property through a disaster is a more urgent case. But this does not deprive the other types [i.e. other legitimate beneficiaries] of their entitlement.

There are, however, certain conditions for a debt to qualify as Zakah beneficiary. The first is that he should be in need of help to settle his debt. If he has enough moneys or goods, which are sufficient to settle his debts, then he does not qualify. Perhaps I should explain that no person is required to sell articles, which he needs, in ordinary life for settling his debts. If he has a carpet or some other articles of furniture, he need not sell them. What we are speaking about here is having things, which he does not ordinarily need. If he has something, which he can use to settle part of the debt, he is given enough to settle the remainder.

The second condition is that his debt should have been incurred for a legitimate purpose. If he has borrowed some money to do something forbidden, such as buying

intoxicants, or to gamble or to throw a party in which the guests have a chance to do something forbidden, then he may not be helped with Zakah funds to settle his debts. The third condition is that the debt is due to be settled. If it is deferred, then help from Zakah funds can also be deferred. The fourth condition is that the debt must be due to a human being. If it is to be atone for something one has committed in violation of certain rules of Islam, and the debt is not due to a human being, then the debtor may not be helped with Zakah funds.

I have already said that the debt must have also been incurred in buying what is reasonable. If one buys a house to live in and the house is of an average standard comparable to his own, then that is reasonable. If the earnings are average for his community but he buys a palatial house, incurring a heavy debt, then he is not to be helped with Zakah funds.

### ***Zakah: Proceeds Of Investment***

1. Someone has deposited an amount of money with an Islamic bank for 8 years, which means that the money will be tied for this period, but it gives him an annual return, which he spends on his family needs. What Zakah is liable on this arrangement?

2. An amount is invested with an Islamic bank where the returns are credited to the owner's current account at regular intervals. These returns are immediately withdrawn and used for the family expense. What Zakah is liable on such an investment?

1. For an investment of this type, scholars have given a Fatwa saying that the returns which the investor receives are liable to Zakah at the rate of 10%, which is payable immediately on receipt. The principal investment is not liable to Zakah since it is tied up. Even though the amount received is spent immediately, it is still liable to Zakah on the day of receipt, at the rate indicated.

2. According to scholars, the Zakah due on your investment is taken from the proceeds. When your current account is credited with returns from your investment, you pay 10 percent of the returns in Zakah, and this is due on receiving the returns, regardless of whether you spend them in a day or a week. The amount invested is not liable to Zakah while the arrangement is continuing.

### ***Zakah: Qualifications To Benefit By Zakah***

You have mentioned on more than one occasion that Zakah money may be paid only to eight classes of people in which you included the poor, the needy and those whose hearts are to be won over. Could you please explain what is meant by these three classes? How to differentiate the needy from the poor? Is it permissible to pay Zakah money to people who wish to embrace Islam in order to encourage them to take that step?

Let me begin by giving a translation of the verse, which enumerates the eight classes that may benefit by Zakah. It may be rendered in English as follows:

*“Zakah collections may be given only to the poor, the needy, officers in charge of Zakah, those whose hearts are to be won over [to Islam]. And [may be used] for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and for those who are overburdened with debts, and for the struggle in God's cause, and for [stranded] wayfarers.”* [Repentance — “At-Taubah” 9: 60]

Scholars differ as to whether "the poor and the needy" are one class or two different classes of people. They also differ as to who is worse off: the poor or the needy? It is

beyond the scope of this column to go into the details of these differences. It is sufficient to say that all sorts of poverty and all its degrees qualify the poor to benefit from Zakah. The operative criterion, which determines poverty is not how little a man, has, but whether he has enough or not. If a person has an income from his work or from a pension or a building he lets out, but the income does not satisfy his own and his family's needs, then he qualifies as a poor person who is entitled to receive Zakah. Basic needs include food and clothes for the person and his family as well as reasonable accommodation and furniture and the necessary tools for his trade and means of transport.

In order to know for certain who qualifies to benefit from Zakah under these two headings, it is useful to throw some light on the opposite state of being "rich."

Scholars agree on the meaning of richness, which makes one liable to pay out Zakah. This sort of richness means that one owns a certain minimum of money in certain conditions. According to the Maliki and El-Shaf'ie and the Hanbali schools of thought, richness means owning what is enough for one's needs. He who does not need extra money to provide for his basic needs cannot be entitled to Zakah, even if he does not own anything. Conversely, if he is in need, then he qualifies as poor or needy, even if he owns what may be considered a fair amount of money by many people. Imam El-Shaf'ie says: "A man may be rich if he owns only one Dirham [the smallest currency unit at the time] and is able to earn, while another may have one thousand Dirhams but may still be considered poor if he is unable to earn or if he has too many dependents." Thus, poverty means being in need while richness is the opposite case.

It may be asked whether Zakah money may be paid to someone who is able to work but prefers not to do so, because he feels that without work he may claim Zakah. The answer, according to most schools of thought is that such a person cannot claim Zakah and may not be paid any Zakah money, which is apportioned to the poor and needy. The prophet states very clearly: "Zakah may not be paid to anyone who is rich or to anyone who is strong and healthy." This pronouncement is restricted by another condition which is that the strong and healthy should also have a job to earn his living. If he cannot find work, then he may be paid from Zakah, or, better still, he should be helped to find work.

Muslim scholars have also specified that if a person who is able to work decides to spend all his time in worship, praying for much of the time and fasting, as many days as he can, then he may not be paid from Zakah. We are told clearly that to work in order to earn one's living is far better, in Allah's view, than voluntary worship, provided that one does not contravene the bounds of religion in his work. Islam does not approve of this type of full-time worship if it means that one becomes a burden to society or to others.

On the other hand, if one seeks better education and cannot combine this with working for his living, then he may be paid from Zakah what is enough for his needs until he finishes his studies. Such a student is given from Zakah because the benefit of his education is not restricted to himself. The whole society benefits from it.

People "whose hearts are to be won over" may be divided into several groups:

- 1, A person who, if given from Zakah, may become a Muslim or may persuade his people to become Muslims.
- 2, A person who is hostile to Islam but, if given from Zakah, he and others with him may keep quiet.
- 3, A newcomer to Islam, even if he is rich. The point here is that a newcomer may find certain difficulties. His family or his people may turn against him, and he may



lose his job, or he may encounter other types of opposition. Financial assistance in such cases may go a long way to reassure him that he has made the right decision.

4, Some of the leading figures among the non-Muslims may be given from Zakah in order to encourage others like them to become Muslims.

5, People who live in the border areas may also be given from Zakah in order to encourage them to defend the borders, in case non-Muslims attack them.

Some scholars, including Imam El-Shaf'ie, are of the opinion that this class of people does not include non-Muslims. Other eminent scholars say that this class of people includes Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Quite a few scholars, over the ages, have been of the opinion that there is no longer any need to win over the heart of anyone. They argue that since Islam has established itself as a strong, firmly rooted religion, there is no longer any need to spend Zakah money in order to make some people sympathetic to Islam. Other scholars who have a different view argue that the need to win the sympathy of certain people can be assessed at any particular time. It does not follow that there will always be such people to win over. This need varies according to the situation of the Muslim community.

It is up to a Muslim ruler to decide, in his discretion, whether to utilize part of the Zakah money in order to win over certain people. It is up to him also to decide not to give such money to any people who used to receive it under his predecessor. Zakah is paid to those of its beneficiaries who exist at any particular time. If one or more of the eight classes of beneficiaries does not exist at any particular time, then its share is not paid out. Withholding it does not constitute an invalidation of Allah's ruling.

Indeed the need to win certain people over to Islam does not cease. Some scholars of the Maliki school of thought argue that such people are not given Zakah money in order that they will help us, but to make Islam acceptable to them so that we help them save themselves. In other words, this is one of the means of calling people to Islam.

Imam Al-Tabari points out that there are two reasons for paying out Zakah. One is to remove a certain weakness of a Muslim and the other is to strengthen Islam. If Zakah is paid for the latter purpose then it may be paid to rich and poor people alike. The recipients here are not given Zakah money because they need it but because Islam needs their help. It is needless to say that only a Muslim ruler may decide to pay Zakah money to this class of people. Such a decision relates to the internal and the external policy of the Muslim state. It is possible, however, that an Islamic organization takes over such a responsibility in a situation where the government does not care about Zakah or about Islam generally.

### ***Zakah: Rate Of 2.5% Is Not For Everything***

How was the rate of 2.5% fixed as the rate of Zakah? I feel that this rate is too small. Moreover, a millionaire who pays 2.5% will remain a millionaire after the payment of his Zakah liability, while there are several Qur'anic verses which warn against hoarding money without spending it for charity. Please comment.

The rate of Zakah is fixed by God Himself. It is true that we do not find a Qur'anic verse which tells us about the rate of Zakah with regard to any type of property, but we also do not find the details of prayer in the Qur'an. In both situations, the Prophet, peace be upon him, has given us detailed guidance. As you are aware, the Prophet, peace be upon him, only conveyed to us God's message as it was revealed to him. A part of his revelations is that contained in the Qur'an and this part is the one we read in prayer. It is God's own word as He Himself has said it. Another part is

that expressed in the Hadith which is the Prophet's own expression of what God has revealed to him. Therefore, we may not argue with what is clear in the Hadith. We accept it knowing that the message it conveys is the truth as God wishes His servants to accept and implement.

It is true that in most cases the rate of Zakah is 2.5%, but this is not applicable to everything. There are certain types of property where the rate of Zakah is 5 or 10%. For example the produce of agricultural land which relies totally on rain for irrigation, and the owner does not need to do any work whatsoever in respect of its irrigation, carries a Zakah rate of 10%. Here the rate is high because there is little work and capital involved in obtaining the income that such land generates. Where irrigation is partly done by machine and partly by rain, the rate is 5%. Moreover, what is taken out from the earth, such as minerals and treasures, has an even greater rate, which is 20%. This is known as rikaz. This shows that in Zakah, as in everything else, Islamic law takes all important factors into consideration in order to provide a fair, reasonable and workable system that can be used in every kind of society without difficulty.

It may be said that the higher rates apply to types of property, which do not constitute a major portion of the wealth of the community. This is true, but that does not mean that the Zakah is inadequate. Indeed it has proved itself to be a highly effective method of combating poverty and ensuring a decent standard of living for everyone. The reader mentions that a wealthy person who pays only 2.5% will remain wealthy. And so will he. But what of that? The point of Zakah is not to deprive the rich of the means of enjoying what God has given them. The point is to ensure a decent minimum for everyone so that no one in society is forced to go hungry. People must not be left to suffer a hard life below the poverty line. But that does not mean to take away what the rich have.

What is important to realize is that the Zakah system is different from all systems, which are, applied anywhere in the world. Income tax, for example, is levied on the income received. Therefore, a millionaire who proves that he did not do good in a particular year will not be taxed and his capital will not be touched. In Islam Zakah is paid on all his savings, including any fresh income saved after his spending and on the capital. And this is annually. So the proceeds of Zakah will inevitably be very large. Hence, when Zakah is implemented for several years, poverty will be drastically reduced.

As for the verses of the Qur'an and the Hadiths to which you have referred concerning the prohibition of hoarding or treasuring of money, they apply to any money where the Zakah has not been paid. Once a Muslim has paid his Zakah, he has discharged his minimum duty. The description of hoarding cannot apply to him.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Acquired On Installments***

I have entered into an agreement to buy two units of office accommodation. The agreement requires me to pay the price by monthly installments over a period of twenty months. My intention is to let out these offices. When I calculate my Zakah, do I need to pay Zakah on the money I have already paid to the construction firm? When I take delivery of the office accommodation, what sort of Zakah should I pay for them?

You are not required to pay Zakah on the portion of the price of these properties, which you have already paid. You pay Zakah on the money, which you have in hand on the date when your calculation of Zakah is due. When you have paid the price of these units and taken delivery of them, you include in your calculation of Zakah the rental, which you receive from them, after the deduction of any expenses, which you have to pay in connection with renting them. For example, if you let them out through

an estate agent and you have to pay him a certain percentage as a commission, you deduct that commission from the rental value. If you have to carry out certain repairs, you also deduct these.

That is the case if you hold these properties only for rental. On the other hand, if you are looking at them as an investment and you intend to sell them if you receive a good offer, then they are treated as commercial commodities. You have to pay Zakah on their market value. So it really depends on how you look at these properties. If they are a long-term investment, and you intend to keep them and benefit by the rent they give you, you pay Zakah on the rent you receive. If you buy a property in a bad condition and you introduce certain repairs in order to sell it at a profit, then you pay Zakah on the value of the property.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Buildings & Factories***

May I ask about the Zakah due on buildings and factories? If a person rents several buildings other than the one in which he lives, should he pay Zakah on their total value, or the income he receives from them? What about a factory? Should we pay Zakah for the total value of machinery and equipment?

No Zakah is payable on one's own house in which one resides, alone or with one's family. As for houses, buildings or real estate that are held for investment, there are two possibilities. The first applies to those that are rented.

Zakah is due on the rent after deducting any expenses incurred in maintenance, repair or services. This applies if the person owns more than the threshold of Zakah, which is equivalent to the value of 85 grams of gold. The second possibility applies when a person buys a house in order to sell it later at a profit. Here the house counts as any other items of trade. Zakah is due on the full value of the house.

Factories, machinery and equipment are considered as fixed capital. Zakah is due on the income generated from them, not their value. All expenses incurred in generating this income, i.e. overhead expenditure, is deducted first and Zakah is calculated on the net income.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Buildings & Land Plots***

1. Could you please let me know which of these items are liable to Zakah? I may point out that some of these items are registered in my name while others are in the name of my wife. May I also ask whether Zakah could be calculated on the basis of the Gregorian rather than lunar year? A rented-out residential apartment building, residential plots bought with the intention of constructing housing flats for letting or sale, four plots intended to be given to one's children as gifts, where only half of the purchase price is paid and the remainder is due for payment within a year.

2. I feel confused concerning the calculation of my Zakah, and would appreciate your help in providing me with simple guidance. I have a house in Sydney where the rent goes into my bank account there. I have real estate in Pakistan, and the rent is paid to my father for my parents' living expenses. I also have three plots of land, which earn nothing, but I will be building a house on one and use the other two to meet the building costs. I earn a salary from my job here in Saudi Arabia, and I have some savings in an account in Australia.

1. Let me first clear the point of registration. A man and his wife have separate liabilities to Zakah. Each is treated as an individual to whom Islamic duties apply in his or her own right. So each of them has to be an owner of something over and above the threshold of Zakah in order to be liable to pay any Zakah. That threshold is equivalent to the value of 85 grams of gold. The reader knows who is the owner of the building registered in his wife's name. If she owns it, then she is the one to pay Zakah for it. If he is the owner and he merely registered it in his wife's name for convenience, then the liability is his. He is clearly liable to pay Zakah, as he owns all these properties.

The other point is that of the Gregorian year. Zakah is calculated on the basis of the lunar year, which has been standard in the Muslim world for more than 13 centuries. Only when the colonial powers occupied our land and imposed their laws and habits we adopted the Gregorian calendar. It is not appropriate for Zakah calculations. Therefore, when you have determined your Zakah date, make sure that you know the date in the lunar year and pay your Zakah at the same time every year.

The apartment building, which is let out, is liable to Zakah. What is payable is the net income it generates. This is the rental after deducting any expenses incurred for the maintenance and administration of the building. Suppose the building is a very large one and you employ one or two people to manage it, then their salaries count as part of the expenses, provided that they work on this task full time. If they have other duties, then the portion of their salaries that is related to this building only may be deducted from the rental. If you have property tax to pay, that is also exempt as cost.

The plots of land bought for constructing houses are liable to Zakah, because the whole project is an investment one. I realize that some people told the reader that as the plots now stand, they are not liable to Zakah, but the basis of that opinion is faulty. These plots are bought for investment, and while no construction work is going on they are treated as commercial ventures. If the owner receives an offer, which gives him a tidy profit, he will seriously consider it, and he may very well sell them to buy some other plots where he constructs building, or may buy other types of property, or whatever. As such they are treated as commercial commodities, and they are liable to Zakah. However, the value to be considered in assessing the Zakah liability is the market value on the Zakah date, not the purchase price.

The plots bought for the reader's children are more problematic. When the father retains, they belong to him, regardless of his intention, because he is at liberty to change his mind at any time. As such they are liable to Zakah.

However, if he makes the gift now, and makes each one of his children the owner of that plot, he is no longer responsible for their Zakah. If his child will retain it as a form of investment, it is liable to Zakah together with that child's other property, provided that he or she is a Zakah payer. What makes the child a Zakah payer is the ownership of more than the threshold of Zakah.

The fact that only half the price of these last plots has been paid does not affect the question, because when the reader calculates his Zakah liability, he will deduct what he owes anyway. This means that only the portion paid is taken into calculation.

2. We first take out the reckoning of income you receive from the property in Pakistan, as that goes to your parents for their living expenses. That income is not liable to Zakah. However, if the situation changes and the rent comes to you, totally or partially, then the net amount you receive has to be included in your Zakah liability.

The plots of land in Pakistan need to be tackled separately. You should identify which plot you allocate for building your house. This is exempt from Zakah, if you intend to live in that house eventually. The other two plots should be treated as a commercial

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commodity, because they are intended for re-sale. On your Zakah date, you should obtain a valuation of these plots and pay Zakah on their value at the rate of 2.5%.

The net income from your rented house in Australia is liable to Zakah. This means that you deduct from the rent all the expenses you have to pay, such as maintenance costs, agent's fees, local taxes, etc. What is left after that is liable to Zakah. The savings in Australian banks are also liable to Zakah and Zakah must be paid on both the deposits and the net income you receive.

If your salary is just about right to meet your living expenses, with your family, then no Zakah is payable on that. If it pays your living expenses and leaves you some savings each month, then what is left after meeting your expenses is liable to Zakah. When your Zakah is due, you include such savings in your calculation of your Zakah liability, even though such savings come to you the day before your Zakah is due. This means that when you calculate your Zakah on your Zakah date, you should add all that you have in your bank accounts, current and savings, as well as the value of the lands you own and the rent you receive. You make your calculation of your Zakah liability on the total amount of all these together.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Buildings For Rental***

I bought a plot of land and started constructing a building on it, intended for rental. I paid out Zakah on the value of the land, but not on the money I spent on constructing the building. Is this the proper action? You mentioned recently that Zakah on rent received from buildings could be at the different rates of 2.5, 5 or 10 percent. There is wide difference between these rates. Please explain. You also mentioned that a property held for several years is liable to Zakah when it is sold, once only, even when it is held for several years. This does not seem to be fair, because a person who spends a million Riyals to buy a piece of land, and sells it after ten years at a million and a half is thus required to pay 37,500 Riyals. Had he the money in other forms he would have paid 250,000 or more. Please clarify.

The important point to remember is that Zakah is normally liable on money and belonging that are liable to growth. When you bought the plot of land and started to construct a building, you are making the whole project liable to growth, but the land and the expenditure are not growing. They are providing the means for income and growth. Thus, neither the land itself nor the money spent on the building are liable to Zakah. When you start to let out the building and receive rent, you pay Zakah on what you receive.

The different rates I mentioned are merely the views expressed by scholars. This is what I said then: "Buildings that are let out are also liable to Zakah, but only on the rent received. Scholars have different views with regard to the rate of Zakah on rented building. Some treat it as other money, requiring payment of Zakah at the rate of 2.5 percent of the gross amount of rent; others say the rate is 5 percent, comparing it to the rate on the produce of agricultural land irrigated with machines; and a third view makes the rate 10 percent of the rent received after deducting any expenses incurred in the renting process. Again the comparison here is with agricultural land irrigated by rain. In all these cases, Zakah is payable on receipt of the rent, whether on weekly, monthly or yearly basis. One does not wait until a year has lapsed, or until one's Zakah date to pay Zakah on rent.

The comparison is clear. Agricultural land irrigated with rain water only, i.e. requiring no expense for the purpose, pays 10 percent of its produce in Zakah. By comparison a house given for rent generates income that requires no trouble or expense by the owner. Hence, some scholars feel that the rate of Zakah is 10 percent

on net rent. Those who opt for a rate of 5 percent compare the building to a land irrigated with machines, incurring expense for the purpose. As for the last point, we need to remember two points. The first is that Zakah is an act of worship. As such, a person does not try to avoid it, because he would be like one who tries to get out of the obligation of offering prayer or fasting in Ramadhan. If he wants to offer his worship, then he must know what he needs to pay out and fulfill his obligation. The second point is that God knows our intentions. When one is trying to avoid payment of Zakah he will have to answer to God for that. He will be in a difficult position indeed if this is his purpose.

On the practical side, you realize that a person who has one million Riyals can invest his money in a wide variety of ways, bringing in a good rate of returns. To put the money in a plot of land keeping it for ten years to get an increase in value of no more than 50 percent, or 5 percent a year, has no proper sense of business. He can easily get much better returns while having access to his capital instead of leaving it in the form of a piece of land that may increase or decrease in value. Besides, if the land is intended for sale at a higher price, it becomes a commercial commodity, liable to Zakah on a yearly basis, according to its value. It becomes liable to Zakah only at the time of sale when it is comparable to goods that are left unsold in order to avoid a big loss.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Determining the Arrears***

I bought a piece of land five years ago on a commercial basis, with the intention of building some shops to offer for rent, or to sell it when the price is right. Am I liable to pay Zakah for this land although it has generated no income since purchase? If so, at what rate, and how often? I also bought a shop that is not yet completed by the builder and I have not taken possession of it yet, but I paid most! of its price two years ago. Is this liable to Zakah?

What is important to understand is that Zakah is payable on any money which, by nature, is liable to grow. The piece of land the reader bought fits this perfectly, whether he eventually decides to build these shops or to sell it as it is. He knows that as it lies unused, its price is appreciating, because this is the nature of real estate in our times. Had he realized at any time that keeping it as it is for this length of time would mean a net loss, he would not have left it in his possession undeveloped. Besides, his intention is clear: This is a business transaction. Hence, it is liable to Zakah.

Zakah is an annual act of worship, and the reader must pay it every year on its due date. If he falls short of payment for one year, or more, he must fulfill his duty straightaway, without any further delay, because his liability remains due, as a preferred debt. Since none of us can tell whether! we will be alive tomorrow, one cannot leave a debt owing to God unpaid for any length of time. Therefore, he must pay his Zakah liability for the last five years now, as well as any further arrears he may owe, and continue to pay his Zakah every year on his Zakah date. For this piece of land, the amount payable is the market value of the land on his Zakah date every year. Suppose he bought the piece of land for 10,000 riyals, and on his first Zakah date it had appreciated by 10 percent, and again by 5 percent the following year, and a further 2 percent the third year, he pays his Zakah on 11,000 the first year, 11,550 the second year and 11,780 the third year. Suppose the year after that its value drops, he calculates that drop and pays Zakah on the lesser amount. All calculations are at the rate of 2.5 percent each year.

As for the shop, again the question is whether in these two years it was marketable or not. If he could not sell it for any price, pending its completion, or if he could sell at

a heavy loss, then it would not be liable to Zakah. But if it could have realized its purchase price at any time, and his intention is to rent it or sell it at profit, then it is liable to Zakah, again at its market value at the rate of 2.5 percent. On the other hand, if he is building it to use it as a shop where he would have his business, then it is not liable to Zakah. Zakah will become due when he starts his business, according to the rules concerning Zakah on commercial enterprise.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Empty House & Zakah Liability***

My sister owns a house, which is empty. If it is kept for selling when a reasonable amount of profit can be secured, what Zakah should she pay?

When you buy something with the intention of selling it for a profit, or when the market price is suitable, then that is considered a commodity for the purposes of Zakah. It does not matter whether this commodity is big or small, cheap or expensive, resold quickly or after a long time. If the intention and the purpose is to resell, then what is bought is a trade commodity and it may be treated as such for Zakah purposes.

A businessman who may have a large and varied stock is required to calculate the value of all he has in stock and pay Zakah for it at the standard rate, deducting first any expenses he might have incurred in conducting his business. Similarly, a person who buys one or two articles for resale at a profit should consider the market value of this article and pay Zakah on that value. If he incurs expenses in the maintenance or administration or safekeeping of that article, then these expenses are deductible from the overall liability.

In this question this principle is applicable to the house that is bought for resale and the gold. Many people have tried to make use of the fluctuations of gold prices in recent years, buying gold bullion when they think the price has gone down sufficiently to begin rising again and selling it when they have secured a reasonable profit. Some people have made large profits this way and some have incurred big losses.

The housing market also offers a good business opportunity for handsome profit. Hence, when a person buys gold or a house for resale, he must, on his Zakah date, calculate the current value of the house or the gold. He should then pay Zakah on the basis of that value, whether it is higher or lower than the purchase price, or the price at which he eventually sells that house or gold.

A rented house is treated differently. The value of the house is no longer the basis of the calculation. It is the rent received that is Zakahable. A person who receives rent on a building or a car or a plot of land or a shop or a factory pays Zakah on the basis of the rent he receives. He should deduct first any amount he spends for the maintenance of that building, and the cost of any repairs as well as any tax he has to pay for it or the salary of any guard he may appoint to look after that piece of property. He then pays Zakah on his net income from it.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Family Arrangements Of A House & Zakah***

A few years ago I bought a house and registered it in my wife's name for the simple reason that I want her to be independent when I die. As we are living in Saudi Arabia, I have made arrangements to let it. I paid about 60 percent of the rental on renovation, repairs and other maintenance work. I also paid about 25 percent in taxes and Zakah. What I would like to know is whether I must treat this house as a gift to my wife and let her have its rental, or should I continue with the present arrangement. There is no

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argument between us on this subject, and I wish to know my obligations as defined by Islam.

What we have to realize when it comes to an arrangement like this is that Islamic duties apply to a man and his wife separately. Either of them may be liable to Zakah or may be exempt from it on the basis of how much each of them owns and whether either of them has more than the threshold of Zakah or not. There may be a great deal of difference in how much you have to pay out in Zakah if you consider this house to be your own, although it is registered in your wife's name. In this case, you have to add the rental to your other possessions and pay Zakah for the full amount. On the other hand, if you consider it to be your wife's property, she may be liable to pay Zakah and the rental may not exceed the threshold below which no Zakah is payable. If both of you are liable to pay Zakah, there will be no difference in the amount you will have to pay at the end. I am sure, however, that this is not your main consideration, but I am pointing it out for the benefit of other readers.

I realize that relations between man and wife may be so close to allow each of them to look at what is owned by the other as joint property. That should not make them lose sight of the fact that they should discharge their Islamic duties as individuals. Therefore, when it comes to the payment of Zakah, each of them has to assess his or her liability on the basis of what each of them own. If we were to suppose that this house you have mentioned was inherited by your wife at the death of one of her relatives, and you have done all the arrangements you have mentioned, the Zakah payable on its rental should be calculated on the basis of what your wife owns. Since the case is as you have described, only you and your wife can determine who of you should receive the rental and pay the Zakah. As far as your arrangements are concerned, there is no question that they are valid. Many a thoughtful husband take similar steps to ensure that his wife continues to enjoy decent and respectable living after his death. Many a wife and a mother will find herself in a very difficult position if she has to work in order to earn her living, after her husband has died. She may be unable to work after having spent most of her life looking after her family.

However, when it comes to arrangements of this sort, family considerations may take precedence over legal ones. Your actions so far have been those of a person making every decision on how to utilize a piece of property of his own. That is all right if it is agreed between yourself and your wife. Since you have made her the gift already and you have told her that the house is, from the moment of purchase, her own, then that is how it should remain. The rental is hers. She may be willing to let you have it all and spend it the way you like, since you will be looking after your family. But then you must not forget that what you get of rental is hers. On the other hand, it may be understood between your wife and yourself that the house will be hers after your death, but for all practical purposes it remains yours as long as you are alive. In that case, you are treading on slippery grounds. What is the difference between this arrangement and that of assigning the house by will to your wife? For practical purposes, there is no difference. You should not forget that you cannot do that in Islam. Your wife is entitled to have a fixed share of what you leave behind. If you have children, she receives one eighth of your property, after the payment of any debts you may have outstanding and the execution of any will you may have made. If you have no children, she inherits one quarter. You cannot add to that share this house of yours.

If you truly mean the house to be hers, then she should be the one to receive the rental. After that, she may, at her own free will, make a gift of the whole or part of that rental to you. She may spend it on the family, if she so desires. What is important is to show that we are serious when it comes to financial transactions so that everyone knows his or her rights and obligations. You cannot just tell your wife, " I am giving you this house, " and then treat it for all intents and purposes as your own. That sort



of attitude should come as the result of a decision made freely by your wife. She may tell you that she is making a certain gift to you which may be the rental of the house of its usage. But this has to be her own free decision. If she decides to make such a gift to you, you may benefit by it, as you like. Whatever you and your wife decide in this case, you have to treat every step seriously and take your decisions wisely. It is wrong to take things for granted and behave as if you can make her a nominal gift and continue to treat it as your own.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Irrigated Or Un-irrigated Land & Farm Produce***

Could you please explain what Zakah should be paid for the produce of irrigated or un-irrigated land? What is the Zakah rate for fruits and vegetables? I would like also to know what Zakah is payable for cattle, sheep, goats and cows, and their milk and dairy products and also about fisheries, chicken and their products? How does a farmer who sells his produce once or twice a year calculate his Zakah liability?

There are differences among scholars on which types of agricultural produce are liable to Zakah. However, with the type of farming that we have today, it is more appropriate to include all types in one's liability to Zakah. The threshold is defined as five wasqs. A wasq is a measure of volume, and five of it is equal to 1600 Iraqi ratl, which is a unit of weight. It can be easily calculated in present day measures and weights.

The rate is 10 percent if the land is irrigated easily, either depending on rain or other easy means that require no effort or expense. If the land depends on machines or purchased water for irrigation, then the rate of Zakah is 5 percent. Some scholars say that no Zakah is payable on vegetable and fruit produce, but to apply this to the produce of large farms with tens or hundreds of trees is to exempt large estates from Zakah, which does not fit with the fairness of the Zakah system.

Zakah on agricultural produce does not work on yearly basis. God commands that we pay Zakah for such produce on harvest day.

***“Eat of their fruits when they come to fruition, and give [to the poor] what is due to them on harvest day.”*** [The Cattle — “Al-Ana'am” 6: 141]

This means that a farmer calculates his Zakah liability once he has determined the size of his produce. If it exceeds the threshold, he pays out his Zakah as soon as possible.

Zakah on animals is payable every year, provided that the stock exceeds the threshold of Zakah. Also, such animals should be of the type that grazes naturally. In the case of sheep and goats, the minimum threshold is 40, when one sheep is due. Two sheep become due for 121 and three sheep for 201. Thereafter, one extra sheep is added for each 100.

With cows, the minimum threshold is 30, and the rate is one male or female aged one year. If the cows are 40, then one two-year old female cow is due. For 60 cows, two cows of one year of age. With 70, two cows one of them one year old and the other two years. For 80 cows, the rate is two female cows of two years each. Then we move up 10 at a time, increasing the liability pro rata.

In the case of camels the threshold of Zakah is ‘five camels’ when the rate is one sheep of more than one year of age. For ten camels Zakah is two sheep and the rate goes up at each stage of five extra camels.

For 25 camels the rate is a she-camel of one year of age, or a male camel which has passed two years of age. For 36 camels a she-camel of 2 years, and for 46, one over 3 years.

As for dairies and fisheries, they should be treated as commercial ventures, and the same that applies to business applies to them.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Land Meant For Sale***

A few years back I bought a piece of land intending to sell it later at a profit. In the first year I paid Zakah on the land value at the rate of 2.5%, but then I changed my mind and decided to build a complex there. I stopped paying Zakah for it. However, I could not raise the necessary funds for my project, and I decided again to sell it. I was told that Zakah is not applicable to it until it is sold. I stopped paying Zakah, and adjusted what I paid on the land value against my Zakah liability for a later year. Now I am told something different. Could you please explain what is my liability?

A land bought for re-sale within a reasonably short period of time is treated like other commercial goods. It is liable to Zakah on the basis of its current value on the Zakah date.

So, what you did in the first year was correct and should not have been taken back as you did later. [It would count as Sadaqah or charity.]

On the other hand, a land intended for development is not liable to Zakah because it becomes part of capital assets. Zakah becomes liable on the property built on it according to its use. If you build a house for your own living, with your family, no Zakah is payable on the land or the building.

But if you build a residential complex, selling some units and renting other, then the money you receive for the parts you sell is liable to Zakah at the rate of 2.5% on the day you receive the money. For subsequent years, it is part of your money.

Buildings that are let out are also liable to Zakah, but only on the rent received. Scholars have different views with regard to the rate of Zakah on rented building. Some treat it as other money, requiring payment of Zakah at the rate of 2.5% of the gross amount of rent; others say the rate is 5%, comparing it to the rate on the produce of agricultural land irrigated with machines; and a third view makes the rate 10% of the rent received after deducting any expenses incurred in the renting process.

Again the comparison here is with agricultural land irrigated by rain. In all these cases, Zakah is payable on receipt of the rent, whether on weekly, monthly or yearly basis.

One does not wait until a year has lapsed, or until one's Zakah date to pay Zakah on rent.

A land that is kept for years before re-sale, intended always for selling at the right price, is not liable to Zakah until it is sold. On receipt of the price, Zakah is payable on the whole price of the land, once only.

This means that no Zakah is payable for past years, but for future, the price becomes part of one's property and is Zakahable with the rest of one's money.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Property Being Used By One's Kin***

We have two apartments registered in my wife's name, and we spend half our annual vacation in each. My brother's family uses one of them. We pay all its expenses, but receive no rent for it. The other is used by my wife's parents who pay its expenses but also pay us no rent. Are we required to pay Zakah on the value of these properties.

Residential property that is used for one's own living is exempt from Zakah . If such property is rented, Zakah is payable on the amount of rent received after deducting any expenses incurred. In your situation, you are receiving no rent. Hence, no Zakah is payable on either property. If your brother is living in your flat because he is poor and cannot afford to buy or rent a flat for his family's residence, and you are helping him by giving him your flat to live in, you are actually doing much more than paying Zakah .

May God reward you richly for that. Even if he can afford to have his own flat and he is living in yours without paying rent, no Zakah is payable on the flat.

The same applies to the other flat used by your wife's parents.

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Three Plots Of Land***

1. I have bought three plots of land: One to use for building a house for living, and one each for my two daughters. What is my Zakah liability?

2. About ten years ago I bought a plot of land on installments, intending to sell it later in order to buy one nearer my hometown, where I will be building a home. It took me several years to settle its price, and the land is now worth about three times its original price. What Zakah is due for such property?

The land you intend to build a family home on is exempt from Zakah. You do not have to pay any Zakah on its value, even though you may not start building the house for several years.

It may happen that someone buys a land to build a house, but his financial situation may not help to fulfill his intention for sometime. As long as his intention remains the same, the land is not Zakahable.

I am not clear on the position of the other two pieces of land. You say that they are for your two daughters, but you did not say for what purpose. If they are intended as an investment, then they are liable to Zakah. If you actually give them to your daughters now, stating even verbally that this land is for this girl and the other for her sister, and both are intended as investment, or savings, then each of your daughters is liable to pay their Zakah. If you are the one holding the plots and you intend to give them to your daughters in due course, then you are the one who pays their Zakah. Each of the two pieces should be evaluated every year on the Zakah date of the person holding it and Zakah is paid accordingly. The person incurring this must be a Zakah payer, which means that he or she has more than the threshold of Zakah, which is equivalent to 85 grams of gold. The Zakah rate on such a scheme is 2.5 percent.

If the lands are actually given now to your daughters and they are also intended to build houses on them for the owners, then they are not liable to Zakah.

2. We can look at this question in two ways. The first is that of a land bought for resale. In this case, it is commercial merchandise and it is liable to Zakah every year

on the owner's Zakah date. It should be valued at the current price every year and Zakah should be paid at the rate of 2.5 percent. For the years when the price was still being paid, only the portion that has already been paid is Zakahable.

The other way is that of holding the property in waiting for a more suitable time to sell. In this case, Zakah is paid only when the land is sold, and Zakah is liable on the full price and must be paid immediately on receiving the price. No waiting for the Zakah date should be considered.

It is clear from the circumstances that the owner is not a land dealer. It is more likely that he is of the second type, which means that he should pay Zakah when he eventually sells the land. Suppose that its price at that time has increased five or ten times, Zakah is due for the full price at the rate of 2.5 percent. QUESTION

### ***Zakah: Real Estate — Unproductive Land***

I have invested my savings in buying some plots of land, which are now lying vacant and unproductive. I have a mind to dispose of them and to invest otherwise. I want to build a house of my own and start a business when I go back home. May I ask how should I pay Zakah on these unproductive lands?

The difficulty which your questions presents is that you do not seem to have a very clear idea of how you look at these plots of land you have bought. It is clear; however, that it is a purchase made for investment. Therefore, the first thing that springs to mind is that they should be treated as ordinary merchandise which one buys in order to sell later, hoping to make a profit. There is, however, the additional point of wanting to build a house.

My advise to you is to identify first of all the land on which you intend to build house. No Zakah is payable on that land or on the house you build on it, even if you build it now and leave it vacant until you have gone back home. However, should you rent out the house, then Zakah is payable on the rent after the deduction of any expenses you may incur in maintaining the house and any fees of the estate agent who rents it out for you.

The other plot should be treated as a commercial commodity. Every year, on the day when your Zakah falls due, you should estimate the value of the land and pay Zakah on it at the rate of 2.5 percent, in the same way as a businessman calculates the value of his stock in order to pay Zakah. This is absolutely fair, because if you had the money in the bank or in a safe, you still have to pay Zakah. If the land appreciates in value, your payment increases, simply because any Muslim in a comparable position who invests his money and makes a profit should pay Zakah on the capital and profit.

### ***Zakah: Reward In the Month Of Ramadhan***

It is said that good deeds in Ramadhan ensure a greater reward than at other times. Does this apply to Zakah as well?

The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to do more in Ramadhan than he would do at other times. This applied to all types of good deeds. He offered more night worship and voluntary prayers. He also gave away more in charity. He was indeed the most generous of people, but in Ramadhan he was even more generous. His companions related that in Ramadhan "his right hand was more generous than unrestrained wind." He also encouraged Umrah in Ramadhan, saying that it is sequel to "pilgrimage in my company."

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There is, as you see, this encouragement to do more good deeds in Ramadhan, because you are already doing an act of worship. This helps to make any action more honest of purpose and properly dedicated for God's sake. Hence, it is common practice that people like to pay out their Zakah in Ramadhan, to increase their reward for it.

As you are aware, Zakah does not have a fixed date, which applies to all people. Its due date differs from one person to another, according to the first date on which a person becomes a Zakah payer, when he owns more than the threshold of Zakah for more than one year.

However, people who wish to pay out their Zakah in Ramadhan may pay it out, and on the date their Zakah is due they calculate their Zakah liability and pay out the remainder, if any.

### ***Zakah: Savings For A Special Purpose***

I have savings in the bank intended for the marriage of my daughters. I receive some income from these savings. Could you please let me know if such funds are liable to Zakah?

There are two ways of looking at this situation. The first is that these savings are gifts you have already given to your daughters, which means that you no longer own them. You cannot use them in an emergency without your daughters' permission. In this case, they belong to your daughters. They will be responsible for their Zakah. Each one of your daughters should then look at her Zakah situation.

If she owns more than the threshold of Zakah, which is the equivalent of 85 grams of gold, then she should pay her Zakah, and the portion of those savings you have assigned to her should be added to her calculation.

The other way is that you treat this money as your own. Although it is set aside for a purpose, it remains yours and you have full authority to change its usage if the need arises. In this case, it belongs to you and you are responsible to pay its Zakah.

There is no doubt that such savings are liable to Zakah every year. However, in situations where the money is placed in a bank or in stocks and shares, without touching the principal amount, Zakah are payable only on the net profits such money returns, at the rate of 10 percent.

Thus, if you have 100,000 in savings, giving you an income of, say, 8,000 a year, you pay 10 percent of the income, which is 800, instead of paying 2.5 percent of the principal and income.

### ***Zakah: Savings For House Purchase***

I have been saving money for the last several years in order to buy a house in Canada, my home country. I have been paying Zakah every year on my savings. As this process will take me several more years, and in the light of the fact that Islam considers having a house for myself, and one's family as a necessity, would it be permissible if one treats such savings for this purpose as exempt from Zakah? Please advise.

If you continue to hold cash savings, they remain liable to Zakah every year, even though they are earmarked for a definite purpose. To start with, such savings are ready money, which can be used for any purpose at any time. Although you plan to use them for buying a house, there is nothing to stop you from using them for buying

a car or organizing a business, etc. But this is not the main point. Since your savings are liquid assets, they are liable to Zakah. Nothing can be argued about that.

Once you use such money for any purpose, the situation becomes different and it should be looked at in the light of the new circumstances. Thus, if you decide to invest your money in a manufacturing business, and you use the money to buy the machinery needed or the land where you will have your business then that money becomes exempt from Zakah. You could also use money for the vehicles to transport your produce to your clients or distribution outlets and that will also be exempt from Zakah.

Islam does not like savings to be kept idle, even though they may be earmarked for a definite purpose. The Prophet, peace be upon him, advised against that saying that money should not be left idle, lest it should be "eaten up by Zakah". What he meant was that if money were saved, without investment, then paying Zakah for it year after year would be certain to make it disappear. While the rate of Zakah at 2.1/2 percent each year, would not literally eat up any savings, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was actually referring to its progressive decrease in quantity and value. Hence, it is important to keep money growing by investing it.

### ***Zakah: Sayyids As Beneficiaries — Detailed Comments On***

1. May I ask whether Zakah may be paid to those who belong to the household of the Prophet? I would appreciate your detailed comments.

2. In our community there are some people whom we call "Sayyid" and who are believed to be the descendants of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. When a person claims to be a Sayyid, this claim cannot be proved or disproved. Scholars maintain that Sayyids are not allowed to be given Zakah money even if they are poor and deserving. I happen to know one of these who receives a poor salary working in a government office. He will be retiring next year when he will have to leave his home which is given to him on a small rent by the government. This man will not be able to have a home for his large family unless he receives help. What is the way to help him if one can only afford to give one's Zakah liability?

Not giving Zakah to people who belong to the Prophet's household, is correct according to a large number of scholars. There are Hadiths, which make it clear that Zakah is not lawful to be taken by the Prophet's household. This has been interpreted by many scholars to be applicable to all descendants of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his clan, may Allah be pleased with them all, the Hashemites, in all generations. However, these people have a special allocation from the share of one-fifth of any spoils the Muslim state gains in war. It is well known that four-fifths of such spoils are divided among the soldiers, but the remaining one-fifth is to go to the state treasury where it should be allocated to the Prophet's relatives, and to orphans, poor people, and those travelers who may be left without means to continue their travel.

Many scholars have over the years spoken about the applicability of the Hadiths that speak about this restriction: Who exactly are those relatives of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and for how long is the restriction applicable? They have also spoken about the situation when there is nothing in the treasury, which may be given, specially to them: Are they to be left out of Zakah to endure poverty?

Dr. Yousuf Al-Qaradawi, a leading contemporary scholar and a highly renowned authority on Zakah, has discussed this subject at length, stating all the view of the past scholars and schools of thought and weighing up the evidence supporting each

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one of them. He then came to a well-argued conclusion, which is summarized, in the following paragraphs:

It is more correct to say that it is perfectly permissible to give Zakah to those who are poor among the relatives of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, at the present time. It is supported by the weightier evidence because they are unable to benefit by the share of the spoils of war, which compensated them in the early generations of Islam. They were not allowed to benefit by Zakah because they stood solidly behind the Prophet, peace be upon him, defending him against his enemies. Giving them Zakah might have appeared like favoritism. Even the non-believers among them gave him that support on a tribal basis. Hence, they should not be denied all help at a time when they cannot benefit by what is special for them.

Moreover, the Hadiths, which are given in support of disallowing them any Zakah money, do not express that restriction very clearly. A Hadith, which states that "Sadaqah is not fitting for Muhammad's household," refers in fact to the suitability of any of them for the job of supervising the collection and distribution of Zakah. This is to keep them away from any position, which leaves them open to suspicion of making personal gains from what really belongs to the community. Nevertheless scholars agree that they may be appointed to such posts. Furthermore, the term, "Muhammad's household," which occurs in more than one Hadith on this subject does not really include all their descendants for the rest of time. According to the Qur'anic usage of the term "household," in connection with other prophets and with Pharaoh, it is limited to the prophet, his wives, children, grandchildren and those who were closest to them. This ruling applied to them during his lifetime in order to keep them and the Prophet, peace be upon him, above any suspicion or criticism.

When the Prophet's blessed life came to an end, the restriction was relaxed. They became the same as the rest of the Muslim community where Zakah is taken from the rich and given to the poor. In saying so we are guided by two considerations. The first is that Islam has not given any special status to the Prophet's relatives. They are in the same position as the rest of the community with regard to their rights and duties. Secondly, and more importantly, Zakah is a duty binding on all Muslims and the ruler is required to collect it and distribute it to those who may rightly benefit by it. Hence, no one may give it as a favor. A person who takes it by right is without reproach. Indeed many scholars belonging to different schools of thought have ruled that it is permissible to give Zakah and Sadaqah to the descendants of the Prophet's household. Indeed this seems to be more in line with the objectives of Islamic law. It is not honorable for the Muslim community to leave the descendants of the Prophet, peace be upon him, enduring poverty, denying them the right to benefit by Zakah which is meant to be taken from the rich in the community and given to the poor.

The above is a summary of Dr. Al-Qaradhawi's view which is well argued and strongly supported. He is a leading scholar from whom I have learned a great deal. Hence, I will say you may certainly help this poor man with your Zakah until he enjoys a decent standard of living. [It is pertinent to point out that Zakah cannot be paid to any person against his wish, whether Sayyid or non-Sayyid. It is thus argued that Zakah can be given to a Sayyid only if he is willing to accept it.] You certainly need not tell him that what you are giving him comes from Zakah, lest he should refuse it on grounds of the commonly held view that he may not take it. Moreover, it is important to make this view widely known. It is wrong of a Muslim community to deny the benefit of Zakah to the descendants of the Prophet, peace be upon him, when the community does not have an alternative which it can use to alleviate their poverty.

### ***Zakah: Sayyids As Beneficiaries***

Our family title is Sayyid and we were told that we are direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. I have heard that because of this fact they cannot accept any Zakah nor can one give them any Zakah. Is this true? As some of my family members are poor, is it possible for me to give my Zakah to them in spite of the fact that they are Sayyids?

It is true that the descendants of the Prophet, peace be upon him, through his daughter Fatimah do not take Zakah, even when they are poor. But this stipulation is compensated for by the fact that they have a special access to funds that an Islamic state wins in its wars against the enemies, and from other state sources. The question arises whether the same restriction applies in these times when Muslim countries are weak and they have no funds from which to compensate the Prophet's descendants.

Sheikh Yussuf Al-Qaradawi, a leading contemporary scholar discusses this situation at length in his priceless book on Zakah. He concludes that it is not in line with Islamic justice that the descendants of the Prophet, peace be upon him, should be denied Zakah funds in times like these when they are not looked after in any other way. They are not less entitled to help than other Muslims. Indeed, the restriction is not meant to impose hardship on them when legislation is in place to relieve the poverty of ordinary people. Hence, he concludes that it is permissible to give them from Zakah and permissible for them to take it.

Besides, when you pay your Zakah, you need not tell the person to whom you pay it that what you are giving him or her is Zakah. To keep that information from him is better and recommended.

Having said that, I should add that not everyone who is given the title Sayyid is a direct descendent of the Prophet, peace be upon him, through his daughter Fatimah. To try to prove this descent could be laborious and hard. We should not be deterred by this title from giving Zakah to these people with this title, if they otherwise qualify to be beneficiaries of Zakah.

### ***Zakah: Spending What Is Beyond Needs & the Zakah***

Verse 219 of the second Surah gives an answer to the question by Muslims on how much of their money they should spend on good causes. The answer given in this verse is that they should spend: "what is beyond their needs." Is this the same as the 2.5 percent Muslims pay in Zakah?

This verse does not refer to Zakah or the 2.5 percent which every Muslim who owns more than the threshold of Zakah should pay. The Muslim state collects this Zakah in order to spend it in a certain way so that the eight classes of people whom God defines as the beneficiaries of Zakah could receive their shares in it. This amount of Zakah, i.e. 2.5 percent, is the minimum paid into the treasury of a Muslim state in order to fulfill a fundamental worship duty, which ranks as one of the five pillars on which the structure of Islam is built. When there is no authority to collect and oversee the spending of Zakah, then every Muslim who is liable to pay Zakah must pay it to discharge his or her own responsibility and fulfill this act of worship, taking as much care as possible to ensure that he pays it only to those who may benefit by it.

This verse refers to a different situation and it may require the payment of a greater portion than 2.5 percent. In this verse God says that Muslims may spend everything that is over and in excess of what they need to meet their own needs. Of course, the basic needs of a person and those of his family and dependents take the first



priority. When these needs have been met, then whatever is left may be spent to earn reward from God, either by giving it to the poor, or by providing essential services to the community such as educational or health needs, or to serve God's cause, including the financing of a campaign of jihad. This is further supported by a Hadith, which states: "There is an incumbent financial duty other than Zakah." The Hadith does not specify how much or what percentage, or in what situations this duty applies. Taken in conjunction with the verse quoted in the question, it seems to cover everything left after a person has spent to meet his own needs and those of his family and dependents.

Most scholars are of the view that Muslim ruler has the power to impose a levy on people in order to pay for what the community needs and what individuals cannot provide for themselves. This may be in the form of a regular tax to cover the normal expenses of the government as it tries to provide community services, or in the form of an exceptional levy to meet an emergency. In the latter cases, it may not be appropriate that the matter is left to individuals to come up with donations. At times donations can be relied upon to provide much-needed funds, but there are situations when it may be wiser for the government to use its authority and impose the duty itself. The way the Qur'anic verse is phrased makes it clear that Muslim ruler may impose such a duty so as to take everything that a person or a family may have after paying for their ordinary living needs. In such a situation, for which we may give the example of a Muslim community finding itself under attack by superior enemy forces, everything that is available to the Muslim population may be taken in order to safeguard the existence, independence or the welfare of the community.

In conclusion one may mention that the commonly held notion that when people have paid their Zakah they have discharged all their financial duties is a wrong one. There is more liability which the Qur'anic verse and the Hadith which we have quoted make absolutely clear. The amount, the size and the duration of this liability have not been specified so that different levels may be determined, as their particular needs dictate. However, it may be as much as people happen to have over their ordinary living requirements. When such a levy is imposed, Muslims must comply, as they should always do when their government is Islamic in character and orientation. [When their government is not Islamic in character and orientation, this financial duty, other than Zakah, remains incumbent on all Muslims, individually.]

### ***Zakah: Stepchildren As Beneficiaries Of Zakah?***

Could you please consider the case of a widow with three children who were about to be thrown out on the street by the landlord for failing to pay the rent? Having heard of what had happened, a kind-hearted neighbor took the widow and her children into his home, married the woman and supported her and her children. Despite being married for some time, they are not blessed with a child. I wonder whether an action of this nature fulfills the duty of Zakah, or must the man continue to pay Zakah? It is said that if someone gives away a young girl in marriage, paying all her expenses, he fulfills the fifth pillar of Islam. Is this true?

There is no doubt that bringing up a young child who has been left without a guardian or without money is an act of kindness which Allah views very favorably. He rewards for it very generously. As you know, every good action is rewarded at least ten times its value. When an act of charity is done to a deserving, helpless young child from whom one does not expect any return, Allah will reward such an action at the different level. Allah increases the reward for a good action, which is done with sincerity and with the sole intention of pleasing Him and multiplies this reward seven hundred times or even more. When a family is left destitute and a person takes them into his home and looks after them, his action merits great reward. When

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the man has confirmed that the widow has no one to support her or her children and feels that he cannot abandon them; he must regularize his relationship with this family. If he cannot provide the woman with separate accommodation, he should consider marrying her. Otherwise, problems could arise from the fact that she is living in his home, even though she has young children. It seems to me that the man in this case has been aware of all the points to be considered in his relationship with this family and he has married the mother, in order to look after her and after her children. May Allah reward him generously for his kindness.

Whatever the circumstances, this gentleman has done something highly commendable when he married the widow and started to look after her three children. Now he is wondering whether his action can be considered against his Zakah. In other words, he wants to do a set off, which relieves him of the duty of Zakah, while he continues to support the orphan children. Before we answer him on whether this is possible or not, let us first consider whether the three children qualify as beneficiaries of Zakah generally, and from their stepfather in particular. We have to assume that the children have no money of their own. Otherwise, their mother would not have been on the verge of being thrown out on the street for failing to pay the rent for her previous accommodation. Hence, this may be taken as evidence that they are poor or needy. As such, they may receive Zakah funds.

The upbringing of young children is the responsibility of their father. If he dies, leaving them young, then the responsibility is taken over by their next of kin. If their grandfather is alive, he is responsible for their upbringing. If he is not, an elder brother or a brother of their father has to look after them. When no such next of kin is available to support, then the Muslim state will look after them. If they live in a non-Muslim country, then the Muslim community is collectively responsible for their upbringing. A stepfather is not duty bound to support the children of his wife, unless he has committed himself to do so voluntarily. Unless it is regulated by a specific contract, this is a moral commitment. In view of the foregoing, the children in this case may receive Zakah from their stepfather, since they are not his dependents. A Muslim cannot pay his Zakah to someone whom he is duty bound to support. Thus he cannot pay it to his mother, or to his children or grand children. It is his duty to support these relatives. Therefore, if he pays them his Zakah, he is paying it to himself.

Having said that, I must explain that there cannot be a straightforward set off, relieving the man from paying Zakah against his upbringing of the orphans. What he should do, however, is to calculate his Zakah and set it aside at the appropriate date. He may wish to pay the whole amount to his stepchildren. If they are very young, he may start to spend the money on their needs, as he thinks fit, since he is their guardian. Alternatively, he may give it to their mother to buy a few things for them. If they can be trusted not to squander the money, as it is the case when they are teenagers, then he can put them in possession of it, as a Zakah recipient must have Zakah paid to him.

It may be that he spends on them much more than the amount of Zakah he has to pay. Nevertheless, he cannot just ignore calculating his Zakah liability. He must have this calculation and the money must be set aside. When rules are made, they take into consideration all possible cases. Someone in the same position as the questioner may have a large amount of Zakah to pay, which could be far in excess of what he pays to bring up his wife's children. If the principle of set off is to be applied, then some Zakah recipients are bound to suffer.

The second case of footing the bill for marrying a young girl being equated with performing pilgrimage should be argued in the same way. Providing a family home for such a girl is highly commendable action. It will certainly earn high reward from Allah. But it cannot be placed on the same level as offering the pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage is a duty owed to Allah by every one of us who can afford to undertake the journey. The nature of pilgrimage is a journey to perform certain acts of worship at a specific time in certain places. In other words, it is different in nature from arranging a marriage or spending money in order to secure a family home for a young girl.

Generous indeed as this second action is, it cannot be equated with pilgrimage. How, then, can it be viewed as compensation for it? The person who arranges such a marriage for a girl in order to protect her against sin or to secure her future may earn highly generous reward from Allah, which may exceed that of pilgrimage, depending on the particular circumstances of the case. But even then, the duty of pilgrimage remains owing to Allah from the man who has arranged this marriage. He is required to fulfill this duty at least once in his lifetime.

Having said that, I would like to add that heaven may be likened to a big garden or a palace with so many doors. A person who wants to get into that garden or that palace may enter through any of these doors. Once he has entered, he is already in. He should not worry too much over which door he got through. The most important thing is that he gets in. Heaven has so many doors: one of them is pilgrimage, another is charity, a third is jihad, a fourth is fasting, a fifth is night worship, etc. A person who manages to get admitted into heaven scores a great success. Whether he does it through pilgrimage, jihad or generous charity is of no consequence.

### ***Zakah: Threshold Of Zakah & Some Confusion***

I am paying Zakah on all my possessions except for 85 grams of gold jewelry for my wife. Could you please corroborate whether my action is correct?

As you mention, you have several types of property. The land you have is intended as investment. Hence, it is liable to Zakah at the rate of 2.5 percent of its market value, which is likely to change from year to year. If it goes up, then your Zakah on that particular property goes up as well. The bonds you have are also liable to Zakah at the same rate, and this applies to both capital and profit.

Your wife's jewelry is not liable to Zakah at all, if it is for her personal use, and its value is well within what is reasonable, although it may be more than 85 grams. You are confusing two things here when you bring up this figure. This is the threshold of Zakah, but it does not have to be in actual gold. Suppose you do not have anything in gold, but you have SR100,000; you are liable to Zakah. The figure has nothing to do with the amount of jewelry any woman has. [Besides, the threshold of 85 grams is not to be taken as a basic exemption and only what is above this threshold is to be counted for Zakah. When you cross the threshold, you pay Zakah for the entire holding. You do not deduct 85 grams and then pay on anything above that.]

Besides, why do you include your wife's jewelry with your property? It is hers, and she is the one to consider whether it is liable to Zakah or not. A woman's jewelry intended for her personal use is not liable to Zakah.

The same applies to your daughter's jewelry, unless you consider it your own property. As for the deposit you have in her name, to be used for her marriage, you have to consider whether you have taken it out of your property and given it to your daughter or not. If you consider it her own property and you have no claim to it other than that of a father on his children, then she is the one to pay its Zakah. But if you are simply reserving it for her, then it is your property, and you pay its Zakah. As for the insurance policies, they are liable to Zakah on their maturity. When you receive their proceeds, you pay their Zakah right away, once only. Then you include these with the rest of your property on your next Zakah date.

***Zakah: Unsolicited Gift Or Zakah***

We visited Madinah in Ramadhan. My husband and 8-year-old son were praying outside the mosque when someone gave my son some clothes. I wonder whether to let the child wear them, because we are not sure whether this was a gift or Zakah. If the latter, we cannot take it because we lead a comfortable life by the grace of God. Please advise.

You should assume that this was a gift from someone who wanted the child to feel happy. You cannot just leave it aside, because then you would be abandoning something that is useful. If the man who gave it to your son classified it as part of his Zakah, then he should have first established that the child's family qualifies as Zakah beneficiaries. Since he has not done so, you should assume that it was a gift and as such it is lawful for your son to wear it.

***Zakah: Warning Against Keeping Money Idle***

Could you please explain whether Zakah is payable on all assets every year, except what is needed for personal and dependents' living. If so, does that not discourage saving to look after one's children? If one is to pay 2.5% of one's savings every year, then the whole amount will disappear in less than 50 years. I am told that Zakah is payable only once, which means that if your savings this year are SR 10,000 and you pay Zakah for this amount, then next year you add to your savings a sum of SR 2,000, then you pay Zakah on this added amount only. This is because you have already paid Zakah for the first amount. If this is correct, then it sounds more encouraging to saving. Please comment.

Zakah is an act of worship required of every Muslim, male or female, who owns more than the threshold of Zakah, which is equivalent to 85 grams of gold, in excess of what he needs for his own and his dependents' living. It is imposed on every type of property that is liable to growth. Thus, it is not imposed on a person's own accommodation, or on the tools of his trade, even though these may be costly.

Thus, no Zakah is payable on the value of your shop if you run a trade, or on your taxi if you are a taxi driver, etc. But it is payable on capital and profit, every year, at the rate of 2.5 percent for most types of money or property, although the rate may be different in some situations. An important aspect is the liability of the property to grow. Thus, if you have a farmland, your Zakah is applicable to your produce; and if you have an animal farm, Zakah is payable on your animals, be they sheep, cows, camels, etc.

It is not true that Zakah is payable once only. It is payable every year. If you have some savings and you keep them for five years, you pay Zakah for them every year of these five. Does this inhibit savings? Certainly not, because Islam does not like money to remain idle, unused. It should be invested. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has warned against leaving money idle, saying that it would be eaten up by Zakah. A person who has more than enough for his needs should express his gratitude to God by paying his Zakah to help other members of the community who are less fortunate than he is. It is only a person who keeps his savings unused that suffers reduction through Zakah. Anyone who invests his savings is likely to increase his savings even though he has to pay Zakah.

***Zakah: When the Situation Of Assets Is Not Clear***

I have a piece of land, which I have not decided on the way I will use it for. I may build some flats for rent, or may sell it when the price is right. So far,

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I have included it with my property for which I pay Zakah. However, since I am uncertain of its future use, does it come under property that is Zakah able once it is sold or realized its value?

Let me first of all say this to all readers. When a person is given more than his needs, he or she should be most grateful to God. They should express their gratitude by lightening other people's burdens through Zakah and Sadaqah.

We should always remember that what we have can easily be taken away, and that the best way to preserve it is to treat it as God's gift for which we have to pay what is due in Zakah and more. Therefore, no one should be sorry that he has to pay much in Zakah, because paying more Zakah means that he has been given much more. This means that when we are uncertain whether a particular item we have is liable to Zakah or not, it is better to take the more cautious option and pay Zakah for it, because this could be treated either as obligatory or voluntary. In either case, we get a reward for it and God records our payment as an act of gratitude to Him. He has promised us: "If you are grateful, I will give you more."

Having said that, my advice is to determine which course you think is most likely for you to go. If you still cannot decide, then take the more cautious attitude and pay Zakah for it on a yearly basis. Since you are not certain you want to use it for some building, then you are more likely to sell it if you receive a good offer. Hence, it is better to treat it as a commercial commodity, liable to Zakah annually.

### ***Zakah: Women Paying Zakah To Brothers Or Sisters***

I am a housewife. Can I give my Zakah amount to my own brothers and sister? None of them is my dependent. My brothers want to do some business but they don't have the necessary capital. My sister is married with two children but her husband's income is insufficient for their needs.

Yes, it is permissible for you to give your Zakah to your sister and your brothers who are in need of the money for their living, or to set up some means of earning an income. The only relatives who may not benefit by our Zakah are those whom it is our duty to look after, such as our children or our parents.

### ***Zakat-ul-Fitr: Payment At Place Of Residence Or Back Home?***

Is it true that we should pay Zakat-ul-Fitr in the place where we have sighted the moon of Shawwal? Many of us expatriates arrange for that Zakah to be paid in our home countries. One reason why we do that is because we cannot identify genuine beneficiaries of Zakah here. Back home, there are many poor and needy people. Is it acceptable if we send our Zakah to be paid to its beneficiaries back home.

It is normal procedure to pay Zakah where one lives. If you are normally resident in this country, you should pay Zakah here. However, there are many cases where expatriates work in a well off country. It is difficult to find poor people who suffer from poverty. In such a situation, there is no harm in sending your Zakah to be paid in your home country, provided you are pretty certain that the poor of the place you live can be easily looked after.

This is not a case, which applies to Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries, but many Muslims living in Europe or America also do likewise.

### ***Zakat-ul-Fitr: Payment In Cash Or In Kind***

Is it permissible to pay Zakat-ul-Fitr in cash instead of food grain if the country or the part of it where the payer lives has abundance of grains? In such conditions, the recipients, as you will appreciate, are in need of money to meet other expenses of day-to-day life. Please clarify.

Zakat-ul-Fitr is a duty, which is applicable to every person or head of a family who has more than enough food for him and his family for the last day of Ramadhan. It is payable toward the end of Ramadhan. The Prophet, peace be upon him, emphasizes its importance by stating that the acceptance by God of our fasting in the month of Ramadhan is made conditional on the payment of this Zakah. It is a small amount. But the fact that it is payable for every person in the family, including the youngest of children, even one born immediately before sunrise on the day of Eid, makes its total sum very large. This is built to relieve the poor of their needs at least for the day of the Eid.

Many scholars argue that Zakat-ul-Fitr must be paid in kind, choosing the staple diet of the local community of the payer. Again the purpose here is to satisfy the needs of the poor. The majority of scholars prefer that it be paid in the form of grains, such as wheat, barley or corn. Dates and other staple diet types of food are also acceptable.

However, many contemporary scholars argue that this is not a rigid ruling. They say that in communities where the food is scarce or hard to get, Zakat-ul-Fitr must be paid in kind. It is not acceptable to pay a poor person the price of whatever quantity of grain the payer must give. On the other hand, in a community where grains and agriculture produce are available in abundance, there is no need to insist on paying Zakat-ul-Fitr in kind. Cash may be much better for the poor. They further point out that in our modern times, homes are not equipped to make use of food grains in order to make bread or something similar. It has been noticed in many communities that the poor who receive a sizeable quantity of such food grains or flour in communities which enjoy abundance of them find no alternative but to try to sell what they receive, or most of it. When they do that, there is plenty of extra amounts of such grains, which will result inevitably in drop in prices. This will affect the poor adversely. Therefore, giving them money to cater for their own needs as they please may be much better for them. Hence, it is acceptable to pay Zakat-ul-Fitr in cash. The criterion, however, is availability of food, especially staple diet, in abundance.

### ***Zakat-ul-Fitr: the Purpose Of***

Is it permissible to collect Zakat-ul-Fitr and pool it together so that the money collected may be used for the purpose of financing the marriage of poor Muslim girls in our locality?

Zakat-ul-Fitr is a charitable donation which is payable as a duty by every Muslim who has any amount of money over and above what he needs for the food which he and his family eat on the last day of Ramadhan. If he has any amount in excess of that, then it is obligatory for him to pay Zakat-ul-Fitr which is a small amount of money estimated normally by a certain measure of the staple diet of the city or area in which he lives. Thus it maybe measured by flour, barley, corn, dates, rice, raisin, etc. It may be paid in cash if such produce is plentiful and widely available and if cash is more beneficial to the recipients, as it is nowadays in most Muslim countries. Every head of a Muslim family is required to pay Zakat-ul-Fitr for himself and his dependents including his wife and children whom he supports and also for either or both of his parents who are his dependents. It is also payable on behalf of every child, even one who is born a few minutes before the Eid prayer on the first day of the month of Shawwal. Some scholars are also of the opinion that it is payable for an unborn baby as long as the pregnancy is confirmed.

The purpose of Zakat-ul-Fitr is to make the poor feel rich or at least self-sufficient on the day of Eid which is a joyous occasion succeeding the month of fasting. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has impressed on his followers that they should make the poor feel in need of nothing on that day. Zakat-ul-Fitr is payable a few days before the end of Ramadhan, with some scholars arguing that it may be paid at any time during Ramadhan, while others insist that it is payable on the last day.

In the light of the foregoing, you can see that the purpose of Zakat-ul-Fitr is different from that of getting Muslim girls married. This is a worthy cause, no doubt, since it enables the poor girls to have homes and families of their own. But, if you collect Zakat-ul-Fitr and establish a fund for the marriage of poor Muslim girls, you are actually depriving the community of achieving a goal for which Zakat-ul-Fitr has been made a duty, namely, that the poor should not feel in need on the day of Eid. Moreover, Islamic marriage is not costly for the girls or her family. From the Islamic viewpoint, it is the bridegroom who must pay a dowry to his wife, so that the marriage can go through. Moreover, he has to provide her with a home and he must look after her. Social traditions in some parts of the Muslim world have, however, made marriage a difficult task for either of the two parties or both. Islam is not responsible for that. The community should change its traditions in order to bring them in line with Islamic teachings. We should not make Islamic legislation subservient to social traditions. If it is the tradition in a certain Muslim society that a girl should give her husband some articles of gold on her marriage, we should make it clear to that community that this is not part of an Islamic marriage. It is a social tradition, which has been most probably picked up from a non-Muslim community. We should try to change this tradition, not to institutionalize it by spending Zakat-ul-Fitr for a purpose which is not its own.

Zakat-ul-Fitr is payable to the poor in the Muslim community. It is indeed the purpose of all Zakah to help the poor overcome the burden of poverty. The Prophet, peace be upon him, instructed his governor of Yemen that Zakah should be taken "from the rich among them and paid to the poor." This applies more strongly to Zakat-ul-Fitr, which must be paid to poor Muslim people.

Having said that I should add that when the Muslim community is affluent and poverty is virtually non-existent in it, Zakah maybe paid to the poor among the Christians and the Jews. At the time of Omar ibn Abdulaziz, one of his governors wrote him that he could not find poor people to whom he should give Zakah. Omar instructed him to pay it to poor Christians and Jews.

When the governor said that he could not find any, Omar suggested that he should buy Muslim slaves and set them free. If we have such a situation when the Muslim community is so affluent that there are no poor in its ranks, then we consider paying Zakat-ul-Fitr to non-Muslims.

### ***Zamzam Water: Carrying Home***

Is it recommended to carry Zamzam water to one's home country?

It is recommended to drink of Zamzam water after one has done tawaf. Taking it home is not something that has been recommended to us. It was not the practice of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to carry Zamzam water home with them. However, if one takes it home for people to drink it, he is welcome to do so.

### ***Zikr: Guidance Which Ends In Ruin***

May I quote from a book which I have been reading recently entitled: What Islam Is. Speaking on Zikr, the author makes this suggestion: "There is no need for those in whose hearts Zikr of Allah has come to dwell permanently

as a result of constant endeavor and become a part of their existence, to follow a set routine, or make a special effort in this respect. But if common people like us want to strengthen their bond with Allah and partake of its suspiciousness and blessedness, they must practice Zikr at a fixed time and in a fixed number according to their individual circumstances. Better still they should seek the advice of a spiritual guide while choosing a Zikr formula for themselves. Or, they can select a 'Kalimah' from the 'Kalimahs' we have given above which may be most suited to their temperament. Time should also be set aside daily for the recitation of the Qur'an." May I ask to what extent are these suggestions valid, according to the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet? Could you please give names of spiritual guides?

'Zikr' or 'Thikr' to spell it more accurately is the Arabic term used to denote the remembrance of Allah whether in secret or verbally, in a whisper, or a low or loud voice. A good believer is one who practices Thikr very frequently. Indeed, the firmer a believer is in his faith, the more he practices Thikr which keeps him always mindful of his Islamic obligations. He is thus conscious of Allah and his consciousness of Him provides a check against deviation from Islamic teachings. Man is always liable to forget his obligations when an immediate interest or temptation offers itself. Being conscious of Allah is the best safeguard against falling to such temptations or pursuing such an interest, if it is of the type, which is forbidden by Allah. Since Thikr helps develop and enhance such conscience, it is part of Islamic worship. Indeed, all Islamic worship can be said to fall within the overall framework of remembering Allah which is the translation offered by many scholars of the term Thikr.

Allah is certainly aware that man's behavior can be partly influenced by his convictions. Nevertheless, man often resorts to harmful practices, knowing in advance they have a negative effect on him, or on his life. No one on earth knows the fact better than those who use, or rather abuse those practices. Their conviction of the harm, which is shown to result from their action, is not sufficient to bring about a behavioral change. Similarly the overwhelming majority of people know deep in their hearts that this universe could not have existed without a Creator who is all powerful and who controls its operation. Nevertheless, many people turn their backs on this fact and deny Allah's existence altogether or lead a life, which is totally oblivious of what Allah requires of human beings. Other people profess to be believers but they nevertheless tend to prefer an immediate interest, or a temporary pleasure, or an easy gain to doing their religious duties. Had their belief in Allah been combined with a strong and clear consciousness of Him and the relative positions of man and Allah, their behavior would have changed. They would have certainly preferred to do what Allah has bidden them to do and refrain from doing what He has forbidden. This shows the importance of Thikr which the Qur'an and the Hadith highlight. It certainly helps people to be always conscious of Allah, mindful of their duties, wary of violating divine teachings.

But how do we practice Thikr? Obviously, we learn our religion from Allah's messenger who has been sent specifically for the purpose of conveying to us Allah's message and explaining to us how to please Allah and earn His reward and how to avoid His displeasure and the punishment that is attendant on incurring it. The first thing in Thikr is to do the duties Allah has imposed on us, such as praying, fasting, pilgrimage and paying Zakah. Moreover, we can glorify Allah and praise Him. We can recite the Qur'an and study its meaning. We should endeavor to understand what it says and to abide by its teachings. It is not sufficient just to read it without understanding. Moreover, we should contemplate and think of Allah's perfect design of the universe. When we see something of Allah's creation, we should try to see the perfection that is the mark of Allah's work. We look at the balance that exists in



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nature and glorify Allah for having established such a balance, which ensures the continuity of life. When we do all this, we develop a consciousness of Allah that will affect our behavior in every respect, making us better human beings. This is in a nutshell what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us of how to practice Thikr. This is supported by the sacred, or Qudsi Hadith in which Allah states that the best thing to draw a human being closer to Allah is for that human being to do what Allah has ordered him to do. When he has done that, he can do more of a Sunnah and Nafil.

In the light of the foregoing, let us consider the quotation you have given us from this book. It speaks of two grades of Thikr and two classes of human beings. The lower class is that which needs a fixed time for Thikr and a fixed number of religious duties such as prayers and fasting. They also need a spiritual guide. Who and where that guide comes from, it does not tell us. The nature of his work is kept ambiguous. His authority, however, is clear and absolute. Whatever he orders should be obeyed.

Is it not right to wonder how far does this fit in with what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us? We have learned from the Prophet, peace be upon him, that we have to offer our prayers five times a day and a time range is specified for each prayer. He has taught us to fast in Ramadhan from dawn to dusk. He has also ordered us to do the pilgrimage at a particular time of the year, going on a journey, which takes us to particular places, and to do certain acts and rituals at specific times. In other words, he has taught us to do the Thikr in a particular manner at a specific time and in fixed numbers. Moreover, he told us that no matter what our circumstances are, prayers must be offered on time. He himself practiced what he has taught us. He did his Thikr in a particular manner at specified times and in fixed numbers. If we take the quotation you have cited as correct, then we are bound to conclude that the Prophet, peace be upon him, has done no more than teaching his followers to be members of the lower class and he himself remained in that class with them. This is certainly a mouthful, which is sufficient to throw anyone who says it in the abyss of hell.

Besides, this author is saying that some people, with whom the Prophet, peace be upon him, is not included, can attain a higher grade through certain endeavor. When they have attained this grade, they are released from the "minor affairs" of offering acts of worship which Allah requires of people, such as prayer, fasting, payment of Zakah, pilgrimage, etc. What the "constant endeavor" signifies, the author does not tell us. What his words mean, however, is that certain people may exceed the Prophet, peace be upon him, in their endeavor to worship Allah as He wants to be worshipped. This is again a mouthful, which brings anyone who says it to ruin. Such people are thus given a status higher than that of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and are claimed to be endowed with knowledge which the Prophet, peace be upon him, had not attained. This is not just a total absurdity; indeed, anyone who claims it needs to have his mind examined.

If you look closely at the life of those spiritual guides who are said not to need to practice the Thikr of Allah in a specific manner or in a fixed time, you will find that they have but scanty knowledge of Islam. Their qualifications do not give them the right to make a pronouncement on even the simplest of questions. Moreover, they find themselves in a position which gives them some prestige, much authority and brings them an income for which they do not have to work. Hence, they try to perpetuate this position. In addition, they do not have enough faith in order to conduct their lives as Islam wishes every Muslim to do. They do not wish to offer prayers as regularly as all Muslims must. Hence, they come up with the idea that they have attained a stage, which released them from that requirement. If the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself and his best companions, such as Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman and Ali were not exempt from offering prayers at a particular time, in a specific number of rak'ahs and so on, how come such "guides" can reach this

stage? The fact is that these persons may be called "guides" but they only guide their followers to ruin, as they take them away from the path shown to us by Prophet Muhammad, Allah's last messenger, peace be upon him.

You need not ask me of the names of spiritual guides in the Islamic world. The only spiritual guide a Muslim may have is the Prophet, peace be upon him. Everyone who follows the Prophet, peace be upon him, is a good Muslim and needs no more spiritual guidance than what the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught us.

### ***Zikr: Preferable Method***

I have seen a small group of Muslim women meeting every Monday to recite a short prayer, requesting God to bless the Prophet, peace be upon him, and repeating it countless times, from Asr till Maghrib. What do you think of their practice?

Praising God and blessing the Prophet, peace be upon him, is part of the remembrance of God or Thikr, which we all are required to do. However, God has not specified a time or a particular formula for Thikr. We have learned from the Prophet, peace be upon him, certain forms of supplication and prayers. If we use these, we do well. If we use phrases of our own, we also do well, as long as these phrases are within the limits of what is acceptable from the Islamic point of view.

Some people do exaggerate, especially when they bless the Prophet, peace be upon him. They think that by using new superlative phrases in praise of the Prophet, peace be upon him, they express their unlimited love of him. Some people do have sessions for such purposes and specific times every week or every day. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has not recommended us to do such things, nor were such sessions devoted for such purposes by the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Therefore, it is not necessary that we do this. Moreover, when we are repeating certain phrases over a long period of time, it loses its meaning. We come to repeat it mechanically without even thinking of what it means. The preferable method is to be conscious of what we say and to say it whenever we have a chance.

### ***Zoos: Deprived Of Their Freedom, the Animals Are Treated Kindly***

However kindly animals are treated and looked after in the zoo, they are deprived of their freedom and natural environment. How can we justify this from the Islamic point of view?

Why should we justify this from the Islamic point of view? Does Islam order or recommend the maintenance of a zoo anywhere in Islamic society? May I say that if a Muslim society does not maintain a zoo, it does not overlook any rule of Islam. So, if a society keeps a zoo, it has to justify its action. We do not have to give it an Islamic justification. What we can say in this regard is that God has made everything on earth subject to man and has required man to look after other creatures.

You have only to remember the Hadith which mentions the case of a man traveling in the desert, and almost dying of thirst after he had used all the water he had. Then he found a well and went down to drink. When he came up, he found a dog panting hard of thirst. He thought, "this dog is as thirsty as I was a short while ago." He went down again in the well and filled his shoe with water to give to the dog. The Prophet, peace be upon him, adds: "God has forgiven him his sins for doing so." Reflect on this and remember that Islam considers dogs impure, yet God gives a very high reward for an act of kindness to a dog.

I entirely agree with you when you speak of the cruelty of depriving animals of their freedom of movement and their natural environment. May I say that if this is done for

a more beneficial purpose, it is permissible and acceptable. If it is done for fun, then it is censurable.

I went recently to a tourist resort, and I found some animals kept in cages. What disturbed me most was the sight of three pelicans and a few flamingos which were kept in two cages. I tried to explain the people that it would much more rewarding to the birds and to the visitors if those birds were trained to spend some of their time in a particular place, but allowed to fly and fish as they like, particularly when the sea was nearby and there was a large artificial lake close by. They would not listen. To me that is an act of cruelty that cannot be justified. [Safari Park in London or the 'Night Safari' in Singapore are typical examples of what may be called an educating experience and therefore acceptable.]

The Prophet, peace be upon him, has given us a very sound advise when he said: "Be satisfied with what God has assigned to you and you will be richest of people." This does not apply only to monetary matters. It applies to everything in life. If you are satisfied with your lot, you will not worry about what you have missed. This is the true meaning of self-sufficiency which is the basis of wealth. A person may have enormous wealth, but he will not feel truly wealthy unless he is satisfied with what he has.

## ADDENDA

### *Rape — Can the Rapist, Be Rewarded?*

#### *Legal Order: the Rape That Never Was*

#### *Article By Adil Salahi —Arab News*

The furor over Imrana Ilahi, the Indian woman at the center of the Fatwa concerning rape by a woman's father-in-law, has not died down yet. Last week, I published an article under the title "Can a Rapist Be Rewarded?" in which I discussed the subject without referring to the Fatwa itself, making clear that I had not seen it. I was responding to press reports that spoke of a Fatwa saying that the woman must separate from her husband and should treat him as her son. Some reports added that she could marry her father-in-law who allegedly raped her. My article sought to clarify these issues. I made clear that in a case of rape the woman is blameless unless it is proven that she had tempted, encouraged or otherwise facilitated her own rape. I made clear that the reported view that Imrana's marriage was terminated as a result of the rape is grossly mistaken, and the suggestion that she could marry her father-in-law is absolutely wrong and has no basis in Islamic law. The following day, my article was copied in full in a paper called *The Asian Age*, but it was given a different title "Imrana: Fatwa is absurd and infuriating". While I am glad that the information I gave was thus circulated to wider readership, I am unimpressed by the twist given to my article by the change of title. Although I stated that the suggestion that a marriage is nullified as a result of rape is absurd, I did not, and could not, comment on the Fatwa itself, because I had not seen it.

Since the publication of my article new information has been published to put the whole question under new light. *Islamonline* posted a special report by its own correspondent, Mr. Zafarul-Islam Khan, which shows that there have been several twists in the case. Under the title "Imrana Case... Rape of Truth in India", the correspondent who made a thorough case of investigative journalism, going to the village where the case took place and speaking to the mufti who issued the Fatwa, gives a totally different picture.

Mr. Khan's efforts show that Imrana and her husband claimed that she was raped by her father-in-law during the night and that he fled when she screamed, but the screams were not heard by anyone in her tiny house or by any immediate neighbors. "This was strange as it is summer time when all people living in the tiny interconnected houses sleep on the terrace or in the open courtyards inside their homes." The correspondent discovered that the allegation was made in the midst of a family dispute about selling the family home, with the father-in-law wanting to sell and the couple objecting because they had nowhere else to go. The report mentions that on July 2, a team of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board visited the village and met the alleged victim, her relatives and a number of village people, but concluded that no rape had taken place and that the case was simply one of dispute over property.

Such a local family dispute could never have made headlines except for the fact that it provided those opposed to Islam and its laws with ammunition to bash Islam. When inaccuracies and deliberate slants are added in the reporting of the case, it becomes easy to start a storm in a teacup. In Imrana's village, local elders' council was called to look into the case, as is customary in rural areas in the Indian Subcontinent. A local junior scholar, or Molvi, told the council that the woman was now forbidden for her husband as she was like his mother now, and that she should

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marry the rapist. In reporting this, the media described the village council as a "Shariah Panchayat", or a council of Islamic scholars, which is totally untrue. The village council is composed of the elders in the village, and these people may have had no Islamic education whatsoever, or indeed any education. They attend because of their position in the village.

This is the sort of material that the media loves: A family rape and an outrageous verdict that brings tragic consequences on the whole family. Thus, reports flew everywhere bringing Imrana and her village unwanted fame. A further twist took place when an outfit based in Delhi, calling itself Muslim Women Forum, sent two representatives to meet Imrana. "They bribed her with five thousand rupees and asked her to say to the media and police that she would not accept the ruling of the Shariah law and would only go for the civil court's judgment to safeguard her rights."

It was much later that the Dar ul-Uloom Fatwa came into the picture. An Urdu newspaper, Rashtriya Sahara, asked the mufti in that Muslim seminary to give his opinion in the case. He opined that "the woman is now forbidden for her husband and should leave him."

There are two important points pertaining to any Fatwa by any scholar. The first is that the Fatwa, or ruling, is given on the basis of the question put to the scholar issuing it. We do not know in what form the question was put to the scholar by the paper. Hence, we cannot comment on it, except to say that the reported view is totally mistaken. The other point is that a Fatwa is binding only on the scholar giving it. It is a legal opinion.

But the case and the Fatwa gave fresh ammunition to those in India who want the Muslim Personal Law to be abolished. Various communist, socialist and rightist parties were in chorus demanding the enforcement of a Common Civil Code to be made applicable to all citizens in India. This means the abolition of the Islamic law in personal and family matters, in favor of such a code that is subject to change by parliamentary acts. This is the crux of the matter. People who have a grudge against Islam will always try to exploit any situation to bash Islam, Muslims and Shariah. In these days when the media is always on the lookout for exciting news, the truth is often lost. The Islamonline correspondent mentions that "on June 30, Dr. Tasleem Rahmani, president of the Muslim Political Council, called a press conference in which he showed a 3-hour video in which Imrana appeared saying that no rape had taken place, and that she was given five thousand rupees by a 'feminist organization.'"

Should we wonder why Muslims feel maligned everywhere? In a case like this, the truth is lost and false allegations are made. A bribe is given to an illiterate woman, for whom the petty sum of five thousand rupees appears large indeed, to come up with falsehood so that the campaign to bury the Muslim Personal Law in India could be carried forward.



# ***Our Dialogue***

## **"TO OUR READERS**

Questions on religious matters may be sent to the following address, which will be forwarded to the appropriate channel for reply and clarification:

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