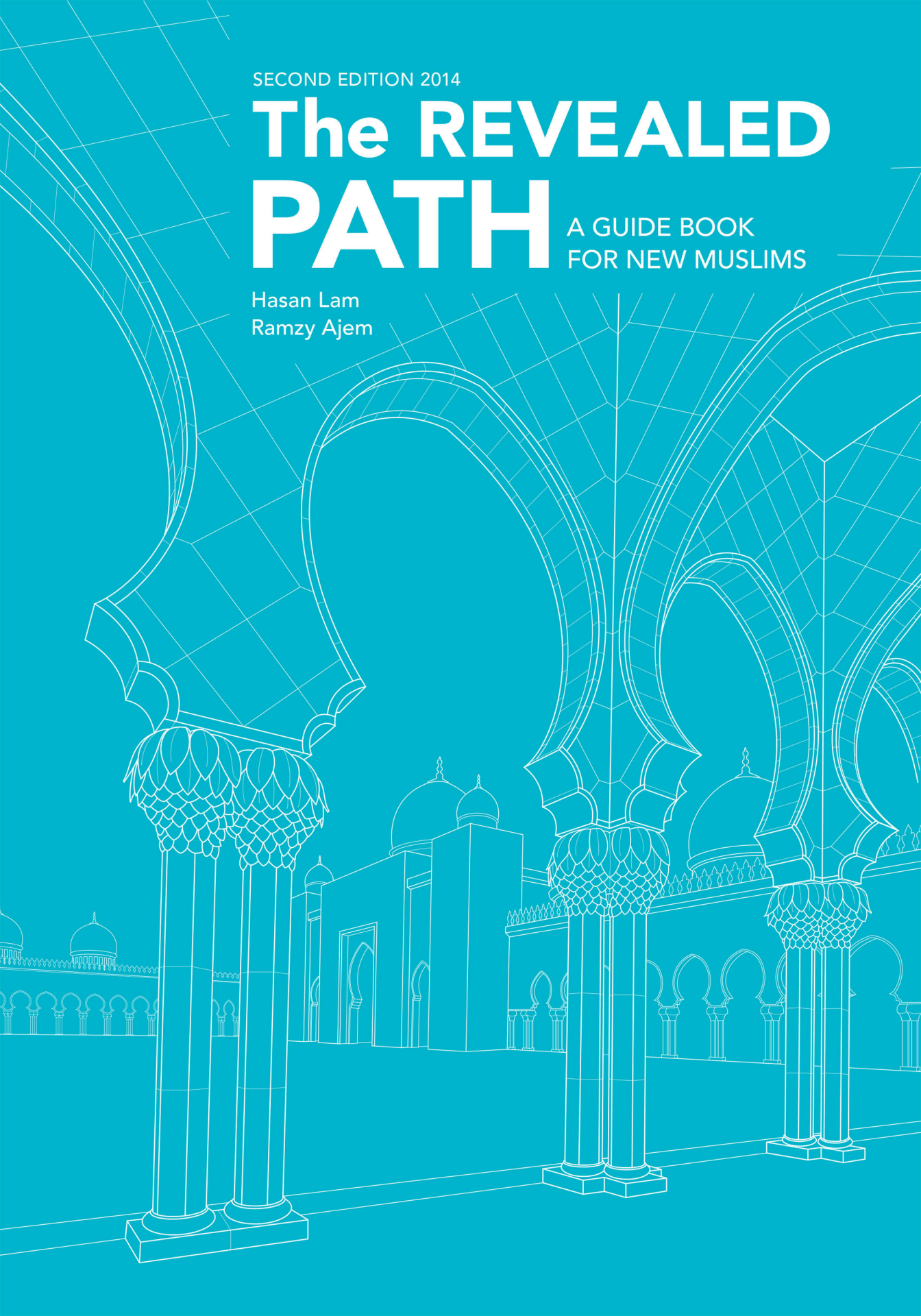


SECOND EDITION 2014

# The REVEALED PATH

A GUIDE BOOK  
FOR NEW MUSLIMS

Hasan Lam  
Ramzy Ajem



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

*In the Name of God  
Most Merciful and Compassionate*

﴿And God increases in guidance those who were guided,  
and the abiding deeds of righteousness are better with  
your Lord in reward and better in return﴾

(QUR'ĀN 19:76)

## **ZHIC NEW MUSLIM CURRICULUM**

### **THE REVEALED PATH**

*A Guide Book for New Muslims:* Hasan Lam (Parts I, II and III), Ramzy Ajem (Part IV)

*First Instructions on Worship:* Ramzy Ajem (Mālikī), Samah Marei (Ḥanafī), Najam Khaja (Ḥanbalī), Saiema Din (Shāfiʿī)

*A Visual Guide to Prayer* (DVD)

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*Teacher's Manual:* Saiema Din

*Teacher Training Course:* Nadeem Memon

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# The REVEALED PATH

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FOR NEW MUSLIMS

Hasan Lam  
Ramzy Ajem



ZAYED HOUSE FOR ISLAMIC CULTURE  
Al-Ain, UAE

## ABOUT ZAYED HOUSE FOR ISLAMIC CULTURE

Zayed House for Islamic Culture (ZHIC) is a specialized independent institution, affiliated with the Court of the Crown Prince. It was founded on the vision of the late UAE Ruler, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, and was officially inaugurated in 2005 by the present Ruler, HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi.

ZHIC focuses on promoting Islamic culture, and building bridges between diverse ethnicities. The institution welcomes new Muslims and individuals interested in learning about Islam and Islamic culture. ZHIC has developed specialized educational programs to educate new Muslims in several languages, providing them the vision and direction they need to integrate into society. Additionally, it offers special programs in Qur'ānic memorization and Arabic language, Ḥajj services, a public library, and other social activities such as cultural and theme-based trips and sports.

## ABOUT SHEIKH ZAYED

Sheikh Zayed was born in 1918 in the city of Al-Ain and spent most of his childhood there. In 1971, after a number of successful years as Ruler of Abu Dhabi, he assumed the leadership of the newly founded United Arab Emirates, a federation of seven emirates, including the capital, Abu Dhabi. Sheikh Zayed guided the UAE through profoundly changing times, bringing wealth, education, and opportunity to a region that had seen hardship for a number of decades. He was beloved by his people and nation and was influential in promoting a culture of co-existence, tolerance, and mutual respect in the UAE. Sheikh Zayed passed away in 2004 and is buried next to the Grand Mosque of Abu Dhabi, named after him. He was succeeded by his eldest son, HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.



## A MESSAGE FROM ZAYED HOUSE FOR ISLAMIC CULTURE

By the grace of Allah ﷻ, the number of new Muslim converts in the United Arab Emirates has been steadily increasing. Since its establishment, Zayed House for Islamic Culture has been an institute that acquaints new Muslims with Islam, and provides them with the assistance and support they need to integrate into society. As such, it has become necessary to develop a comprehensive and holistic system for educating new Muslims about their faith.

Zayed House for Islamic Culture is pleased to introduce *The Revealed Path*: a comprehensive curriculum which sets a fresh standard for new Muslim education in the twenty-first century. In producing this curriculum ZHIC has kept in mind the unique challenges of our age and has endeavored to make it both relevant and contextual. This system incorporates modern educational theories and formulas of adult education and takes into account the cultural sensitivities and backgrounds of new Muslims.

The advent of the information age means that new Muslims can access materials on Islam from various sources and in no particular structure, easily causing confusion and uncertainty. To counter this phenomenon, this curriculum aims to provide a base from where anyone can begin his or her search for authentic Islamic knowledge.

*The Revealed Path: A Guide Book for New Muslims* is the cornerstone of this curriculum, followed by its companion: *First Instructions on Worship*. These are the primary texts of ZHIC's curriculum for new Muslims and will be indispensable resources for all those entering the doors of our institution seeking guidance.

Zayed House would also like to take this opportunity to thank Tabah Foundation (UAE) and Razi Group (Canada) for their tireless efforts in making this unique and innovative project an unqualified success. It is our hope that this work can be the beginning of a concerted effort to produce quality Islamic educational materials.

Zayed House for Islamic Culture





## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### HASAN LAM

Hasan Lam is a certified member of the Ontario College of Teachers and works as a teacher at the elementary level. He studied English literature at the University of Toronto where he received his B.A. before going on to complete a B. Ed. from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

His journey on the path of Islamic knowledge began while studying Arabic as an undergraduate student which eventually led to further studies abroad. He currently resides in Toronto, Canada with his wife.

### RAMZY AJEM

Ramzy Ajem is co-founder of Razi Group ([www.razigroup.com](http://www.razigroup.com)) and serves as its Director of Curriculum Development. He is also the founder and executive director of Risalah Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides educational and social services to new Muslims.

In 1995 he began his Islamic studies at Abu Nour Islamic Institute in Damascus, Syria, graduating from its pre-college program in 1998 with honors. While in Damascus, he also studied privately with a number of its scholars, including Shaykh Ramaḍān al-Bouti, Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr, and Shaykh Adīb Kallās.

In pursuit of a classical Islamic education, he travelled westwards and was welcomed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Morocco to enroll as a full time student at the ancient seminary of Tanalat, becoming the first westerner admitted. While in Morocco he received a number of authorizations to teach the religious sciences from scholars in Fes, Salé, and Southern Morocco.

Since his return to Toronto, Canada in 2001, Ramzy has been deeply involved in serving the Muslim community. He teaches regularly at Risalah Foundation and resides in Toronto with his wife and four children.

## TRANSLITERATION KEY

آ/أ	ā
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	ʿ
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w/ū
ي	y/ī
ة	a
ء	ʾ
أ	a
إ	i

## FORMULAIC ARABIC EXPRESSIONS

ﷺ (*Ṣalla-llāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) an invocation of God’s blessings and peace upon the Prophet Muḥammad: “God’s blessings and peace be upon him.”

ﷺ (*‘Alayhis-salām*) an invocation of God’s blessings and peace upon a Prophet or an Angel: “May peace be upon him.”

ﷺ (*‘Alayhimus-salām*) an invocation of God’s blessings and peace upon three or more Prophets: “May peace be upon them.”

ﷺ (*Raḍiyallāhu ‘anhū*) an invocation of God’s pleasure with a male Companion of the Prophet: “May God be pleased with him.”

ﷺ (*Raḍiyallāhu ‘anhā*) an invocation of God’s pleasure with a female Companion of the Prophet: “May God be pleased with her.”

ﷺ (*Raḍiyallāhu ‘anhūm*) an invocation of God’s pleasure with the Companions of the Prophet: “May God be pleased with them.”



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## ISLAM, IMAN AND IḤSĀN



‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, a close Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, said:

One day while we were sitting with the Messenger of God ﷺ, there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black. No signs of travel were seen upon him and none of us knew him.

He walked up and sat down by the Prophet ﷺ. Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said: ‘O Muḥammad! Tell me about Islam.’

The Messenger ﷺ said: ‘Islam is to testify that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, to perform the prayers, to give the alms, to fast in Ramaḍān, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so.’ The man said: ‘You have spoken truthfully.’ We were amazed at him for asking the Prophet ﷺ a question and then saying that he had spoken truthfully.

Then he said: ‘Then tell me about Iman.’

The Messenger ﷺ said: ‘Iman is to believe in God, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both its good and evil.’ He said: ‘You have spoken truthfully.’

Then he said: ‘Tell me about Iḥsān.’ The Messenger ﷺ said: ‘It is to worship God as though you are seeing Him, and if you don’t see Him, know that He sees you.’ He said: ‘Then tell me about the Hour.’ The Messenger ﷺ said: ‘The one asked about it knows no better than the one asking.’ So he said: ‘Then tell me about its signs.’ The Messenger ﷺ said: ‘That the servant will give birth to her mistress and that you will see the barefooted, naked, and destitute herdsmen competing in the construction of lofty buildings.’

Then the man left and I stayed for a time. Then the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘O ‘Umar! Do you know who the questioner was?’ I said: ‘God and His Messenger know best.’ He ﷺ said: ‘It was Gabriel, who came to you to teach you your religion.’



[Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim]

## PREFACE

“Make things easy and do not make things difficult.”<sup>1</sup> In this ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ lies the great educational foundation that this guide book follows.

In his commentary on the abovementioned ḥadīth, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, one of the most authoritative Islamic scholars, noted that: “The contention [here] is suitable for new Muslims.” Since the readership of this book is precisely the new Muslim, we made sure to take this Prophetic guidance to heart. Ibn Ḥajar continued: “Thus, learning knowledge ought to be gradual. If a subject matter is easy from the outset, it becomes appealing to the one going into it and it also causes him to receive it with delight.”<sup>2</sup>

The goal of this book is to present to the new Muslim an engaging and well-rounded explanation of the fundamentals of Islam, the basics of Iman, and the path of Iḥsān. Furthermore, it endeavors to provide some key ethical virtues and practical counsels that every new Muslim needs.

In order for our pedagogical model to fulfill its objectives, the contents of this book are arranged according to the Prophetic order presented in the famous Ḥadīth of Gabriel ﷺ. The elaboration in each section is introductory, personal, and tailored for newcomers to the religion. The language used is clear and deliberately non-academic. Comprehensive proofs and theological details are kept to a minimum.

To help the new Muslim integrate into contemporary society, it concludes with a practical lifestyle section based on the rights and responsibilities humans have in relation to God, their selves, and the world around them. To ensure further study, a recommended reading section is also included to direct new Muslims towards authentic and normative religious teachings.

One of the challenges many new Muslims face is becoming familiar with the large number of religious terms expressed in Arabic. In order to minimize confusion and facilitate learning, these terms, when used, are repeatedly given succinct definitions and are placed in a glossary at the end of the book.

To make this book appealing and relevant to as wide an audience as possible, it is supplied with easy to understand charts, inspiring illustrations and images, and important advice distilled from the experiences and lessons of Muslim men and women who were once newcomers to the revealed path of Islam.

Although it is encouraged to study this material with a qualified teacher, the content and carefully designed layout are accessible for independent learners. Specific teachings on purification, prayer, and fasting can be found in the companion volume titled *The Revealed Path: First Instructions on Worship*.

It is hoped that this book will facilitate a better understanding of the religion of Islam for new Muslims, an understanding that enables them to adjust to their newfound faith with a sense of proportion, balance, and moderation.

HASAN LAM  
RAMZY AJEM

# INTRODUCTION

## THE FIRST STEPS OF THE JOURNEY

Welcome to Islam. You are not the first to embark on this blessed journey nor are you the last. The path of Islam is wide and expansive and on it you will find ample room and good company. As with any journey, it all starts with a sincere resolve and a single step.

People come to Islam for an endless variety of reasons. Your embarking on this path is a very personal decision which should be respected and cherished. As you begin this journey you are probably wondering about many things: where exactly are you going? What provisions will you need? What will you encounter along the way, and most importantly, how will you find your way and arrive at your final destination? Everyone who chooses Islam asks these same questions and more.

### THE TRAVEL GUIDE

This book, *The Revealed Path: A Guide Book for New Muslims*, is designed to help you find the answers to the above questions and offer support and encouragement along the way. It will present you, the new Muslim, with a description of the path and introduce the signposts of Islam so you can confidently put your new way of life into practice.

Travelling this path is a lifelong journey of spiritual growth and self-development. Although you may face challenges, travel across unfamiliar terrain from time to time, and even stumble on occasion, Islam is a priceless gift of guidance from God to be cherished through gratitude and genuine effort.

When God guides someone, He grants him or her openness and the means to take the first steps on the path of Islam. God says: *«So whomever God wills to guide, He opens his breast to Islam»* (QUR'ĀN 6:125).

### ADVICE FOR THE JOURNEY

As with any journey towards an important destination, this path will require work and determination. In order to benefit from all of one's efforts, certain important points should be kept in mind.

Firstly, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ (God's blessings and peace be upon him) said: "Actions are according to their intentions."<sup>3</sup> Begin your journey with the intention of drawing closer to God. With a good intention even the act of studying becomes a blessed form of worship.

Secondly, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said: "The most beloved works to God are those that are consistent, even if they are small."<sup>4</sup> Read and study at your own pace. While doing so, reflect and put into practice what you have learned.

Finally, realize that despite all your sincere efforts, ultimately success comes from God alone. We should always be ready to turn to Him and sincerely ask for

“Whoever travels a path in pursuit of knowledge, God puts him on a path to Paradise.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

His help in removing any difficulties we encounter. Our trust should be placed in Him, for He says: *«God is the Protector of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into the light»* (QUR’ĀN 2:257).

## APPROACHING THE PATH

As the final revelation from God, the religion of Islam is a richly layered and comprehensive way of life that addresses all of the various dimensions of a human being: the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual.

As such, deciding how to approach and understand the religion can be a challenge. The best way is to refer to the Prophet’s life ﷺ for guidance and examine how he lived according to the divine revelation. As the final Messenger ﷺ, his role was not only to convey the Qur’ān but to elucidate its meanings with his Sunna, or way, described by the Qur’ān as the Wisdom. God says: *«God has surely been gracious to the believers in sending into their midst a Messenger who is one of their own to recite God’s verses to them, and purify them, and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, whereas they had certainly been in error before»* (QUR’ĀN 3:164).

The main sources of knowledge about his life are contained in the Prophetic ḥadīth, which are the records of his sayings, actions, and approvals or disapprovals on an issue. These records have been preserved by his Companions who witnessed them first hand and passed them down over the

years to succeeding generations.

Another type of ḥadīth, known as a ḥadīth qudsī or sacred ḥadīth, is a saying ascribed to God Himself conveyed by the Prophet ﷺ in his words. A ḥadīth qudsī differs from Qur’ānic revelation in that the Qur’ān’s meaning and words are both entirely revealed by God.

One Prophetic ḥadīth in particular, named after the Angel Gabriel ﷺ, provides us with a clear and systematic approach to understanding the various dimensions of Islam and how these dimensions relate to one another. It explains the various integrals of the religion, enabling us to learn it in practical stages.





## THE ḤADĪTH OF GABRIEL ﷺ

ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, a close Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, said:

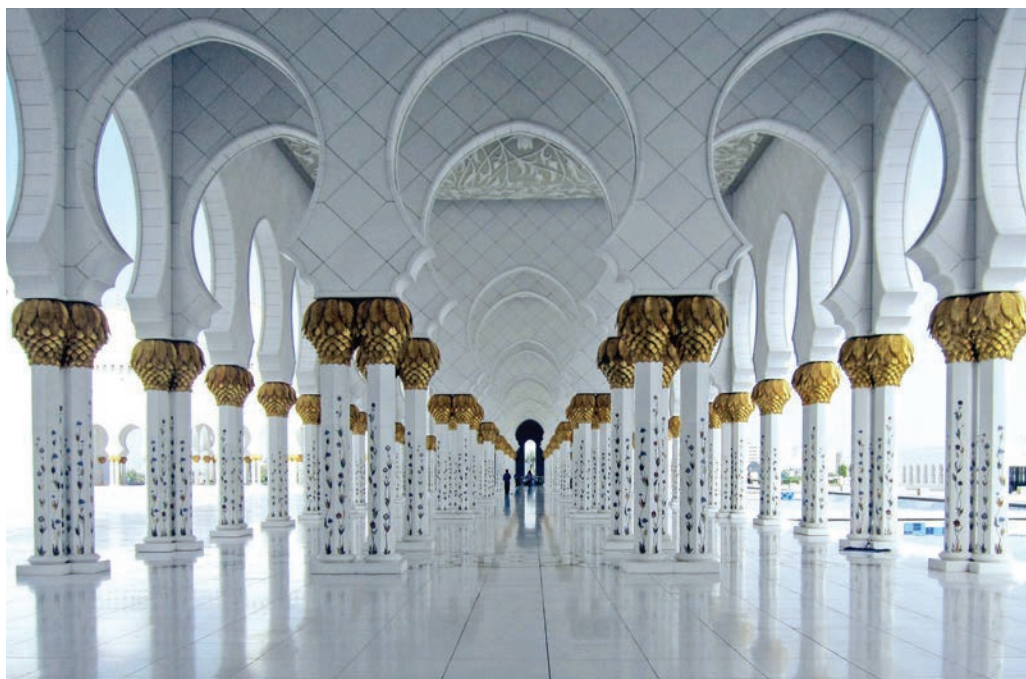
One day while we were sitting with the Messenger of God ﷺ, there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black. No signs of travel were seen upon him and none of us knew him.

He walked up and sat down by the Prophet ﷺ. Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said: “O Muḥammad! Tell me about Islam.”

The Messenger ﷺ said: “Islam is to testify that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, to perform the prayers, to give the alms, to fast in Ramaḍān, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so.” The man said: “You have spoken truthfully.” We were amazed at him for asking the Prophet ﷺ a question and then saying that he had spoken truthfully.

Then he said: “Then tell me about Iman.”

The Messenger ﷺ said: “Iman is to believe in God, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both its



[Above] Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Abu Dhabi, UAE

good and evil.” He said: “You have spoken truthfully.”

Then he said: “Tell me about Iḥsān.” The Messenger ﷺ said: “It is to worship God as though you are seeing Him, and if you don’t see Him, know that He sees you.” He said: “Then tell me about the Hour.” The Messenger ﷺ said: “The one asked about it knows no better than the one asking.” So he said: “Then tell me about its signs.” The Messenger ﷺ said: “That the servant will give birth to her mistress and that you will see the barefooted, naked, and destitute herdsmen competing in the construction of lofty buildings.”

Then the man left and I stayed for a time. Then the Prophet ﷺ said: “O ‘Umar! Do you know who the questioner was?” I said: “God and His Messenger know best.” He ﷺ said: “It was Gabriel, who came to you to teach you your religion.”<sup>5</sup>

## THE REVEALED PATH

The Ḥadīth of Gabriel ﷺ provides us with a clear framework for understanding

the three integral and inter-related aspects that define this religion. The first aspect is that of Islam itself, which includes various forms of inward and outward training embodied in the five most important acts of worship.

The second aspect is that of Iman, which includes the knowledge and beliefs that allow us to understand divine revelation.

The third aspect is that of Iḥsān, in which individuals strive to attain perfection in humble worship with the certitude that God sees them in everything they do.

Finally, all three aspects are applied in our daily life to prepare us for the Day of Judgment. This preparation is embodied in the rights we enjoy and the responsibilities we owe God and others.

We pray that God makes your journey in Islam easy and that you travel its path with success and a sure footing. May your journey be a fruitful one that leads to the gardens of the Hereafter.



# ISLAM

## (SUBMISSION)

*“Islam is to testify that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, to perform the prayers, to give the alms, to fast in Ramaḍān, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so.”*

—ḤADĪTH OF GABRIEL ﷺ

# 1 OVERVIEW

## THE ESSENCE OF ISLAM

Throughout history, God has sent Prophets and Messengers to different nations and tribes, all bearing the same essential message:

﴿O my people! Worship God. You have no other god but Him﴾ (QUR'AN 7:59).

The final Messenger, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, was sent to all of humankind to reaffirm this message of God's oneness and to guide them back to His worship based on the revelation he received.

This worship requires humility before the Creator and sincere submission to His will, which is the essential meaning of the word Islam. True submission comes after acknowledgement of His Divinity, followed by acceptance and conformity to the divine command inwardly and outwardly.

The Most-Loving tells the Prophet ﷺ to say to mankind: ﴿If you love God, then follow me; for then God will love you and forgive you your sins. God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.﴾ (QUR'AN 3:31).

The human heart experiences peace and serenity when its desires and inclinations are finally aligned in accordance with revelation. Further perseverance in the path of worship yields a delight and sweetness whose taste produces an attachment and yearning for the Beloved.



## THE FIVE PILLARS

As was stated in the Ḥadīth of Gabriel ﷺ, submission to God begins with the declaration that He is One and that Muḥammad ﷺ is His Messenger. This first fundamental pillar opens the way for us into a life of higher meaning and purpose.

Once the foundation of this central pillar is established, the remaining pillars that support the structure of our religious life are the performance of the ritual prayer (Ṣalāh), the payment of the alms (Zakat), the fast in the month of Ramaḍān (Ṣawm), and the pilgrimage (Ḥajj).

“Whoever God wishes good for, He blesses him with knowledge of the religion.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ



Devotion to God consists of fulfilling these five pillars. But in order to carry out these works correctly, one must begin by learning the necessary knowledge.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

In the Qur’ān, God encourages the believers to seek knowledge: *«God will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks. God is informed of what you do»* (QUR’ĀN 58:11).

From the very first revelation of *«Read! In the name of your Lord who created»* (QUR’ĀN 96:1), God made Islam a religion of knowledge and learning. Muslims have

always traveled far and wide seeking knowledge in accordance with the Prophet’s injunction ﷺ: “The quest for knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim.”<sup>6</sup>

The fundamental starting point for seekers on the path is the acquisition of sound knowledge. Worship is a conscious act of drawing near to God with what He has revealed; so learning how to worship Him is essential.

So what about those who have not received the opportunity to learn? Out of His mercy, God will not hold them accountable for what they do not know—although their obligation to learn still remains.

“O you who believe, obey God and obey the Prophet and those of authority among you.”

—QUR’ĀN 4:59

The Prophet ﷺ said: “The cure for ignorance is asking.”<sup>7</sup>

Islam has a rich history of scholarship and an extensive legal tradition. Throughout the ages until this very day, rightly guided scholars have answered difficult questions coming from the diverse community of believers. The Prophet ﷺ said: “The scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets.”<sup>8</sup>

The vast horizon of Islamic learning is adorned with a splendid constellation of great and pious scholars in every field who show seekers the way to truth and success. Such learned men and women acquired their knowledge through noble etiquette (*adab*), painstaking effort, and careful study with those who received knowledge and guidance from the Prophet ﷺ through an unbroken chain of teachers. They respected what they were entrusted with, practiced what they learned, and shared the treasures of their wisdom with others.

Although there is much knowledge to acquire, we should start by learning what we need in order to fulfill our current obligations, such as how to pray. As we put into practice what we learn, we can gradually increase our knowledge. It has been narrated: “The one who practices what he knows, God teaches him what he doesn’t know.”<sup>9</sup> Learning forms an integral part of our lives.

## THE REVEALED LAW

As a Muslim’s knowledge increases, his or her heart becomes more refined and attuned to the Revealed Law (Shariah). God says in the Qur’ān: *«For each of them We have established a Law and a revealed way»* (QUR’ĀN 5:48).

Like a path in the desert that leads a lost and thirsty traveler to a source of water and gives him life, Islam’s Revealed Law provides us with a map, showing us how to live our lives and guiding us to the source of happiness.

The Revealed Law is a documented code containing the injunctions of revelation. It is drawn from four main sources:

- 1 The Qur’ān
- 2 The Sunna, or customary practice, of the Prophet ﷺ based on his statements, actions, approvals, and disapprovals
- 3 The *ijmā’*<sup>c</sup>, or consensus of qualified scholars on a particular issue
- 4 *Qiyās*, or analogy, used to apply established rulings to other cases

Since the time of the Prophet ﷺ, there has always been a culture of scholarship aimed at preserving and transmitting the sound beliefs and practices of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ. Qualified teachers and students alike have carefully documented and conveyed the tenets of faith

“God will not make my community concur on misguidance.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

and the revealed rulings that legal experts derived from the Qur’ān and the Sunna.

The scholarly principles and methods of understanding the main sources of Islamic Law are embodied in a *madhhab* (way), or legal school. Four main accepted schools in Islamic practice are still followed today. They are the schools of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, Imam Mālik, Imam al-Shāfi‘ī, and Imam Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.

Through these scholarly approaches, the Revealed Law has been preserved and remains a living guide that encompasses every facet of life, imbuing even the seemingly mundane with a deeper significance.

In practice, the basic rulings of the Revealed Law classify human actions according to five categories described below. As a holistic way, the Revealed Law separates the beneficial from the harmful. It also seeks to bring about the most benefit for

individuals and society in this world and the Hereafter. The rulings of the Revealed Law serve to fulfill five major objectives and seek to:

### 1 PRESERVE THE RELIGION

The Revealed Law encourages and promotes matters that ensure the preservation of the religious teachings that lead humanity to happiness in this life and the next, such as the right to knowledge, guidance, and religious practice.

### 2 ENSURE THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

The Revealed Law not only protects the life of the individual but also of humanity. It affirms and guards the right to the necessities of life such as food, shelter, and medicine. It prohibits genocide, murder, abuse, and suicide.

### 3 MAINTAIN THE INTELLECT

The Revealed Law encourages and

RULING	ARABIC	DESCRIPTION
Obligatory	<i>Farḍ/Wājib</i>	Required actions that are rewarded; one is held accountable for not performing them.
Recommended	<i>Mandūb/Sunna</i>	Recommended actions that are rewarded, although there is no accountability for not performing them.
Permissible	<i>Mubāḥ</i>	Neutral actions that have neither reward nor liability, although one can be rewarded for them if performed with good intentions.
Disliked	<i>Makrūh</i>	Discouraged actions that do not hold one liable for performing them, although one is rewarded for avoiding them.
Forbidden	<i>Ḥarām</i>	Forbidden actions that hold one liable for performing them; one is rewarded for avoiding them.



“*This day I have perfected your religion for you, and completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.*” —QUR’ĀN 5:3

promotes matters that maintain and preserve the intellect. That which destroys the intellect such as substance abuse is prohibited and that which protects it such as reflection, education, and beneficial discourse is prescribed and encouraged.

#### 4 SAFEGUARD FAMILY RELATIONS

The Revealed Law also consists of legal rulings that pertain to family relations. These rulings seek to strengthen kinship and preserve the family unit and lineage through guidelines that relate to

marriage, divorce, inheritance, and even new issues such as artificial insemination.

#### 5 SAFEGUARD PROPERTY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Revealed Law encourages and promotes matters that ensure the preservation of wealth and the environment, such as the right to private ownership and investments, the encouragement to give charity, and the discouragement of wasting water and other natural resources.

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*Now with a destination and provisions, let us travel upon the path before us, beginning with the first pillar of Islam: the key to Paradise and an expression of submission and faith.*

## 2

# SHAHĀDA (THE TESTIMONY OF FAITH)

## THE FIRST STEPS

The journey on this path begins when a person feels the first stirrings of gratitude and humility before the Creator and Sustainer. These feelings take root in the heart and grow until he or she is filled with certainty that there is nothing worthy of worship and more beloved than the One.

Time slows down and the world seems to pause, waiting in expectation as the individual struggles to find the words capable of conveying this tremendous praise and submission to God alone. At last, from

the depths of the heart a cry emerges, declaring faith (Shahāda) through the expression of the tongue:

*“Asb-hadu allā ilāha illā Allāh wa asb-hadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlullāh.”*

“I bear witness that there is no god but God, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God.”

With this declaration, the individual becomes a Muslim. His or her heart has accepted and submitted to God; and the outward actions begin to reflect that inward conviction.



“Announce to the people the tidings that whoever says: ‘There is no god except God alone, without partner, Paradise is guaranteed for him.’”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

This first step has to be taken deliberately, of one’s own accord, and with an understanding of what it entails. It cannot be forced. God says in the Qur’ān: *«Let there be no compulsion in religion: truth stands clear from error. Whoever rejects idolatry and believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. And God hears and knows all things»* (QUR’ĀN 2:256).

## A NEW BEGINNING

The Qur’ān describes how each person has already made a primordial covenant with God before he or she was even born. It describes how God brought forth from the loins of humanity every soul and how every soul bore witness to the Divinity’s oneness when He asked: *«Am I not your Lord?»* Every soul replied: *«Yes. We do testify!»* (QUR’ĀN 7:172).

Bearing witness to faith renews that primary bond and reestablishes the sacred pledge and commitment between the individual and God, who promises: *«And whosoever keeps his pledge that he has made with God, God shall grant him a great reward»* (QUR’ĀN 48:10).

In the process, a person returns to a state of *fiṭra*, the natural state of the human soul in its innate purity. Prior good deeds are kept in his or her favor, while previous sins and mistakes are washed away, and the new Muslim begins life in Islam as pure and as fresh as the day he or she was born.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “If a person embraces Islam sincerely, God will forgive him all of his previous sins, and after that starts the settlement of accounts. Each good deed will count as ten to seven hundred like it, while each bad deed will count as one like it, unless God forgives it.”<sup>10</sup>

## AFFIRMING THE DIVINITY’S ONENESS

Since the Shahāda represents our sacred pledge to God, it is important to understand the meanings of its two parts, for both are essential to our faith.

The first part of the declaration (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*) is a negation of all false deities and an affirmation of the One Deity, who alone is worthy of worship. This entails the firm conviction that He indeed exists and is One, that there are no deities besides Him, and that He alone is absolutely free of need while everything else is in need of Him.

By commencing the declaration with “there is no god...,” the heart is emptied and cleansed of everything false, by continuing with “but God,” the heart is refilled with the lights of *tawḥīd* (Oneness of God). In this way, the individual is freed from enslavement to false beliefs and ideas, and is redirected towards knowledge and certitude in that which is real and eternal. Declaring God’s oneness frees one from *shirk*, or the association of partners with God.

“O God! I seek refuge with You from knowingly associating others with You, and I seek Your forgiveness for that of which I do not know.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

God says: *«Surely, God does not forgive those who assign partners to Him, but He forgives all else for whomever He wills. Whoever ascribes partners to God has wandered far astray»* (QUR'ĀN 4:116).

The association of partners with God can enter the heart in different ways and it falls into two categories: major *shirk* and hidden *shirk*. Major *shirk* entails worshipping things other than Him; setting them up as separate divinities and loving them as one would love God, whether they are statues, objects in nature, humans, spirits, or anything else.

Although hidden *shirk* does not break one's covenant with God, it makes one's faith severely defective because it involves acts of pious worship that are not performed for the sake of God, but for the sake of others, whether to please them or to show off in front of them.

## AFFIRMING THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE ﷺ

The second part of the Shahāda affirms the Prophet MuḤammad's mission ﷺ as the last and final Messenger of God sent to wake humanity from the sleep of heedlessness and guide it back to the path of knowing and serving the Divinity.

This affirmation entails conviction in the truth of the Prophet's message ﷺ, accepting what he brought, and humbly following his example as the surest guide on the path of Islam. God says: *«MuḤammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets»* (QUR'ĀN 33:40).

Both parts of the Shahāda are necessary to complete one's entry into the faith. Affirmed together, they form the key to salvation and unending bliss in the gardens of Paradise.

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*With this new beginning, let us now put our faith into action and continue on the path towards the second pillar of Islam, the ritual prayer.*

### 3 ŞALĀH (PRAYER)

#### A CONNECTION TO GOD

Five times a day, each and every day, all over the world, the melodious call to prayer floats over city rooftops. It permeates the air of the fields, deserts, and mountains, proclaiming God’s absolute greatness and calling on the faithful to draw closer to Him through perseverance and obedience in regular worship.

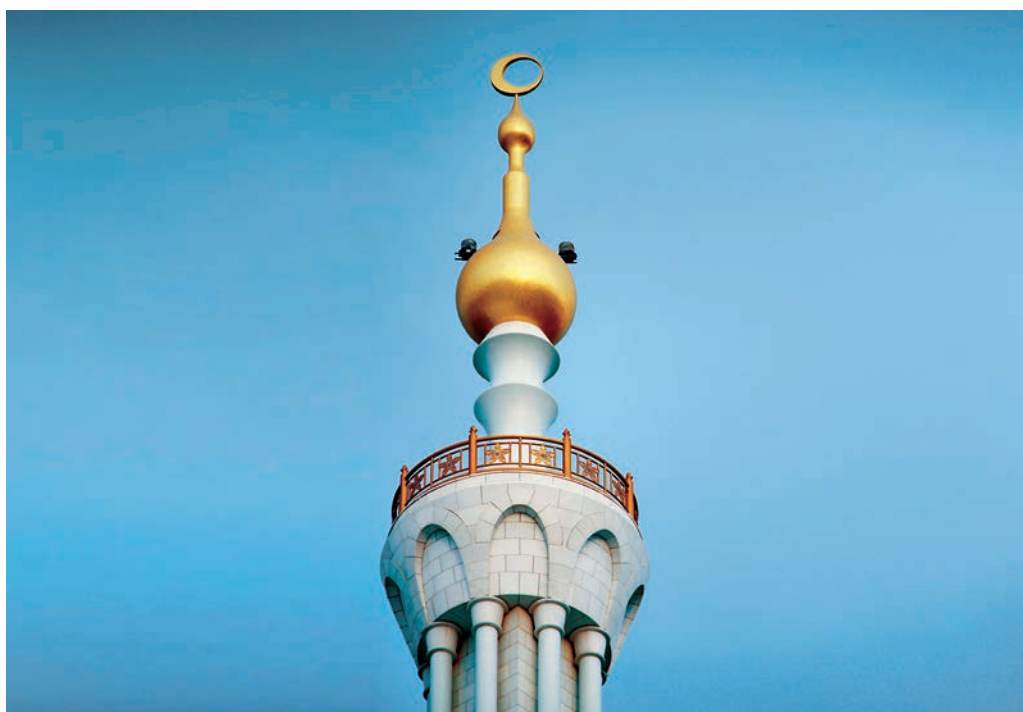
“Come to the prayer,” it beckons, “come to true success!” Its words ring out, reminding Muslims everywhere of their sacred pledge and inviting them in the midst of worldly cares and concerns to turn their faces towards the *qibla*, the direction of

the Ka‘ba in Mecca, in humble submission to God.

God says in the Qur’ān: *«Verily, I am God. There is no god but Me. So worship Me and establish the prayer for My remembrance»* (QUR’ĀN 20:14).

He also says: *«Prayer has been enjoined upon the believers at prescribed times»* (QUR’ĀN 4:103).

Those who strive to respond to the call at its prescribed times throughout the day keep their trust with their Lord and are perpetually reminded of His presence in their lives and are thankful for His



“*And establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and evil deeds.*”

—QUR’ĀN 29:45

blessings. Their souls are refreshed and their days are brought to life by constantly returning to Him in sincere remembrance.

They perform the prayer as the Prophet ﷺ performed it: with grace and simplicity of movement; standing, bowing, prostrating, reciting, contemplating, and glorifying. When performed correctly, the prayer aligns the body, mind, and soul of the worshipper with the will of the Creator, establishing an intimate connection of harmony and submission.

God says: *«And they were not ordered except to worship God sincerely, being true in faith; and to establish the prayer and give the Zakat (alms). And that is the worthy religion»* (QUR’ĀN 98:5).

## “THE COOLNESS OF MY EYE”

No one knew the Lord more intimately or worshipped Him with more devotion than the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, the guide and leader of those on the path of Islam. Of the acts of worship most beloved to him ﷺ was the prayer. He said ﷺ: “When performing the prayer, one is conversing intimately with his Lord.”<sup>11</sup>

By means of reciting the Qur’ān in prayer, the Prophet ﷺ held long intimate conversations with God. He found such delight in it that he said: “The coolness of my eye has been placed in prayer.”<sup>12</sup> Meaning that he found comfort and relief when he was in the act of humble submission before his Creator.

As the sun traveled across the sky and the times of prayer arrived, the Prophet ﷺ would signal to Bilāl ؓ, one of the early converts and the first muezzin in Islam, to commence the call to prayer. He ﷺ would say: “O Bilāl! Give us comfort and call for the prayer.”<sup>13</sup>

Prayer develops humility and submission and those who perform it regularly become transformed and elevated. As the believer persists in the discipline of prayer, his or her heart inclines towards obedience and shuns disobedience. God says in the Qur’ān: *«And establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and evil deeds»* (QUR’ĀN 29:45).

The Prophet ﷺ described prayer as a means of self-purification. He said: “The five prayers may be compared to a stream of fresh water, flowing in front of your house, into which you bathe five times each day. Do you think any dirt would remain on your body?” Those around him said: “No, none at all!” He replied: “Indeed, the five prayers remove sin, just as water removes dirt.”<sup>14</sup>

## BRINGING THE PRAYER TO LIFE

The Prophet ﷺ also said in a ḥadīth: “The first thing for which a servant of God will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection is his prayers. If they are in order, he will prosper and succeed; and if they are wanting, he will fail and lose.”<sup>15</sup>

“*Make frequent prostrations before God, for you will not make one prostration without Him raising you a degree because of it, and removing a sin from you because of it.*”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

It is said that when the time of prayer arrived, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet ﷺ, began to tremble. When asked about this, he replied: “The time has come for a trust which God offered to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it; they were wary of it, but I have taken it on.”

Prayer is not confined to outward motions and words; it also has inward aspects that must be established to bring it to life. One should intend to fulfill God’s command, both its outward performance as well as its inner attentiveness, drawing nearer to Him with sincere hope and gratitude.

Just as outward cleanliness in one’s clothes and place of prayer is important, the purity of the mind and heart from inner distractions and wandering thoughts is also crucial. The Prophet ﷺ warned: “Though a person performs the whole prayer, he may not get credit for half of it, or a third, a quarter, a fifth, a sixth, or a tenth. A person gets credit only for that part of his prayer in which he is conscious.”

For this reason, it is important to develop concentration and attentiveness in prayer. One of the Prophet’s رضي الله عنه Companions, Abū al-Dardā’ رضي الله عنه, advised: “The sensible thing is to attend to one’s needs beforehand, so as to have nothing on one’s mind when approaching the prayer.”

It is also said that Muslim b. Yasār رضي الله عنه, another Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, used to be so focused in his prayer that on one occasion he finished his prayer and discovered that a column of the mosque had fallen down without him noticing it.

Through attentiveness in the prayer, the heart begins to realize the One to Whom it is speaking and submitting. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn رضي الله عنه, the great-grandson of the Prophet ﷺ, used to turn pale when washing for prayer. When asked about this, he replied: “Do you realize the One before Whom I wish to stand in prayer?”

The worshipper’s deepest submission is embodied in the moment of prostration, when the face is placed on the ground acknowledging God’s greatness and one’s neediness and humility. The Prophet ﷺ said: “The servant is never closer to God than when he is prostrating himself in worship.”<sup>16</sup>

If you are new to Islam, the prayer may at first seem daunting, especially with the added challenge of having to perform the prayer in Arabic. As an aid, you can refer to the companion of this book: *First Instructions on Worship*, where you will find more information about the specific details, conditions, and times of prayer, including a step-by-step description of the prayer along with an audio appendix of the Arabic words and phrases used.

“Prayer with the congregation is better than prayer alone by twenty-seven times.”

— THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

## PRAYERS AT OTHER TIMES

The five daily prayers regulate our days and nights, but for those who desire extra devotion to God beyond the obligatory, there are many other opportunities for prayer. The Prophet ﷺ used to pray voluntary prayers just before and right after the main prayers. These voluntary prayers help one to prepare for the obligatory prayers and they compensate for any deficiencies found in them.

Other prayers are performed on specific occasions, such as the Friday *jumu'a* prayer that is prayed in a mosque accom-

panied by a sermon in place of the noon prayer. The *janāza* prayer is a communal prayer for someone who has just passed away. The *tarāwīḥ* prayers are voluntary prayers performed during the nights of Ramaḍān, while the Eid prayers mark the two festival days of the Islamic year.

Of the extra prayers that the Prophet ﷺ taught his Companions رضي الله عنهم, one of the most important is the *istikhāra* prayer, or the prayer of guidance. It can be prayed whenever one is confronted by an important decision and does not know which way to decide. Through this prayer, we





“O people! Spread peace, feed others, maintain family ties, and pray at night when others sleep and you will enter Paradise safely.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

ask God to lead us to that which will be good for us and to keep us away from that which will harm us, entrusting ourselves to His care and direction. Both major and minor decisions—ranging from marriage, to moving, or taking up a new job—can be subjects of the *istikhāra* prayer for guidance.

The *tabajjud* prayer is a night vigil prayer that is usually performed in the last third of the night, which is a special and blessed time to pray. The night vigil prayer allows one the opportunity to have

quiet devotion to God in the stillness of the night. It is recommended to sleep a little before waking up in the last third of the night.

The Prophet ﷺ informed: “Every evening when it is the last third of the night, our Lord, the Blessed and Exalted, descends to the nearest heaven and says: ‘Is there anyone to invoke Me that I may respond to his invocation? Is there anyone to ask Me that I may grant him his request? Is there anyone asking My forgiveness that I may forgive him?’”<sup>17</sup>

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*Now that we have learned about the prayer, let us move on to the pillar of Zakat, which expands our worship to meet our communal duties.*

## 4 ZAKAT (ALMS)

### THE OBLIGATION TO GIVE

In our spiritual journey, each of us toils and plants the seeds for his or her Hereafter. With spiritual training and discipline, we make our souls receptive to the gentle rains of divine blessings.

This training and discipline is embodied in the obligation of Zakat. Those in possession of surplus wealth are required each year to give away a small percentage of it in alms. In the process, the soul is directed to think of others and not only of itself.

God says in the Qur'an: *«Believe in God and His Messenger, and spend of that which He has entrusted you with: for*

*those of you who believe and spend will have a great reward»* (QUR'AN 57:7).

The command to give Zakat is often mentioned along with the command to establish prayer. *«And they were not ordered except to worship God sincerely, being true in faith, and to establish the prayer and give the Zakat. And that is the worthy religion»* (QUR'AN 98:5).

Whereas prayer develops the individual's connection to God, Zakat tests the strength of that connection. The soul is confronted with the choice of holding onto its hard-earned wealth or giving some of it up out of obedience and in fulfillment of God's command. By constantly training to give up what it loves,



“*The Caliph sent me to collect the Zakat from the Muslims of Africa. When I collected it, I asked if there were any poor people on whom the money could be spent, but I could not find a single poor person.*” —YAḤYĀ B. SAʿD (720 AH)

the soul can become less attached to worldly things, grateful for what it has received and content with what it has.

God says: *«By no means shall you attain righteousness until you give freely of that which you love»* (QURʼĀN 3:92).

Although Zakat purifies the heart, its benefit is not limited to the inner dimensions of the individual. Those who give Zakat bring benefit to the less fortunate of society and are at once promoting the circulation of wealth; for those who are in need are more likely to spend it on their necessities without delay.

## THE CONDITIONS OF ZAKAT

To determine whether or not you are required to pay Zakat in a given year and to calculate the amount to be paid, it is necessary to understand the concept of *niṣāb*. The *niṣāb* is the minimum amount of wealth in a person’s possession beyond which Zakat becomes payable.

The *niṣāb* is equivalent to 87.48 grams of gold or 612.36 grams of silver. From this amount, you can then calculate the cash equivalent in your local currency. Any wealth owned above the *niṣāb* at the end of one year becomes liable for Zakat. 2.5 percent of this wealth is then given away to eligible recipients.

Those who are eligible to receive Zakat include the poor, the needy, and those with debts, among others. It is encouraged

to give Zakat to needy Muslim relatives, as long as they are not dependents, such as one’s wife, children, or elderly parents whom one is already obliged to support.

## THE WISDOM AND ETIQUETTE OF ZAKAT

Just as the one who hopes to reap a good harvest must plant and tend to his or her crops, the one paying Zakat should observe certain etiquettes in giving.

Most importantly, Zakat should be given with sincerity and not for the sake of a good reputation or with expectation of returns. Furthermore, the person who gives Zakat should understand that every single thing, each blessing and possession, is from the bounty of God. Zakat is not his or her gift to someone else but rather it is God’s gift that has only been entrusted to his or her care on behalf of a needy person. As a result, giving should be done with gentleness and humility while avoiding hurtful reminders and insults.

For details pertaining to your specific situation, the amount of Zakat to be given, to whom it should be given, and how to go about giving it, it is highly recommended to seek the advice of a knowledgeable scholar who can guide you through the entire process.

## GIVING AT OTHER TIMES

Besides the obligation of Zakat, voluntary acts of charity (called *ṣadaqa*) are highly

“The upper hand [that gives] is better than the lower hand [that takes].”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

encouraged. If planted with sincerity and watered with humility, these acts of generosity will in time sprout forth and yield an abundant harvest in the Hereafter.

No one was more generous than the noble Prophet himself ﷺ. When his wife’s nephew Ḥakīm embraced Islam, the Prophet ﷺ gave him one hundred camels as a gift.

But Ḥakīm felt it wasn’t enough. He wanted two hundred more, which the Prophet ﷺ gave him, along with the ad-

vice: “The upper hand [that gives] is better than the lower hand [that takes].” Upon hearing this, Ḥakīm gave back the two hundred camels and vowed to always be of those of the upper hand.<sup>18</sup>

Other Companions of the Prophet ﷺ went to great lengths in spending in charity, demonstrating their sincerity and trust in God. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه, one of the closest of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, gave away half of his wealth for the sake of God and His Messenger ﷺ. Content with what he offered, he then



“Whoever clothes another Muslim, God will clothe him on the Day of Judgment with the clothes of Paradise.” —THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD

found out that Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, the closest Companion to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (and who became the first Caliph), was the first to bring his wealth and had given it all away. ‘Umar رضي الله عنه aid: “He and I did not compete in doing good deeds except that he surpassed me in them.”

When giving, generous believers give from the best of what they have, demonstrating preference to others over themselves. By giving what is dear to them, the separation from it has a greater effect on their spiritual development.

Generous believers also know that whatever they spend or share with others does not diminish their own provisions in the least but rather increases them by purifying their wealth and multiplying it with countless blessings.

God says: *«Those who spend their wealth in the way of God are like grain that sprouts seven ears, in every ear one hun-*

*dred grains. And God gives increase to whomever He wills»* (QUR’ĀN 2:261).

Charity does not have to be monetary, since any act of kindness that helps another person counts as a form of voluntary charity. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that even a smile is an act of charity. He also said: “Every joint of each person must perform a charity 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 prayer is a charity; and removing a harmful thing from the road is a charity.”<sup>19</sup>

Everyone traveling the Prophetic path should seek opportunities to train themselves and benefit society through giving. God promises: *«Those who spend their wealth by night and day, in private and public, shall be rewarded by their Lord. No fear shall come upon them and they will not grieve»* (QUR’ĀN 2:274).

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*Having elevated our souls with the prayer and fulfilled the communal rights with Zakat, we move along and learn self-restraint with the pillar of fasting.*

## 5

# ŞAWM (FASTING) IN RAMADĀN

## A NEW MOON

As we continue upon the journey, night falls and in the distance there is a crowd gathered on a hill, their faces turned towards the heavens. There, hanging silently in the darkness of the sky, the faint sliver of a new moon heralds the arrival of another month.

Every day during the month of Ramaḍān, between dawn and sunset, Muslims do not eat, drink, or have sexual relations. God says: *«Ramaḍān is the month in*



*which the Qur'ān was revealed, as a guide to mankind, and containing signs for guidance and judgment between right and wrong. So every one of you who is present during that month should spend it in fasting»* (QUR'ĀN 2:185).

In Ramaḍān, the gates of Paradise are thrown wide open inviting the pious with its fragrance, while the gates of Hell are shut and the devils are chained so that they do not distract the earnest worshippers from performing the important works of this holy month or from earning the abundant rewards that are multiplied from each act of worship.

## THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

Delaying the gratification of the body's various appetites has always been an effective means of strengthening the soul and freeing it from the entanglements of worldly desires.

God says in the Qur'ān: *«O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it has been prescribed for those before you in order that you may be God-fearing»* (QUR'ĀN 2:183).

This act of discipline and self-restraint becomes a hidden self-sacrifice that is between the servant and God. Whereas the other pillars are outward acts that may be seen by other people, fasting is internal and unseen by human eyes, and thus it has a special status with God.

“Whoever fasts the month of Ramaḍān with faith and anticipation of reward, all of his previous sins shall be forgiven.” —THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

The Prophet ﷺ related in a ḥadīth qudsī that God said: “Fasting is for Me and I alone will reward one for it.”<sup>20</sup>

The one who intends to fast wakes up early in the pre-dawn hours to eat a light meal (*suhūr*)—as was the Prophet’s custom ﷺ—to nourish the body and prepare it for the coming day’s fast that begins at dawn. As the servant abstains from food, drink, and sexual relations throughout the daylight hours, he or she experiences the pangs of hunger, thirst, and want. By ignoring the growls of the appetites, the body is taught that there are higher goals more important than the satisfaction of its desires.

In the process, the ego is tamed and becomes submissive to God’s will, while laziness in worship is removed from the servant’s limbs and replaced with spiritual determination.

## THE LEVELS OF FASTING

The noble Prophet ﷺ warned that there are some who fast all day but get nothing from their fasting except hunger and thirst. They neither benefit from its training nor do they earn its reward.

Even though they deny their stomachs food and drink, they freely feed the greed of their other senses and organs by indulging in illicit cravings and desires. They fail to realize that fasting is not merely abstinence from food and drink but restraint from sins and disobedience.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Fasting is a shield; when any one of you is fasting on a day, he should neither indulge in obscene language, nor raise the voice; and if anyone reviles him or tries to quarrel with him he should say: ‘I am fasting.’”<sup>21</sup>

A higher level of fasting—one that exceeds abstinence from food and drink—requires much more attentiveness and involves guarding the senses from that which distances the fasting person from attachment to God. In particular the eyes should not look at what poisons the heart, and the tongue should be restrained from lying, backbiting, gossiping, and obscenity.

A fasting person trains and refines his or her soul until it rises delicately above its physical limits and becomes mindful of the divine command. By deliberately abstaining from that which is otherwise permissible, fearfulness of God (*taqwā*) is planted in the believer’s heart so that he or she is scrupulous and careful in staying away from that which is impermissible.

The highest level of fasting is the fasting of the Prophets and those completely attached to God, where the heart abstains from any unworthy thought or concern that does not draw it closer to God.

## BREAKING THE FAST

As the sun sinks lower in the sky, the tired servant gains a new appreciation for the blessings of food and drink, after having been separated from them for a time.

“*The supplications of three people are not rejected; the supplication of a fasting person when breaking the fast, the supplication of a just leader, and the supplication of the oppressed.*”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

The heart is more inclined to turn to God in humble gratitude for even the smallest blessing, realizing that many people go hungry and thirsty out of necessity.

Finally, the sun sets below the horizon and the fasting for the day has come to an end. People hurry to feed each other at the time of breaking the fast (*iftār*) with dates and water as was the Prophet’s custom ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ said that the one who feeds a fasting person gets a reward equivalent to the one who fasted, without diminishing the reward of the one who fasted.<sup>22</sup>

Families get together and communities gather for an evening meal. This meal should be simple and enough to subdue the appetite and preserve the spirit of

the day’s fast. There is a danger of over eating after having gone without nourishment for a time.

Later, after the evening prayers, mosques are lit up with the presence of eager souls profiting from the blessings and discipline of this holy month to perform extra acts of worship. They pray the *tarāwīḥ* prayers, read the Qur’ān, give charity, and lift up their hands and supplicate sincerely. They are directed towards their Lord. Through their worship the days and nights of Ramaḍān are brought to life.

## LEARNING THE LESSONS

Towards the end of Ramaḍān, there comes a night of incredible power and spiritual



[Above] Muslims gather to break the fast



“Look for the night of destiny in the last ten nights of Ramaḍān.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

blessings known as *Laylat al-Qadr*, or the Night of Destiny, in which the Qur’ān was originally revealed to the noble Prophet ﷺ, changing the course of humanity.

Although different opinions exist regarding its exact date and occurrence, this night is generally thought to fall among the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramaḍān when something of the Heavenly Kingdom is revealed to those whose hearts are awake to see it. The Qur’ān describes it as better than one thousand months, and eager worshippers search for it with earnest prayers and supplications throughout the nights.

Finally, with the appearance of the sliver of a new moon, we bid farewell to Ramaḍān. Muslim communities gather together in joyous celebration of *Eid al-Fiṭr* to mark the end of a month of intense

training and devotion. Homes are cleaned, decorations are set up, new clothes are worn, sumptuous meals are prepared, and many family gatherings are arranged.

*Eid al-Fiṭr* is also a day of reflection to contemplate the lessons learned through fasting and to give thanks and praise to God for having completed His command. Eid prayers are held and each person pays a small charity called *Zakat al-Fiṭr*, which is given out of compassion to help feed the poor.

There are many other days throughout the year in which it is recommended to fast. A sign that one’s fasting in Ramaḍān has been accepted is that further acts of worship are opened up and what began in Ramaḍān accompanies him or her throughout the other months.

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*Having thus begun the path with the testimony of faith and attuned ourselves to the rhythm of the cyclical pillars of prayers, Zakat, and fasting, we come at last to the final pillar in which we leave behind this ordinary life and embark on a journey of devotion in fulfillment of God’s command: the Ḥajj.*

## 6 HAJJ (PILGRIMAGE)

### THE HOUSE OF GOD

Rising from the courtyard of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, the distinct cubic structure of the Ka'ba, the House of God, stands in stark simplicity and solitude.

Built in ancient days by the Prophet Abraham ؑ and his son Ishmael ؑ in obedience to the divine command, the Ka'ba became a sanctuary in the wilderness and a place of purity for the worship of the One God.

God says: *«And behold when We appointed for Abraham the site of the House, saying: “Do not associate anything with Me, and*

*purify My House for those who circle it, those who stand, and those who bow and prostrate.”»* (QUR'ĀN 22:26).

God set it as a beacon for all of humanity, commanding Abraham ؑ to establish the pilgrimage as an act of worship. *«And proclaim among people the Pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every deep ravine»* (QUR'ĀN 22:27).

What began with the Prophet Abraham ؑ was brought to completion with the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. To this day the Ka'ba continues to be a symbol of singular



[Above] The Ka'ba—a symbol of singular devotion

“*And proclaim among people the Pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every deep ravine.*” —QUR’ĀN 22:27

devotion, calling on the faithful in every land to the service of the One God.

Five times daily, Muslims everywhere turn their faces in prayer towards the direction of the House and turn their hearts in devotion towards the Lord of the House.

Every year during the Ḥajj season, pilgrims gather from every corner of the world to fulfill this fifth pillar as a sign of their compliance and adoration of their Lord.

God says: *«And it is a duty of humanity to God, that whoever is able, to make the pilgrimage to the House»* (QUR’ĀN 3:97).

## PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

Those who intend to perform the Ḥajj prepare themselves for the journey by divesting themselves of their ties to the world and leaving behind their families, homes, and familiar comforts. They go humbly with the sincere intention of renewing their commitment to God and fulfilling their covenant with Him.

They cast off their old lives and enter a state of ritual sanctity by putting on the seamless white garments of *iḥrām*, reminding themselves that there will come a day when they will be transported to their graves in a similar white shroud to meet their Lord.

Just as death brings everyone low and returns them to the same earth, the bare

simplicity of *iḥrām* effaces status, wealth, and distinction, and removes the layers of the ego from each person until only the pure servant remains to perform the Ḥajj.

In this state of sanctity, the pilgrim is forbidden from harming any living thing, and is even prohibited from cutting his or her own hair or nails. Like the other pillars, this act of worship requires from each person patience and self-restraint. In addition, the pilgrim must avoid arguments and anything else that will prevent the attainment of the goal.

The Prophet ﷺ has promised: “He who makes Pilgrimage to this House—avoiding indecent and immoral behavior—emerges from his sins like a newborn baby.”<sup>23</sup>

As the pilgrims approach the Sacred House, a chant soon emerges from their hearts, signifying their readiness and servitude: “*Labbayk Allāhumma Labbayk*—Here I am at Your service, O God, here I am!” They have come, putting themselves at God’s service and choosing Him over the world.

This sentiment is embodied in the Prophet Muḥammad’s ﷺ statement: “For a blessed Pilgrimage there is no reward except Paradise.”<sup>24</sup>

## THE MAIN RITES OF ḤAJJ

Upon entering the Precinct of the Sacred Mosque, visitors become aware of the

“Pilgrims and visitors are the emissaries and guests of God; if they petition Him He gives what they ask, if they seek His forgiveness He forgives them.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

continuous chanting of pious devotion. They are also confronted by the majestic sight of the ancient Kaʿba towering over the circling pilgrims. Submitting to its pull, they are drawn into its orbit and move around it slowly, with their hearts revolving around the remembrance of God like the celestial angels who circle the divine Throne in Paradise.

After they complete their movement around the Kaʿba, visitors offer prayers behind the Station of Abraham ﷺ, the area where Prophet Abraham ﷺ stood when he constructed the Kaʿba. Next they make their way between the hills of Safa



and Marwa seven times, symbolizing the hope for mercy and acceptance. It was here that Ishmael’s mother, Hagar, ran to and fro searching desperately for water for her thirsty child until God brought forth the miraculous well of Zamzam whose blessed waters continue to provide for pilgrims to this day.

The most important part of the Ḥajj takes place when the pilgrims gather to stand on the sacred plain of Arafat. It was here on the low Mount of Mercy that the noble Prophet ﷺ gave his final sermon during his farewell pilgrimage before his passing, reminding his listeners to treat each other with kindness.

At the final sermon he recited the last verses of the Qurʾān to be revealed, in which God declared to all of humanity: *«This day have I perfected your religion for you, and completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion»* (QURʾĀN 5:3).

The standing at Arafat is a time of deep reflection, earnest supplication for mercy, and contemplation on one’s life. Looking about, one sees crowds from every race and nation gathered together for a common purpose, foreshadowing the Day of Judgment when all of humanity will be brought forth in one place to be judged for their actions.

The following day the pilgrims move on to Mina where they throw tiny pebbles at

“I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together...”

—MALCOLM X TALKING ABOUT HIS HAJJ EXPERIENCE



three pillars representing the Devil, just as their ancient father Abraham ﷺ once drove off the Devil when the latter tried to tempt him into disobedience.

## THE GREAT SACRIFICE

The Qurʾān relates how God tested Abraham ﷺ by ordering him to sacrifice his son. And it describes how both father and son remained steadfast and submitted themselves to carrying out the order.

Abraham’s ﷺ pure faith and sincerity were rewarded. As he was about to sacrifice his son, God gave him a ram to sacrifice instead.

This willingness to sacrifice everything in obedience to God is commemorated at Ḥajj with the sacrifice of an animal during the great celebration of *Eid al-Adḥā*.

In the rest of the world, those not perform-

ing Ḥajj also take part in the blessings and joyous celebrations of *Eid al-Adḥā*. Those who are able sacrifice an animal and give a portion of its meat away to the poor. The Eid prayer is performed, new clothes are worn, presents are given, and families visit each other to rejoice in God’s generosity.

## VISITING THE PROPHET ﷺ

At last, the pilgrims bring their Ḥajj to a close by cutting their hair and returning to Mecca for the final circuits around the Kaʿba and farewell prayers, hoping in their hearts that their Ḥajj is accepted.

For many, however, the journey is not yet over. There is one more place to visit. To the north of Mecca lies the sanctified city of Medina. Medina is not only where the Prophet ﷺ lived, received revelation,

“Whoever visits my grave, my intercession becomes guaranteed for him.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

and established his Mosque, but it is also where he is buried. The soil of Medina is forever connected with the best of creation; for it contains the blessed body of the Messenger of God ﷺ.

Pilgrims are drawn to Medina by its peace and the blessings and serenity of praying in the Mosque. But most of all they come to convey their greetings and love to the one who led humanity with wisdom and gentleness on the path to salvation: the best of creation and a mercy to the worlds ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ said: “There is not anyone who greets me with peace except that God has returned my soul to me so that I may return his greeting.”<sup>25</sup>

Before greeting the Prophet ﷺ, visitors who are able greet the Mosque with a two cycle prayer in the *Rawḍa*, which is an area between the Prophet’s blessed grave ﷺ and his pulpit—a place which the Prophet ﷺ described as a garden from the gardens of Paradise. After praying in the *Rawḍa*, visitors humbly approach the Prophet ﷺ at his blessed grave and greet him with peace. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever visits my grave, my intercession becomes guaranteed for him.”<sup>26</sup> Afterwards, visitors make their way to the graveyard of *al-Baqīʿ* wherein lies the best community the world has ever known—the noble Family and Companions ﷺ of the Prophet ﷺ.

Medina has many rights over its regular visitors and inhabitants and there are several etiquettes to observe. One should review these rights and etiquettes with someone who comprehends the magnitude of the Prophet ﷺ and his noble city.



*Having emerged humbled and transformed from this overwhelming experience of drawing closer to God through the Hajj, we carry its lessons and the lessons of the other pillars with us onto the next stage of the journey.*



# IMAN

## (BELIEF)

*“Iman is to believe in God, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both its good and evil.”*

—ḤADĪTH OF GABRIEL ﷺ



## 7 OVERVIEW

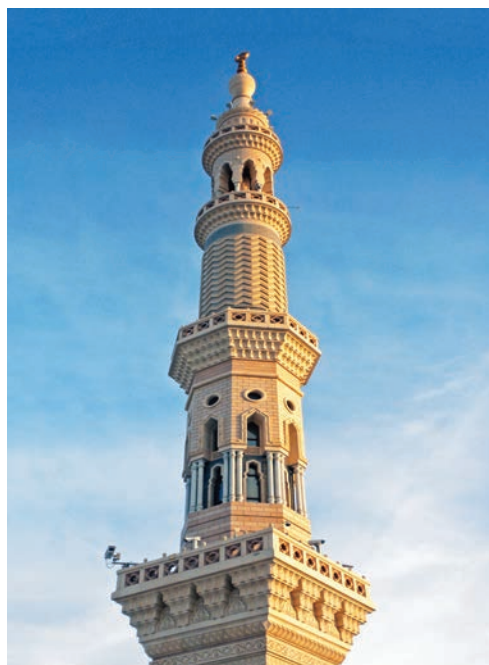
### THE TREE OF FAITH

﴿Have you not seen how God sets forth a parable? A goodly word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens. It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the permission of its Lord. So God sets forth parables for mankind, in order that they may receive admonition﴾ (QUR'ĀN 14:24–25)

The roots of Iman are not planted in empty speculation, doubt, or conjecture. The belief of the Muslim must be rooted in the soil of firm knowledge and conviction regarding the Divinity, the Messengers, and all they conveyed from their Lord. The trunk of the tree of faith is certainty and sincerity with God and its fruits are the good words and actions resulting from that certainty and sincerity.

### THE SIX PILLARS

Under the discipline and effects of the five pillars of Islam, the soul is trained to submit and connect to its Lord. With the six pillars of Iman the individual knows what is essential to believe and can begin the ascent towards a stronger affirmation drawn from the majestic signs of God's creation and orient its own place within the divine scheme.



The first fundamental pillar of Iman is belief in God, and around this reality the remaining pillars revolve—belief in the Angels, the Books, the Messengers, the Last Day, and divine destiny.

Through regular reflection and contemplation on the signs in the heavens and on earth, the perceptive believer strengthens his or her vision and certitude and is drawn forward on the journey until he or she reaches the final destination.

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*Let us now continue on the path with the light of Iman to illuminate the signs that appear before us by examining the first pillar of Iman.*

## 8 BELIEF IN GOD

### THE SIGNS AND THE MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES

During the moments of peace and quiet on this journey, there are many opportunities to pause and gaze out upon the majestic panorama of creation that is all around us.

There is much to ponder on with the wondrous signs set in the heavens and the earth: from the star-filled depths of the cosmos to the sightless worm burrowing through the soil; and from the flower bud that struggles to unfold on the branch, to the cry of a newborn child. The beauty and symmetry of creation testify to the craftsmanship and perfection of the Creator.

Furthermore, every motion and phenomenon manifests a beautiful name pointing towards an attribute of the Divinity. Each person experiences these names and attributes in his or her daily life. In the mountain-shattering earthquake we witness the power of the Mighty. In the seasons with their cycles of earthly decline and renewal we see the work of the Reviver, the Giver of Life and its Taker. And in a mother's love and sacrifice we behold the gentle mercy of the All-Merciful and Compassionate.

The Lord of Majesty and Bounty declares: *«Soon will We show them Our signs in the furthest regions of the earth, and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth»* (QUR'ĀN 41:53).

Of the divine names, Allah is the Unique and Supreme Name for the One God. Nothing shares in the use of this name since it refers to Him alone. He says: *«Do you know any being that can be named along with Him?»* (QUR'ĀN 19:65).

In addition, God has ninety-nine other names that describe aspects of His reality and acts manifested throughout creation. However, the All-Encompassing Supreme Name is Allah, and it is highly beneficial to remember God by it often. It is also commendable to learn the ninety-nine Names along with their meanings. God says: *«To God belong the most beautiful names: so call on Him by them»* (QUR'ĀN 7:180).





<b>AL-RAḤMĀN</b> (The Compassionate)	<b>AL-RAḤĪM</b> (The Merciful)	<b>AL-MALĪK</b> (The King)	<b>AL-QUDDŪS</b> (The Holy)	<b>AL-SALĀM</b> (The Flawless)
<b>AL-MU' MIN</b> (The Guardian of Faith)	<b>AL-MUHAYMIN</b> (The Protector)	<b>AL-ʿAZĪZ</b> (The Mighty)	<b>AL-JABBĀR</b> (The Compeller)	<b>AL-MUTAKKABIR</b> (Supreme in Greatness)
<b>AL-KHĀLIQ</b> (The Creator)	<b>AL-BĀRI'</b> (The Producer)	<b>AL-MUṢAWWIR</b> (The Fashioner)	<b>AL-GHAFFĀR</b> (He Who is Full of Forgiveness)	<b>AL-QAHHĀR</b> (The Dominator)
<b>AL-WAHHĀB</b> (The Bestower)	<b>AL-RAZZĀQ</b> (The Provider)	<b>AL-FATTĀḤ</b> (The Opener)	<b>AL-ʿALĪM</b> (The All-Knowing)	<b>AL-QĀBID</b> (The Constrictor)
<b>AL-BĀSIT</b> (The Expander)	<b>AL-KHĀFIḌ</b> (The Abaser)	<b>AL-RĀFI'</b> (The Exalter)	<b>AL-MU'IZZ</b> (The Ennobler)	<b>AL-MUḌIL</b> (The Humbler)
<b>AL-SAMĪʿ</b> (The All-Hearing)	<b>AL-BAṢĪR</b> (The All-Seeing)	<b>AL-ḤAKAM</b> (The Judge)	<b>AL-ʿADL</b> (The Just)	<b>AL-LAṬĪF</b> (The Benevolent)
<b>AL-KHABĪR</b> (The Well-Informed)	<b>AL-ḤALĪM</b> (The Clement)	<b>AL-ʿAZĪM</b> (The Magnificent)	<b>AL-GHAFŪR</b> (The All-Forgiving)	<b>AL-SHAKŪR</b> (The Appreciative)
<b>AL-ʿALĪ</b> (The Exalted)	<b>AL-KABĪR</b> (The Great)	<b>AL-ḤAFĪZ</b> (The All-Preserver)	<b>AL-MUQĪT</b> (The Nourisher)	<b>AL-ḤASĪB</b> (The Reckoner)
<b>AL-JALĪL</b> (The Majestic)	<b>AL-KARĪM</b> (The Generous)	<b>AL-RAQĪB</b> (The All-Observant)	<b>AL-MUJĪB</b> (The Answerer of Prayers)	<b>AL-WĀSI'</b> (The Vast)
<b>AL-ḤAKĪM</b> (The All-Wise)	<b>AL-WADŪD</b> (The Loving)	<b>AL-MAJĪD</b> (The Glorious)	<b>AL-BĀ'ITH</b> (The Raiser of the Dead)	<b>AL-SHAḤĪD</b> (The Witness)

“Indeed, God has ninety-nine names; whoever enumerates them will enter Paradise.”<sup>27</sup>

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

AL-ḤAQQ (The Real)	AL-WAKĪL (The Guardian)	AL-QAWĪ (The Strong)	AL-MATĪN (The Firm)	AL-WALĪ (The Protecting Friend)
AL-ḤAMĪD (The Praised)	AL-MUḤṢĪ (The Knower of Each Separate Thing)	AL-MUBDIʿ (The Beginner)	AL-MUʿĪD (The Restorer)	AL-MUḤYĪ (The Life-Giver)
AL-MUMĪT (The Slayer)	AL-ḤAYY (The Living)	AL-QAYYŪM (The Self-Existing)	AL-WĀJID (The Resourceful)	AL-MĀJID (The Magnificent)
AL-WĀḤID (The Unique)	AL-ṢAMAD (The Eternal)	AL-QĀDIR (The All-Powerful)	AL-MUQTADIR (The All-Determiner)	AL-MUQADDIM (The Promoter)
AL-MUʾAKHKHIR (The Repriver)	AL-AWWAL (The First)	AL-ĀKHİR (The Last)	AL-ZĀHIR (The Manifest)	AL-BĀṬIN (The Hidden)
AL-WĀLĪ (The Ruler)	AL-MUTAʿĀLĪ (The Lofty)	AL-BARR (The Doer of Good)	AL-TAWWĀB (The Ever-Relenting)	AL-MUNTAQIM (The Avenger)
AL-ʿAFŪ (The Pardoner of Sins)	AL-RAʿŪF (The All-Pitying)	MĀLIK AL-MULK (King of Absolute Sovereignty)	DHŪ AL-JALĀL WA AL-IKRĀM (The Possessor of Majesty and Generosity)	
AL-MUOSIT (The Equitable)	AL-JĀMIʿ (The Gatherer)	AL-GHANĪ (The Rich)	AL-MUGHNĪ (The Enricher)	AL-MĀNĪʿ (The Protector)
AL-ḌĀRR (The Punisher)	AL-NĀFIʿ (He Who Gives Benefit)	AL-NŪR (The Light)	AL-HĀDĪ (The Guide)	AL-BADĪʿ (The Originator)
AL-BĀQĪ (The Everlasting)	AL-WĀRITH (The Inheritor)	AL-RASHĪD (The Glorious)	AL-ṢABŪR (The Patient)	

“Faith is not lengthy hopes and wishful thinking. Faith is that which settles in the heart and is demonstrated by action.”

—AL-HASAN AL-BAŞRĪ

Each of these names points to a certain aspect of God and enables the believer to learn more about Him. To enumerate these ninety-nine names entails learning them, understanding their meanings, and being positively changed by them in one’s life. The believer who truly understands God’s name “the All-Compassionate” is kind and compassionate with those in need, and the one who truly understands God’s name “the All-Hearing” is careful to speak good words and refrain from foul speech.

## KNOWING THE DIVINITY

The Possessor of these names also informs us: *«I have only created jinn and mankind that they may worship Me»* (QUR’ĀN 51:56). This worship entails knowing Him with a knowledge that is substantiated and clear, for belief in the One God is the foundation of our Iman and the basis upon which our journey is set.

In order to know one’s Lord, one must know of the divine attributes that belong to Him. These attributes, some of which are shared in name only with the creation, are perfections whose reality belongs to the Creator alone.

## GOD’S EXISTENCE

The greatest of these perfections, the self-signifying attribute (*al-ṣifa al-nafsīya*) that belongs exclusively to God alone, is His ineffable Being and Self-Existence (*al-Wujūd*).

Only God is the Necessary-Existent (*Wājib al-Wujūd*) and the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*), while everything else in creation was previously nonexistent and is forever dependent on the divine Power for its continued existence. No other existence is comparable to God’s because His Existence is not characterized by beginning, end, dependence, or change.

## THE FIVE NEGATING ATTRIBUTES

There are other principal attributes of divine perfection that are known to us primarily by the innate imperfection of created things. Among them are five negating attributes (*ṣifāt tanzīhiyya*) which serve to remove from the human psyche all false and unbecoming conceptions of the Divinity. These attributes negate all descriptions that do not apply to God, thereby helping us to understand what He is *not* in order that we may affirm what He *is*.

### 1 ONENESS (*waḥdāniya*)

He is the One and the Single, possessing the attribute of Oneness. He is not composed of parts but is One inexpressible Holy Entity. There are neither partners nor other divinities that share in His unique and exclusive attributes, nor do acts exist except through His creative power alone.

He says: *«Indeed your God is certainly One»* (QUR’ĀN 37:4).

“We shall soon show them Our signs in the furthest regions of the earth, and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth.”

—QUR’ĀN 41:53

**2 BEGINNINGLESSNESS** (*qidam*)  
and

**3 ENDLESSNESS** (*baqāʾ*)

He exists without beginning and is abiding eternally and unchangingly without end.

He says: *«He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward. And He is the Knower of all things»* (QUR’ĀN 57:3).

**4 SELF-SUBSISTENCE** (*qiyām bil-nafs*)

He is Independent in His Self-Subsistence and free of any need or dependency, while everything in creation is in absolute dependency and need of Him.

He says: *«O mankind! It is you who are in need of God: but God is Free of all needs, Worthy of all praise»* (QUR’ĀN 35:15).

**5 TRANSCENDENCE**  
(*mukhālafā lil-ḥawādīth*)

He does not resemble any created thing. He is Transcendent and without spouse, partner, equal, or offspring. He is genderless, unique, and exalted beyond both imagination and visualization.

He is not characterized by size, shape, form, color, or any other finite quality in time and space by which created things are qualified.

He says: *«There is nothing whatsoever like unto Him»* (QUR’ĀN 42:11).

These attributes are summed up in the Qur’ān in *Sūrat al-Ikblās*, which the Prophet ﷺ described as equal to a third of the Qur’ān<sup>28</sup>, signifying its importance:

*«Say: “He is God, the One. God, the Eternally Self-Subsisting. He does not beget nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him.”»* (QUR’ĀN 112:1-4).

## THE SEVEN AFFIRMING ATTRIBUTES

Once the false conceptions have been negated, we affirm seven principal attributes of perfection that are necessary qualities of God. They are called the affirming attributes (*ṣifāt al-maʿānī*):

**1 LIFE** (*ḥayāt*)

He is the Living, eternally characterized by the attribute of Life which has no beginning and no end. He says: *«God! There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternally Self-Subsisting»* (QUR’ĀN 2:255).

*«And put your trust in the Living who never dies»* (QUR’ĀN 25:58)

**2 POWER** (*qudra*)

He is the Powerful, possessing the attribute of Power through which He creates and annihilates, bringing things into existence or placing them back into non-existence. He says: *«God is the Creator of all things, and He is the Guardian and Disposer of all affairs»* (QUR’ĀN 39:62).

“Say: “He is God, the One. God, the Eternally Self-Subsisting. He does not beget nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him. ” —QUR’ĀN 112:1-4

《Truly, God has power over all things》  
(QUR’ĀN 2:20)

### 3 KNOWLEDGE (‘ilm)

He possesses the attribute of perfect and all-encompassing Knowledge. He is the All-Knowing from Whom nothing is ever hidden or unknown. He says: 《And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. None but He knows them. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf falls but with His knowledge》 (QUR’ĀN 6:59).

《And God has knowledge of everything》  
(QUR’ĀN 4:176)

### 4 WILL (irāda)

He possesses the attribute of Will, by which He specifies each and every possibility. Non-existing possibilities cannot enter into existence unless He first wills it. He says: 《Your Lord creates what He wills and chooses. Not for them is the choice》 (QUR’ĀN 28:68).

《We only say to a thing, when We want it: “Be,” and it is》 (QUR’ĀN 16:40)

### 5 HEARING (sama’) and

### 6 SIGHT (baṣar)

He is the All-Hearing, possessing the attribute of Hearing without the need for ears or sound. Likewise, He is the All-Seeing, possessing the attribute of Sight without the need for eyes or any other means of perception. Nothing escapes His Hearing

and His Sight. He says: 《There is nothing whatsoever like unto Him, and He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing》 (QUR’ĀN 42:11).

### 7 SPEECH (kalām)

He possesses the attribute of Speech. His Speech is beginningless and eternal, without resembling the speech of created things in any way. His divine Speech is not characterized by sound, letter, or voice. The words of the Holy Qur’ān indicate some of this eternal Speech. He says: 《And if all the trees on earth were pens and the sea with seven more seas were to supply it with ink, the words of God could not be exhausted》 (QUR’ĀN 31:27).

## LIVING WITH THE MERCIFUL

《God is the light of the heavens and the earth》 (QUR’ĀN 24:35)

Although He may at times seem distant and far in His transcendence and utter majesty, God is also near and intimately involved with His creatures.

Out of His mercy and kindness He sustains all of creation and nurtures it. The Prophet ﷺ said: “When God created the creation He wrote above His Throne: ‘Verily, My Mercy prevails over My wrath.’”<sup>29</sup>

Those traveling on the path of Islam will see His acts manifested all around them in beauty. With this awareness they do not feel alone, for He says: 《We surely created man and We know what his soul

“Faith has over seventy branches. The highest of them is the saying: ‘lā ilāha illā Allāh’; the lowest of them is the removal of harm from the road; and modesty is a branch of faith.”

—THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

whispers to him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein) (QUR’ĀN 50:16).

﴿And He is with you wherever you are﴾ (QUR’ĀN 57:4)

He watches over His servants out of divine concern and pure generosity, directing His help towards each particular

person as He wills. He says: ﴿When My servants question you about Me, I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when He prays to Me﴾ (QUR’ĀN 2:186).

In return, each traveler on the path turns in gratitude to the Lord, worshipping Him sincerely out of a realization of servitude before His greatness.



With this deeper understanding of God, let us continue on the journey towards a greater awareness of the realities around us by examining the second pillar of Iman.



## 9

# BELIEF IN THE ANGELS

## SERVANTS OF GOD

In addition to those of faith who travel on the path along with us, there are other beings that worship God. The universe is a dynamic arena filled with different forms of sentient life, some of which are visible and others that are hidden from our sight.

One of the matters of the unseen world that the noble Prophet ﷺ conveyed to us is the existence of certain celestial beings: creatures made of subtle light normally invisible to the human eye, yet capable of assuming various noble forms.

They are the angels, pure and genderless and free of physical needs. As obedient servants they carry out the command of God whenever they are ordered and they are actively engaged in praising their Lord, day and night.

Some angels have the honor of carrying the divine Throne while others circle around it, glorifying God and praying for the believers' forgiveness, as stated in the Qur'an: *«Our Lord! You embrace everything in Your mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who repent and follow Your way: and preserve them from the torment of Hell!»* (QUR'ĀN 40:7).

Other angels are sent to convey specific signs and messages from their Lord to certain individuals. There are others still who travel through the earth, attending the gatherings wherein God's name is mentioned and remembered, and not leaving until the sessions are complete.

## SOME SPECIFIC ANGELS

Although they are part of the unseen in which the Muslim believes, angels are nonetheless actively involved in human affairs and they perform several important roles in human lives.

Chief among the angels is Gabriel (Jibrīl) ؑ. He is of the noblest ranks and is the Angel of Revelation, who brought the Qur'an from the Almighty to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. It was he whom the Prophet ﷺ saw standing astride the horizon in every direction in his angelic splendor, announcing: "O Muḥammad, you are the Messenger of God, and I am Gabriel."

Another angel, mentioned by name in the Qur'an, is Michael (Mikā'il) ؑ. He sends rain and sustenance according to God's decree. When the Last Day arrives, it will be the angel Israfil (Israfil) ؑ who blows a mighty blast on the Horn to signify the end of the world and the beginning of the final Judgment.

Riḍwān ؑ is the angel who oversees Paradise, guarding its gates against those unauthorized to enter, while another angel, named Mālik ؑ is the grim overseer of the inferno of Hell, strong and severe in his responsibility.

Watching over each person in this worldly life are two angels called Raqīb ؑ and 'Atīd ؑ, noble scribes who faithfully

“God has angels who travel the pathways and by-ways seeking out the people of remembrance. When they find people remembering God, the Mighty and Majestic, they call out to one another...” —THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

witness and record the good and bad deeds of each individual.

As for those whose allotted time on earth has ended, Azrael (ʿAzrāʾīl) ﷺ, the unswerving angel of Death, comes to seize their souls whether or not they are ready to depart. Then the angels, Munkar ﷺ and Nakīr ﷺ visit them in their graves to question them about their Lord, their

religion, and the Prophet they followed. That questioning will serve as a prelude to the greater and more intense questioning still to come on the Day of Judgment.

As can be seen with all of these roles and tasks, the angels form an integral part of our inner and outer experiences as they accompany us throughout our lives.

ANGEL	ROLE
Gabriel ﷺ	Angel of Revelation
Michael ﷺ	Angel of Rain and Sustenance
Israfil ﷺ	Angel responsible for blowing the Horn on the Last Day
Riḍwān ﷺ	Angel that oversees Paradise
Mālik ﷺ	Angel that oversees Hell
Raḳīb ﷺ	Angel that records good and bad deeds
ʿAtīd ﷺ	Angel that records good and bad deeds
Azrael ﷺ	Angel of Death
Munkar ﷺ	Angel that questions people in the grave
Nakīr ﷺ	Angel that questions people in the grave

*With this greater awareness of the world beyond our immediate vision, let us now reflect upon the means by which God guides His servants to His eternal Truth by examining the third pillar of Iman.*

## 10

# BELIEF IN THE REVEALED BOOKS

## DIVINE REVELATIONS

At different stages throughout human history, God communicated with humanity through His chosen Messengers ﷺ. He gave different groups of people books of guidance appropriate for their time and place to lead them successfully through life towards the Final Abode.

God says: *«Now there has come to you light from God, and a clear Book whereby God guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace [and safety], and leads them out of darkness, by His permission, into light, and guides them to a straight path»* (QUR'ĀN 5:15-16).

Although clothed in language and detail that reflected each people, these sacred Books laid out a path by which each group could travel in the shared common truth: that there is no divinity worthy of worship except God. He says: *«And We never sent a Messenger except with the language of his people, that he might make [the message] clear for them»* (QUR'ĀN 14:4).

Since all of these scriptures originate from the same source in the heavenly archetype, Muslims recognize in their words the authentic flashes of divine revelation. But this



“Surely this Qur’ān guides to that which is most upright, and gives good tidings to the believers who do good works that theirs will be a great reward.”

—QUR’ĀN 17:9

REVEALED SCRIPTURES	THE PROPHET TO WHOM IT WAS SENT
Torah	Prophet Moses ﷺ
Psalms	Prophet David ﷺ
Gospel	Prophet Jesus ﷺ
Qur’ān	Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

recognition extends only to the scriptures in their original forms, for much has been lost and even altered by human hands since the time of their initial revelations.

Many Books were revealed, among which four are known by name: the Torah sent to Moses ﷺ, the Psalms sent to David ﷺ, the Gospel sent to Jesus ﷺ, and the Qur’ān sent to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Unlike previous scriptures however, the Qur’ān has been preserved and will remain unchanged until the end of time, as the Almighty declares: *«We have indeed sent down the Remembrance, and We shall preserve it»* (QUR’ĀN 15:9).

## THE WORD OF GOD

As the last and final scripture sent to all of humanity until the end of time, the Qur’ān renews the message of divine Unity and abrogates the Books and revealed laws that came before it.

The All-Merciful says: *«O mankind! There has come to you a counsel from your Lord, and a healing for what is in*

*the breasts, and a guidance and a mercy to the believers»* (QUR’ĀN 10:57).

Like a flash of lightning that illuminates the darkness, this noble scripture containing the word of God was first brought down at His command by the Angel Gabriel ﷺ to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ on the Night of Destiny in the Prophet’s ﷺ fortieth year.

Thereafter it was revealed in gradual stages over a period of twenty-three years as a source of guidance and admonishment in a pure and moving Arabic. God says: *«Thus We have sent this down as an Arabic Qur’ān, and displayed in it some of the warnings, so that they may perhaps take heed, or may renew their remembrance»* (QUR’ĀN 20:113).

As the inimitable miracle vouchsafed to the Prophet ﷺ, the Qur’ān challenges listeners with its unmatched style, meanings, and language. Its chapters are perfectly arranged and its verses are signs pointing to creation, the end of time, and the visible and unseen worlds.

“Thus We have sent this down as an Arabic Qur’ān, and displayed in it some of the warnings, so that they may perhaps take heed, or may renew their remembrance.”

— QUR’ĀN 20:113



The Living says: *«And this is a blessed Book which We have sent down. So follow it and fear God, that you may find mercy»* (QUR’ĀN 6:155).

Out of respect for its tremendous sanctity, those around the Prophet ﷺ purified themselves with ablution before touching the sacred Qur’ān. Some of them wrote down sections, while others made an effort to engrave it on their hearts by memorizing it in the Prophet’s ﷺ presence with meticulous accuracy. God says: *«And We have made the Qur’ān easy to remember, but will anyone take heed?»* (QUR’ĀN 54:17).

There were countless souls who carried in them the sacred text and confirmed the authenticity of its written verses in the Prophet’s presence ﷺ. Ever since then it

has been preserved and transmitted from generation to generation without a single change, through an unbroken chain of certified masters trained in its memorization and recitation.

Over time, a tradition emerged whereby many became great scholars who devoted their lives to expounding upon the inner and outer meanings of this most comprehensive of books. In the process, many important commentaries on the Qur’ān were produced to help the faithful access its innumerable treasures.

The All-Powerful said: *«And We have revealed the Book to you, an explanation of all things, and guidance and mercy, and good news to those who submit»* (QUR’ĀN 16:89).

“*The seeker is not a true seeker until he is able to find in the Qur’ān everything he desires.*”

—SHAYKH ABŪ MADYAN

## THE QUR’ĀN IN OUR LIVES

Those who nurture a connection with the Qur’ān will discover an ocean of benefits through pondering and reflecting upon its meanings. They will feel personally addressed and moved to their very souls by the august majesty of He Who revealed it.

The Almighty declares: *«If We had caused this Qur’ān to descend upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of God. Such are the examples We set forth to people, so that they may reflect»* (QUR’ĀN 59:21).

Reading the Qur’ān is an act of worship that involves the eyes, the tongue, and the ears. The eyes gain their share of worship by looking at the Qur’ānic text; the tongue by reciting it; and the ears by listening to its melodious recital.

It is advisable for you to learn Arabic, the language of this revelation. Understanding Arabic will enable you to read the words of your Maker with deeper appreciation. You should also seek, if possible, a qualified Qur’ān teacher to perfect your pronunciation and recitation.

Both of these goals may be challenging but they will be a priceless treasure once

attained. The All-Knowing says: *«Surely this Qur’ān guides to that which is most upright, and gives good tidings to the believers who do good works that theirs will be a great reward»* (QUR’ĀN 17:9).

Although the Qur’ān in its original Arabic is the one and only Qur’ān for all Muslims everywhere and for all times, translations of its meanings into other languages are widely available. These can be very useful in helping you draw upon the riches of the Qur’ān on a regular basis, even if it is only a little each day. The early morning hours in particular are a special time for reading, as the All-Seeing says: *«For the recital of the Qur’ān at dawn is ever witnessed»* (QUR’ĀN 17:78).

With its inspiring moral and spiritual ideals, the Holy Qur’ān forms a central part of every Muslim’s life. It guides to a life of balance, peace and happiness. The Prophet ﷺ said: “It is a clear light, a most beneficial cure, a protection for the one who holds firm to it, and a way of salvation for the one who follows it.”<sup>30</sup>

The Prophet himself, our perfect model ﷺ, embodied the Qur’ān in his own life to such an extent that when his wife ‘Ā’isha ؓ was asked about him, all she said was: “His character was the Qur’ān.”<sup>31</sup>

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*With a sacred book to guide us along the way, let us now turn our attention to the fourth pillar of Iman, belief in the noble Messengers chosen by God to bring us revelations.*

## 11

# BELIEF IN THE MESSENGERS ﷺ

## THE NOBLE GUIDES

Many have traveled this path before us. Chief among them are the pure and noble souls sent by the All-Merciful to different communities and nations. These Messengers ﷺ knew best what the journey entailed and they bore a message from their Lord to call people to the truth and guide them along the way.

Throughout history, every nation was sent its own Messenger. God, in His mercy and justice, does not punish a people until they have been given the chance for guidance. Those who have not received the divine message are excused while those who willfully reject or deny the message are taken to account.

God says: *«For every nation there is a Messenger. And when their Messenger comes, justice is done among them; they are not wronged»* (QUR'ĀN 10:47). He also says: *«Nor do We punish until We have sent a Messenger»* (QUR'ĀN 17:15).

The Messengers ﷺ were sent to people in their own language, yet they all bore the same essential message. God says: *«We have raised in every nation a Messenger, [proclaiming:] “Worship God and avoid false gods!”»* (QUR'ĀN 16:36).

And He says: *«We sent no Messenger before you, but that We revealed to him: “There is no god but I, so worship Me!”»* (QUR'ĀN 21:25).

Although they bore a divine message, the Messengers ﷺ were nonetheless human beings who ate food, required sleep, married, had children, grew old, and passed away like all other human servants of God. The Majestic says: *«And We never sent Messengers before you but who did eat food and walk in the markets»* (QUR'ĀN 25:20).

However, each of these chosen men possessed certain essential characteristics in their special role as Messenger. They are:

- 1 Truthfulness (*ṣidq*)
- 2 Trustworthiness (*amāna*)
- 3 Intelligence (*faṭāna*)
- 4 Conveyance (*tablīgh*)

They were truthful and did not lie. They were trustworthy, divinely protected from sin, and did not betray their trust. They were highly intelligent and free of repulsive traits or features. They also conveyed their messages completely to their people.

Many Prophets and Messengers are mentioned in the Qur'ān. A Prophet is one who receives a revelation, while a Messenger is one who receives revelation and a command to convey it to others. Twenty-five Messengers are explicitly named in the Qur'ān and many others were sent who remain unnamed. God says: *«And Messengers We have mentioned to you before and Messengers We have not mentioned to you»* (QUR'ĀN 4:164).

“*And Messengers We have mentioned to you before and Messengers We have not mentioned to you.*” — QUR’ĀN 4:164

It is part of Iman to believe in and affirm all of these noble guides, whose names are listed at the side, beginning with the first human, Prophet Adam ﷺ, through the succession of Messengers ﷺ and culminating with the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, the last and final Messenger.

## THE SEAL OF PROPHECY

The Prophet ﷺ said that prophecy is like a house, of which he was the last brick that completed it. He ﷺ is the Seal of the Prophets. The Almighty says: *«Muḥammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets»* (QUR’ĀN 33:40).

As the last and final Messenger, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was not sent to a specific group of people but to all of humanity; a mercy from the All-Merciful, who says: *«And We have only sent you universally to all people as a herald and a warner»* (QUR’ĀN 34:28). The Revealed Law which he ﷺ brought completes what came before it, confirms or abrogates previous laws, and remains valid until the end of time for all people.

In addition to being sent to teach people the Qur’ān and guide them to a balanced and God-centered way of life, he ﷺ purified them of their bad habits and previous false beliefs. Furthermore, he ﷺ brought wisdom and came to complete good character with his noble example for those who aspire to follow his path.

## NAMES OF PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS ﷺ

Muḥammad ﷺ

Jesus (‘Īsā) ﷺ

John (Yaḥyā) ﷺ

Zacharias (Zakariyyā) ﷺ

Elisha (al-Yasa’) ﷺ

Elias (Ilyās) ﷺ

Jonah (Yūnus) ﷺ

Ezekiel (Dhū al-Kifl) ﷺ

Job (Ayyūb) ﷺ

Solomon (Sulaymān) ﷺ

David (Dāwūd) ﷺ

Moses (Mūsā) ﷺ

Aaron (Hārūn) ﷺ

Shu‘ayb ﷺ

Joseph (Yūsuf) ﷺ

Jacob (Ya‘qūb) ﷺ

Isaac (Ishāq) ﷺ

Ishmael (Ismā‘il) ﷺ

Abraham (Ibrāhīm) ﷺ

Lot (Lūṭ) ﷺ

Ṣāliḥ ﷺ

Hūd ﷺ

Noah (Nūḥ) ﷺ

Enoch (Idrīs) ﷺ

Adam ﷺ

[Above] The twenty-five Messengers mentioned by name in the Qur’ān



“*And We did not send you except as a mercy to the worlds.*”

—QUR’ĀN 21:107

God confirms the Prophet’s lofty and beautiful character ﷺ, saying: *«In the Messenger of God you have a good example for he who hopes in God and the Last Day and remembers God much»* (QUR’ĀN 33:21). He also says to the Prophet ﷺ: *«And indeed, you have an exalted standard of character»* (QUR’ĀN 68:4).

## THE PROPHETIC WAY

As the best of His creation, God loves the Prophet and blesses him ﷺ. He says: *«Indeed, God and His Angels send blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe! Send abundant blessings and salutations upon him»* (QUR’ĀN 33:56). So in addition to believing and affirming everything the Prophet ﷺ brought as true, Muslims invoke peace and blessings on him.

Muslims revere the Prophet ﷺ and seek to emulate his example in how he lived and acted. Many Muslims of the early generations of Islam traveled great distances and for long periods of time just to be in his presence and learn from him ﷺ. His Companions would record and memorize the things he said and did however insignificant they seemed to be. They also made note of what he approved and disapproved, whether tacitly or overtly. These records, called ḥadīth, were preserved and passed on from generation to generation to preserve the Prophet’s Sunna ﷺ.

Over time, many great Muslim scholars collected these ḥadīth and tested their

authenticity, producing important and well recognized collections of ḥadīth that illustrate the various aspects of the Prophet’s life ﷺ. The most famous of these collections include those by Imam Mālik, Imam al-Bukhārī, Imam Muslim, and Imam al-Tirmidhī.

As the Qur’ān is God’s direct guidance to His servants, the Prophet’s Sunna is the living example of how to understand and practice this guidance in our daily lives. For example, in the Qur’ān God commands the believers to pray, but it is through the Prophet’s living example that the exact details of how to pray are made clear.

Together, the Qur’ān and the Prophetic Sunna, along with *ijmā’*<sup>c</sup> and *qiyās*, form the main sources of Islamic Law.

## PROPHETIC BIOGRAPHY (SĪRA)

Although the ḥadīth reports may include what the Prophet ﷺ said and did, they may not include the full context in which they occurred. This could cause non-experts to misunderstand the Prophet ﷺ and misconstrue his noble teachings. The full context of the Prophet’s teachings ﷺ is found in the many Prophetic biographies (*sīra*) that speak of his life ﷺ. Many biographies of the Prophet’s life ﷺ were written throughout the ages and in various languages. One of the most famous biographies from which most draw their inspiration is the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām. The *sīra* sheds light

“*And We preferred some of the Prophets above others.*”

—QUR’ĀN 17:55

on the Prophet’s beautiful life ﷺ and provides many important lessons for the Muslim community.

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was born in the city of Mecca of a noble lineage in about 570 AD. His father passed away just before he was born and his mother passed away when he was about six years old. Thus from an early age he became an orphan and was raised first by his grandfather and then by his uncle Abū Ṭālib. The Prophet ﷺ was handsome, of medium height, and slim with broad shoulders. His eyes were large with long lashes; his hair and beard were thick and dark, slightly curled. There was a light and radiance in his face from his aquiline nose to his wide and finely shaped mouth.



[Above] The Prophet’s Mosque ﷺ in Medina where he now rests

His people knew him for his noble character and truthfulness. He ﷺ was called al-Amīn, or the Trustworthy, even before receiving the revelation. He ﷺ also had a reputation for being reliable and was valued for his advice and intelligence.

The Prophet ﷺ was warm and welcoming and was often seen with a smile on his face. He ﷺ was gentle to his family. As a husband, he sought to treat his wives kindly and fairly, and he often helped them around the house. He taught his Companions: “The best of you is the best towards his wife, and I am the best of you towards my wives.”<sup>32</sup>

As a father, the Prophet ﷺ loved children and would play with them. He would even allow his granddaughter Umāma to sit on his shoulders while he prayed. He was sensitive and compassionate to the needs of others. Once when visiting a home, he saw a little boy sitting with a sad expression on his face. Upon finding out that the little boy’s pet parrot had died, the Prophet ﷺ sat and consoled him.

As he began to call others to Islam, the Prophet ﷺ suffered insults and opposition from those who rejected his message. Throughout his struggles he remained patient and continued to treat his enemies well. He was eventually given permission by God to leave Mecca and immigrate to Medina. But even after his victorious return to Mecca ten years later, he did not take revenge on his opponents but rather he treated them with generosity.

“That you may believe in God and His Messenger, and may honor him and may revere him and may glorify Him at early dawn and evening.”

—QUR’ĀN 48:9

In Medina the Prophet ﷺ became the leader of a quickly growing community. He was supported by the Muslims of Medina, known as the *Anṣār* (the Helpers) ﷺ, who welcomed him and put themselves and their possessions at his service. After a lifetime of successfully conveying his message and teaching his followers by example to submit themselves wholeheartedly to God, the Prophet ﷺ passed away at the age of sixty-three. He left behind him the Qur’ān, the example of his life in the Sunna, and the effects of his love and companionship in the believers who continued on after him.

The political leadership of the Muslim community thereafter fell upon his closest companion, Abū Bakr ﷺ, who was also the father of the Prophet’s wife, ‘Ā’isha ﷺ.

Abū Bakr ﷺ was pious and had been one of the earliest of the Prophet’s followers. He led the Muslim community through its first years after the Prophet’s death and was followed in turn by ‘Umar ﷺ, ‘Uthmān ﷺ, and ‘Alī ﷺ, all pious and longtime Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. These four are remembered as the Rightly-Guided Caliphs ﷺ. Under them the Muslim community expanded and was able to continue the Prophet’s mission of calling others to the path.

## LOVING THE PROPHET ﷺ

One of the surest signs of Iman is love for the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Love for the Prophet ﷺ is the heart’s attachment to him and yearning to be with him in the Hereafter. The Prophet ﷺ remarked: “None of you will truly believe until I am more



[Above] Pilgrims make their way up the Mountain of Light to the cave of Hira where the Prophet ﷺ was visited by the Angel Gabriel ﷺ with the first verses of the Qur’ān

“Now there has come to you a Messenger, from among yourselves; grievous to him is your suffering; anxious is he over you, gentle to the believers, compassionate.”

—QUR’ĀN 9:128

beloved to him than his own self, his family, and all of humankind.”<sup>33</sup> The Companions ﷺ of the Prophet ﷺ loved him dearly and openly expressed their love for him ﷺ. One of them, Thawbān ﷺ, loved the Prophet ﷺ so much that he could not bear to be parted from him. One day he met the Prophet ﷺ, who said that his face had changed color. Thawbān replied: “O Messenger of God! I am neither suffering from an illness nor an ailment; but rather whenever I go without seeing you I miss you so severely until I finally meet you. Then I thought of the Hereafter, and I fear that I will not see you there, for you will be taken up to the Prophets; and if I enter Paradise, I shall occupy a station

lower than yours, and if I do not enter Paradise I shall never see you again!” Not long after his remarks, God revealed: ﴿And those who obey God and the Messenger will be with those whom God has blessed among the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous﴾ (QUR’ĀN 4:69).<sup>34</sup>

To know the Prophet ﷺ is to love him. To know him one should read about his beautiful life (*sīra*), learn the exact descriptions of his physical appearance, emulate his noble traits, and most importantly, keep company with pious people who embody and reflect his beautiful character ﷺ.



Following in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ, we now continue on the path to the fifth pillar of Iman to take a glimpse of the events that will occur at the end of time.

## 12

**BELIEF IN THE LAST DAY****THE END OF TIME**

There will come a time when those on earth will experience a succession of trials and calamities on a scale never seen before. Bonds between people will dissolve and corruption will spread across the land. The earth will be afflicted with tremors and the Sun will rise from the west as an ominous sign of what is to come.

Children will revolt against their parents and a servant will give birth to her mistress. Knowledge will be taken away from human hearts and ignorance will prevail.

Transgressions will be committed openly as values are inverted and right appears wrong while wrong appears right.

Those holding onto the path of Islam will recognize these ordeals as being some of the signs of the Final Hour foretold by the Prophet ﷺ. At that time, anyone with even an atom's weight of Iman will succumb to a divine wind so that only the corrupt will remain on earth. Then in the midst of all the chaos and rampant abuse, a mighty blast from the Horn of Isrāfīl ۞ will cause everything to die, signaling the arrival of the Day of Judgment.



“It is a day when hearts will be agitated, while eyes will be downcast.”

—QUR’ĀN 79:8–9

## THE JOURNEY TO THE GRAVE

Before that time comes, everyone should be busy preparing for the Last Day, firm in their conviction that the world through which they travel will not abide forever. This earthly life is but a stage along the way and should be used to gather provisions in the form of good works for the next stage that begins at death.

Those entering the gloominess of the grave will experience a frightening constriction. With the earth closing in upon them, they will find that they are empty-handed, for their status and worldly possessions will not follow them into this place but will be left behind on the shores of their previous life. Only their faith and good works will have inner meaning and substance in the unseen world.

Then the two angels, Munkar and Nakīr ﴿﴾, will approach and ask the inhabitants of the graves about their Lord, their religion, and their Prophet.

Through their life of faith and worship, the believers will be equipped with the answers by which they may safely pass their questioning. Their graves will be abodes of delight and spacious meadows from the gardens of Paradise—a taste of what awaits them.

But for those who transgressed and disbelieved, they will be unable to answer the questions correctly, and their graves will be pits from the depths of Hell and they

will be tormented until the coming of the Final Hour.

## THE FINAL RECKONING

After the initial blast, Israfael ﴿﴾ will blow the Horn again and everything will be brought back to life. Then everyone will be gathered, full of fear and anxiety, as they await the final reckoning. The Almighty describes it as a day when *《hearts will be agitated, while eyes will be downcast》* (QUR’ĀN 79:8–9), and *《a day which shall turn children gray》* (QUR’ĀN 73:17).

Each person will be so preoccupied with his or her own predicament that there will be no time for friends or family. The sun will be brought near and its heat will be oppressive, except for the seven types of people whom the Prophet ﴿﴾ mentioned will be shaded by God on the day when there will be no shade but His.

Those seven types are: a just leader; a young person who grew up worshipping God; a person whose heart was attached to the mosque; two people who loved each other for God’s sake; a person who resisted seduction by saying “I fear God!”; a person who gave charity secretly so that his left hand did not know what his right hand gave; and a person who remembered God when alone and whose eyes overflowed with tears.

Finally, everyone will be brought forth individually for the questioning before God, at which time they will be shown their book

“If the Day of Judgment arrives and one of you has a seedling in his hand, then let him plant it if he can before leaving.” —THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

of deeds which Raqīb and ‘Atīd ﷺ had been recording about them. Witnesses will be called to testify and nothing will be hidden. The Judge declares: *«On the day when their own tongues, hands, and feet shall bear witness against them as to what they used to do»* (QUR’ĀN 24:24).

Everyone’s good and evil deeds will then be weighed on the Scale. A person’s actions in life will have their full effect and will either be a source of joy or of regret depending on what he or she did. The Reckoner says: *«Whoever brings a good deed will have better than it’s worth, and will be safe from that day’s terror. And whoever brings an ill deed, such will be flung down on his face in the Fire. Are you being rewarded other than what you did?»* (QUR’ĀN 27:89–90).

Thereafter is the thin, razor-sharp bridge called the *Ṣirāṭ* which spans the abyss of Hell. Those of faith who were quick to obedience will cross the bridge with speed and lightness. Others will struggle slowly across, weighed down by their sins, while some will slip and fall headlong into the abyss below.

## THE RECOMPENSE

Those who make it to the other side will be greeted by the sight of the noble Prophet ﷺ standing by his Pool as he had promised. With his own gracious hand he will serve water from his Pool to his faithful followers as a sign of their special

connection to him ﷺ. Anyone who drinks from this water will never be thirsty again.

Then the Intercession will commence whereby the Most-Merciful will permit the Prophets and those among the righteous believers to seek forgiveness on behalf of others. First among those who will be allowed to intercede will be the Prophet MuḤammad ﷺ himself, whose tireless intercession will save many from the torments of the Fire.

After this long and arduous journey, each person will have arrived at his or her final destination.

Those who followed the Path successfully will be rewarded with the bliss of eternal life in Paradise, while those who rejected the truth and did evil will be requited with the torment of Hell.

God compares these two fates in the Qur’ān: *«The model of the Garden promised to the pious: in it are streams of unpolluted water; and streams of milk whose taste never changes; and streams of wine that is bliss to those who drink it; and streams of pure honey. And there is every kind of fruit for them there, and forgiveness from their Lord. Is that like the state of those who remain in the fire, are given boiling water to drink, and it tears their bowels?»* (QUR’ĀN 47:15).

However, in His mercy, the Most-Forgiving will eventually take out of Hell any

“I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined.”

—ḤADĪTH QUDSĪ

who had even a tiny amount of Iman in their hearts that they may join the others in the noblest of final abodes.

## PREPARING FOR THE LAST DAY

When he was in the world, the Prophet ﷺ gave his followers important advice on how they should prepare for the Final Reckoning. He ﷺ said: “Be in the world as though a stranger or wayfarer, and consider yourself one of the inhabitants of the graves.”<sup>35</sup>

He ﷺ also counseled them to remember death often, calling it the *Ender of Pleasures*. He advised his followers to take their souls to account before they are taken to account. He said ﷺ: “Those who remember death most often, and prepare for it best: they are the intelligent ones who have gained the honor of this world and a noble rank in the Hereafter.”<sup>36</sup>

Reflecting on death helps us to realize our priorities and reminds us of the shortness of

our time here in this world. Contemplating our mortality encourages us to hasten in repentance to God and to actively acquire good works for the Hereafter.

The Reckoner warns: ﴿O you who believe! Let neither your wealth nor your children distract you from the remembrance of God. Those who do so, they are the losers. And spend of that which We have provided you before death comes unto one of you and he says: “My Lord! If only You would reprieve me for a little while, then I would give alms and be among the righteous.” But God reprieves no soul when its term comes, and God is Aware of what you do﴾ (QUR’ĀN 63:9–11).

As the Prophet ﷺ himself said: “What have I to do with the world? The likeness of me and the world is that of a rider traveling on a summer day who found a tree, rested underneath it awhile, and then went on, leaving it behind.”<sup>37</sup>

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*In preparing for the Last Day, we will not only be tested with commands and prohibitions, but also with difficulties and ease. How we respond to the tests is an important part of our Iman and the sixth pillar of Iman.*



## 13

# BELIEF IN DESTINY, ITS GOOD AND ITS EVIL

## EVENTS ON THE PATH

This path that we travel is one of ease. However, each of us will be exposed at various times to ordeals and tribulations that will test our steadfastness.

The trials of life may sometimes seem like random autonomous acts in their outward appearance. However, with the light of Iman they can be traced back to the One, the Manifest and Hidden, Who sent them with His divine wisdom. God is All-Wise and He directs all events in the best of ways.

He says: *«No misfortune befalls in the earth, or in your own persons, but it is recorded in a book before We bring it into being. That is easy for God»* (QUR'ĀN 57:22).

## GOD'S DECREE

Those who understand the divine attributes of perfection will realize that whatever occurs, whether physical or immaterial, is only brought into existence through the Will and creative Power of God in perfect accordance with His all-encompassing Knowledge.

God says about Himself: *«He creates what He wills. When He decrees a thing, He only says to it: “Be,” and it is»* (QUR'ĀN 3:47).

For each of His creatures, the Creator has determined and measured out its allotment, including the length of its life, the provisions it will receive, and what will

befall it of good and of evil. He says: *«He created everything, and then ordained it all in precise measure»* (QUR'ĀN 25:2).

So while outwardly that which comes to a person may appear as good or evil or beneficial or harmful, inwardly it is governed by a divine wisdom that belongs to God alone. God declares: *«He is not questioned about what He does—it is they who will be questioned»* (QUR'ĀN 21:23).

## RESPONDING TO DIVINE DESTINY

Although believers continue to work and strive along the way, they also put their trust in their Lord. They recognize that they cannot deflect the arrows of the divine decree nor can they escape their trajectory since all matters are in God's control.

The believers are carried on mighty currents in the realization that there is no power or ability except through God, and that each person will indeed be tested on the path. The Prophet ﷺ said: “The greatest reward comes with the greatest trial. When God loves a people, He tests them. Whoever accepts this, wins His good pleasure.”<sup>38</sup>

The Almighty says: *«Do people imagine that they will be left alone because they say: “We believe,” and that they will not be tested?»* (QUR'ĀN 29:2).

He also says: *«We shall surely test you with something of fear and hunger, and*

“No misfortune can befall in the earth, or in your own persons, but it is recorded in a book before We bring it into being. That is easy for God.”

—QUR’ĀN 57:22

*loss of property and lives and crops; but give glad tidings to the patient*  
(QUR’ĀN 2:155).

The secret to the divine decree lies in accepting it with contentment. As one of the pious scholars of the past mentioned, the one who is content with the divine decree is like the lover who is pleased with the acts of his Beloved, whether they are sweet or bitter. Whatever may befall the believer, he or she remains constant in prayers and supplication, seeking that which pleases God.

The Prophet ﷺ himself advised others to have patience and contentment and he was the first to demonstrate this in the most graceful of ways during periods of extreme hardship. His beautiful character ﷺ

remains the best example regardless of the difficulties we face; for no one was tested more than the Prophets ﷺ. The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ asked: “O Messenger of God! Who among the people receive the most trials?” He replied ﷺ: “The Prophets, then those who are closest to them, and then those who are closest to them. A servant’s test is commensurate with his level of faith; trials will continue to befall the servant until he is left walking the earth without a single sin.”<sup>39</sup>

Those who submit to God should be grateful during times of ease and well-being. During times of adversity they should bear their ordeals with humble patience in the knowledge that there is no better disposer of their affairs than the Creator of all things.

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*With this understanding of Iman and its pillars, and with the effects from the training of Islam, we move on to the next stage of the journey, Iḥsān, in which we strive to undergo the change necessary to reach the highest levels of spiritual beauty and perfection.*



# IḤSĀN

## (EXCELLENCE)

*“Iḥsān is to worship God as though you are seeing Him, and if you don’t see Him, know that He sees you.”*

—ḤADĪTH OF GABRIEL ﷺ

## 14 OVERVIEW

### THE PATH OF SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE

Thus far we have learned that the path extends itself to the seeker when the tongue affirms and the limbs conform; this is Islam. Advancing forward in the journey begins only when this outward conformity is supported by the convictions of the inward; this is Iman. As for Iḥsān, it is when the heart is illuminated and no longer heedless to the reality of the Manifest (al-Zāhir).

Our perfect guide, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, hinted at two levels of Iḥsān in the Ḥadīth of Gabriel ﷺ. The higher of the two is to travel the path as a witness: “as though you are seeing Him.” If one is unable to attain this, then at the very least one ought to develop an awareness of the omnipresent Witness (al-Shahīd): “and if you don’t see Him, know that He sees you.” The way to this illumination is the way of knowledge, love, and spiritual transformation.

### THE WAY OF KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

The Prophet ﷺ said: “God Most High says: ‘I declare war against he who is hostile to a friend of Mine. My servant approaches Me with nothing more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and My servant keeps drawing nearer to Me with voluntary works until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his

sight with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give to him, and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him.’”<sup>40</sup>

It is a way of knowledge because one must learn what God has “made obligatory upon him” so that one may practice it. It is a way of love because works that are “voluntary” are not performed out of a sense of obligation but rather out of love. It is a way of spiritual transformation because God says: “when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which



“Surely, there is a piece of flesh in the body; if it is sound, the whole body is sound. If it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Know that it is the heart.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks,” all of which is a metaphor for the illuminated awareness of God’s oneness (*tawḥīd*).

Attaining this level of *tawḥīd* and of worship is preconditioned by consistently striving to perform obligatory and voluntary acts of devotion. When these acts of obedience are characterized by high etiquette (*adab*) and sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*) one can be brought into the divine presence and special status of love. God says: *«If you love God, then follow me; for then God will love you»* (QUR’ĀN 3:31).

The heart’s capacity to witness God as if it is beholding Him depends on its purity, as God says: *«It is not the eyes that go blind but it is the hearts in the breasts that go blind»* (QUR’ĀN 22:46).

Just as one’s vision is affected by the slightest foreign particle that enters the eye, the heart’s spiritual insight can become obscured by the slightest blemish that it acquires from blameworthy acts, whether they are outward or inward. But when the spiritual heart is sound and guarded from that which blinds it, then Iḥsān becomes a reality in one’s journey.

## 15 THE HEART AND THE LIMBS

Just as the inward condition of the heart can bring excellence (Iḥsān) to the outward reality of our lives, the outward can evoke positive inward states which in turn bring the light of certainty to our hearts.

The eyes, ears, tongue, stomach, limbs, and the private parts all have a delicate yet direct connection with the heart. If they are governed properly and used in that for which they have been created, they will increase the heart's purity and spiritual perception. But if they are not governed by the dictates of the Revealed Law and are misused, then they will cast a shadow over the heart. Nothing other than the bad deeds performed with one's own limbs will bring about this condition of the heart, as God declares: *«Nay; rather, their own deeds have cast a veil over their hearts»* (QUR'ĀN 83:14).

The Messenger of God ﷺ said: "Verily, when the believer commits a sin his heart is stained with a black dot."<sup>41</sup>

The limbs that God has given us are like a trust temporarily placed in our care. They are gifts that are meant to facilitate a good return back to our heavenly origin. God says: *«...the day wealth and children will be of no avail except for the one who comes to God with a sound heart»* (QUR'ĀN 26:88–89).

Using these gifts to disobey the Giver is the epitome of ingratitude (*kufrān*). And whoever wishes to show gratitude (*shukr*)

must guard his or her limbs and use them only in that which pleases God.

### 1 THE EYES

With the eyes, one witnesses God's wonders and sees the signs of His omnipotence, knowledge, and other attributes of beauty and majesty. The eyes are the primary window to the heart and imagination. Hence, it is obligatory to safeguard our gazes from fornication and from looking at anything prohibited.

### 2 THE EARS

With the ears, the traveler hears the speech of God, the guidance of the Prophet ﷺ, the wisdom of the enlightened, and the elucidation of the scholars. The ears are another important window to the heart and intellect. It is obligatory to safeguard them from listening to profanity, slander, gossip and other forbidden things.

### 3 THE TONGUE

With the tongue, God's name is uttered. With it we communicate with Him and others. The tongue is used to convey good words of counsel, knowledge, and guidance. It is the interpreter of the heart and in turn affects it. Hence, it is obligatory to safeguard it from lying, slander, backbiting, argumentation, boasting, cursing, insulting mockery, and breaking promises.

### 4 THE STOMACH

Via the stomach, whatever is consumed

“*The lustful glance is one of the poisoned arrows of Satan. Whoever forsakes it for fear of God will receive from Him a faith the sweetness of which he will find within his heart.*”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

will make its way through the body and will in turn affect the heart. God has blessed us with good and pure foods to nourish our bodies so we may travel the path swiftly. It is obligatory to safeguard the stomach from unlawful food and drink. The seeker of Iḥsān should stop short of being satiated; for satiation hardens the heart, ruins the intellect, and weakens the limbs, thereby hindering healthy activity.

### 5 THE HANDS

With the hands, each person works, earns, writes, assists, and serves humanity. The work of the hands affects the heart and it is obligatory to safeguard them from abusing others and oneself, from earning an unlawful income, and from doing anything prohibited such as writing slander or spreading lies.

### 6 THE LEGS

The legs facilitate movement and with them we walk upright, work, travel, stand

in prayer, and fulfill the great Pilgrimage (Ḥajj). The legs and where they transport us affect the heart. Hence, it is obligatory to safeguard them from walking to that which is prohibited.

### 7 THE PRIVATES

Through the sacred union of marriage the private parts serve the purpose of procreation wherein the pleasures of intimacy are experienced. How and for what purpose the private parts are used affect the heart. It is obligatory to keep oneself chaste and pure through lawful intercourse within the confines of marriage.

God says: *«Tell the believing men to lower their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. God is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their eyes and guard their private parts, and that they display not their ornaments except what appears of them»* (QUR’ĀN 24:30–31).



## 16

## THE STATES AND TRAITS OF THE HEART

God says: *«Forsake all sin: both the outward and inward»* (QUR'ĀN 6:120)

Traveling the path of Islam not only entails governing the body by the Revealed Law but also governing the heart. Arriving at our destination with spiritual excellence (Iḥsān) is easier when the heart has been guarded from blameworthy traits and beautified by praiseworthy traits. What renders the journey a success is the sound status of the heart.

Our guide and master, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, said: “Verily, in the body there is a piece of flesh which, if sound, the body is all sound. But if it is

corrupt, the body is all corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.”<sup>42</sup>

Although the heart starts out in a neutral state, it can become corrupted when the following impure traits creep in, slowly overtake, and finally occupy it: greed, anger, falsehood, envy, miserliness, ostentation, vanity, pride, malice, love of fame, and love of the world.

For this reason, seekers of Iḥsān must acquire basic knowledge of these blameworthy traits to guard against them. With this basic knowledge, these traits can be identified and replaced with praiseworthy traits such as: recognition of God’s oneness



“If you go astray, return. If you regret, quit. If you do not know, ask. And if you are angry, hold back.”

—AL-HAṢĀN AL-BAṢRĪ

(*tawḥīd*), sincerity, repentance, love of God, longing, fear, hope, abstinence, reliance, restraint, forbearance, patience, gratitude, truthfulness, and contentment. The heart must be continually revisited by these states until they become familiar residents. It is this kind of heart, adorned by beautiful traits, that gives meaning to our actions.

The Messenger of God ﷺ said: “Verily, God does not look to your bodies or to your forms but He looks to your hearts.”<sup>43</sup>

## REPENTANCE

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Verily, God has prescribed excellence in everything.”<sup>44</sup>

The Muslim who continually advances and grows in his or her faith never feels that the struggle is over; for excellence is required in everything. When a firm resolve for change enters the heart it will exhort the traveler to strive and he or she will begin to see the ways of spiritual struggle open up. The Almighty says: *«And those who strive for Us, We will certainly guide them to Our paths. And verily, God is with those who are excellent»* (QUR’ĀN 29:69).

These paths are the prevailing conditions of Iḥsān, which lead one to obedience to God. Spiritual struggle begins with the traveler’s resolve to genuinely and incessantly turn to his or her Lord. This turning, called *tawba* (repentance), is the heart’s turning away from the path of distance to the path of proximity to the divine.

God says: *«Turn towards God, O believers, every one of you, so that perhaps you will have success»* (QUR’ĀN 24:31).

It is obligatory to repent from all sins, inward and outward. It is also obligatory to hasten one’s repentance. There are four conditions that make repentance valid, known as the *four Rs*:

- 1 Remorse
- 2 Refrain
- 3 Resolve
- 4 Return

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Remorse is repentance.”<sup>45</sup> That is because true remorse after committing an act of disobedience helps one to refrain from it and initiates a resolve within the soul to never commit the sinful act again. If the sin involved the right of another person that right must be returned in order for the repentance to be valid.

If the four Rs are fulfilled then one must move forward on the journey and not look back, for the Prophet ﷺ said: “The one who repents from a sin is like the one who has no sin.”<sup>46</sup>

Repeatedly falling into transgression and sin may bring about an overwhelming sense of guilt and cause the traveler to lose hope, yet he or she should never give up. God is All-Merciful and cautions us from despair. He says: *«Say: “O my servants who have been excessive against their own*

“*I am with My servant whenever he remembers Me and whenever his two lips are moved with [mentioning] Me.*” —ḤADĪTH QUDSĪ

*good! Do not despair of God’s mercy. God forgives all sins; He is indeed Forgiving, Compassionate.”* ﴿QUR’ĀN 39:53).

## FEAR (KHAWF) AND HOPE (RAJĀ’)

Fear and hope are prerequisites for the spiritual journey of Iḥsān. They must both be present in the heart and operative in varying degrees.

Fear is the heart’s distress that one may be taken to task for his or her sins and shortcomings either in this world or the next. Fear motivates us to promptly respond to the possibility of being punished. It should become the dominant characteristic of the Muslim who is living in disobedience to God, otherwise, hope should predominate.

The Messenger of God ﷺ said: “He who fears sets off (on the journey) at night. He who sets off at night reaches the destination. Lo! The merchandise of God is expensive. Lo! The merchandise of God is Paradise.”<sup>47</sup>

Hope is the heart’s attachment to the mercy of God while striving to prepare it for the reward. Hope creates an inner attachment to the mercy of God and His help. Hope propels us to move forward

and to continue striving for God’s good pleasure. The Prophet ﷺ said: “If even the unbeliever should realize the extent of God’s mercy, he too, would not lose hope of Paradise.”<sup>48</sup> Hope brings ease and joy, making the journey swift and light.

## PATIENCE (ṢABR)

An essential quality that assists us in reaching our destination is patience. Patience prepares us to deal with unforeseen difficulties.

The Messenger of God ﷺ said: “How amazing is the affair of the believer, for all of it is good! And this is exclusive to the believer. If he attains goodness he is thankful and that is better for him. And if a calamity touches him he is patient and that is better for him.”<sup>49</sup>

Reaching our ultimate destination cannot be realized without patience. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Paradise is surrounded by difficulties and Hell is surrounded by temptations.”<sup>50</sup>

An important element of patience is asserting the will within to obey God and subduing the will within to disobey. Hence, exercising patience is required to both fulfill the commands of God and refrain from His prohibitions.

## 17

## COMPANY AND SURROUNDINGS

No journey is complete without good company. Keeping righteous company will influence our direction and pace on the path. The best companions to have are believers who remember God often and who are compassionate and kind. The Prophet ﷺ described the best people as those whose presence reminds one of God.<sup>51</sup>

The seeker of Iḥsān should minimize company that entangles him or her in useless pursuits or things that distract from goodness and nobility.

The Prophet ﷺ likened good company to a perfume seller. He said ﷺ: “A virtuous companion is like the merchant of musk. Either he will offer you some, or you will

buy it from him, or you will find him pleasant to smell. But an evil companion is like the bellows-blower. Either he will scorch your clothes or you will receive a foul smell from him.”

A gradual adjustment to one’s new lifestyle as a Muslim can help immensely in overcoming past habits and adopting new ones, as can choosing company which positively inspires you and whose speech, action, and spiritual state benefit you.

God says: *«By time, man is indeed in loss, except those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patience»* (QUR’ĀN 103:1–3).



## 18 REMEMBRANCE (DHIKR)

The best companion one can have during the journey is God Himself who says: “I am in the company of My servant as long as he remembers Me.”<sup>52</sup>

The scholars of Ihsān have agreed that the Muslim is rewarded in the Hereafter for worship and good action. Additionally, they have also agreed that experiencing this special divine presence—alluded to in the above ḥadīth—occurs only to someone who invokes God’s name with *adab* (etiquette) and awareness. It is with this kind of *dhikr* that the heart transforms.

The main point of any devotional act is the remembrance of God (*dhikr*). One should increase in the remembrance of God through the *dhikr* with the tongue until the higher realization of *tawḥīd* is attained, namely, “to worship God as if you see Him.”

*Dhikr* is food for the spirit and without it the spirit dies, as the noble Prophet ﷺ said: “The example of the one who remembers God in comparison with the one who does not remember God is that of the living and the dead.”<sup>53</sup>

There are no limits set for *dhikr*, so one may remember Him abundantly at any-time. God says: ﴿O you who believe! Remember God with much remembrance﴾ (QUR’ĀN 33:41).

Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ, a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ and one of the foremost

interpreters of the Qur’ān, said that ﴿much remembrance﴾ means to “remember God at all times possible.” This is also reiterated in another verse that describes the believers as: ﴿Those who invoke God while standing, sitting, and reclining on their sides and those who contemplate the heavens and the earth﴾ (QUR’ĀN 3:191). This verse encourages *dhikr* in all the possible postures a person may find him or herself in.

General *dhikr* can be words of remembrance from one’s own language; however, the *dhikr* taught to us by the Prophet ﷺ should be read in the original Arabic, either aloud or silently, depending on the circumstances. There are many formulas that a Muslim must learn, the best of which is “*lā ilāha illā Allāh.*”

The Prophet ﷺ said “Faith has over seventy branches. The highest of them is the saying: ‘*lā ilāha illā Allāh*’; the lowest of them is the removal of harm from the road; and modesty is a branch of faith.”<sup>54</sup> He ﷺ also said to his Companions ؓ: “Renew your faith!” They replied: “O Messenger of God! How do we renew our faith?” He said: “Increase in saying ‘*lā ilāha illā Allāh.*’”<sup>55</sup>

God says: ﴿Those who believe, and whose hearts find their rest in the remembrance of God—verily in the remembrance of God do hearts find their rest﴾ (QUR’ĀN 13:28).

The following are some formulas one should learn and say frequently:

“The example of the one who remembers God in comparison with the one who does not remember God is that of the living and the dead.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

### SEEKING REFUGE

*A‘ūdhu billāhi minash-shayṭānir-rajīm*  
I seek God’s protection from Satan,  
the accursed

### THE BASMALA

*Bismillāhir-rahmānir-rahīm*  
In the name of God Most Merciful  
and Compassionate

### BLESSINGS AND PEACE UPON THE PROPHET ﷺ

*Ṣalla-llāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*  
God’s blessings and peace be upon him

### SEEKING FORGIVENESS

*Astaghfirullāh*  
I seek God’s forgiveness

### GLORIFICATION

*Subhāna Allāh*  
Glory be to God

### PRAISE

*Al-ḥamdu lillāh*  
All praise is due to God

### THE TAKBĪR

*Allāhu akbar*  
God is the greatest

### DECLARING GOD’S ONENESS

*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*  
There is no god except God

### DECLARING GOD’S POWER

*Lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā billāh*  
There is no might or power except by God

## SENDING BLESSINGS UPON THE PROPHET ﷺ

God the Exalted says: *«Indeed, God and His Angels send blessings on the Prophet. O you who believe! Send blessings and abundant salutations upon him»*  
(QUR’ĀN 33:56).

God sends blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ to ennoble him, honor him, and elevate his rank. The angels send blessings upon him ﷺ in order to be ennobled by praising and mentioning him ﷺ. When we send blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ we are thanking God for the gift of faith in



“*Those who will be sitting in the company of God on the Day of Judgment are the subservient, humble, fearful people who remember God much.*”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

Him and are asking that He bless him and grant him the highest station in paradise. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said: “Indeed, whoever sends one blessing upon me, God shall send ten blessings upon him.”<sup>56</sup> Sending blessings and salutations upon the Prophet ﷺ is a part of our five obligatory prayers and an important means of drawing close to him on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Indeed, those closest to me on the Day of Judgment are those who send blessings upon me the most.”<sup>57</sup> He also said ﷺ: “Adorn your gatherings with blessings sent upon me, for indeed your blessings upon me will be a

light for you on the Day of Judgment.”<sup>58</sup> Increase in your love and attachment to the Prophet ﷺ by sending abundant blessings and salutations upon him. There are many beautiful formulas for sending blessings and salutations upon him ﷺ. Commit a few to memory and make it a habit to repeat them often, especially on Friday.

The Messenger of God ﷺ said: “Invoke blessings upon me abundantly on Friday because it is a day that is witnessed and the angels witness it. As soon as a person invokes blessings on me his invocation is shown to me until he completes it.”<sup>59</sup>







# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

*“Surely your Lord has a right over you, and your soul has a right over you, and your family has a right over you; so give to each that has a right its right.”* —THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

## 19 OVERVIEW

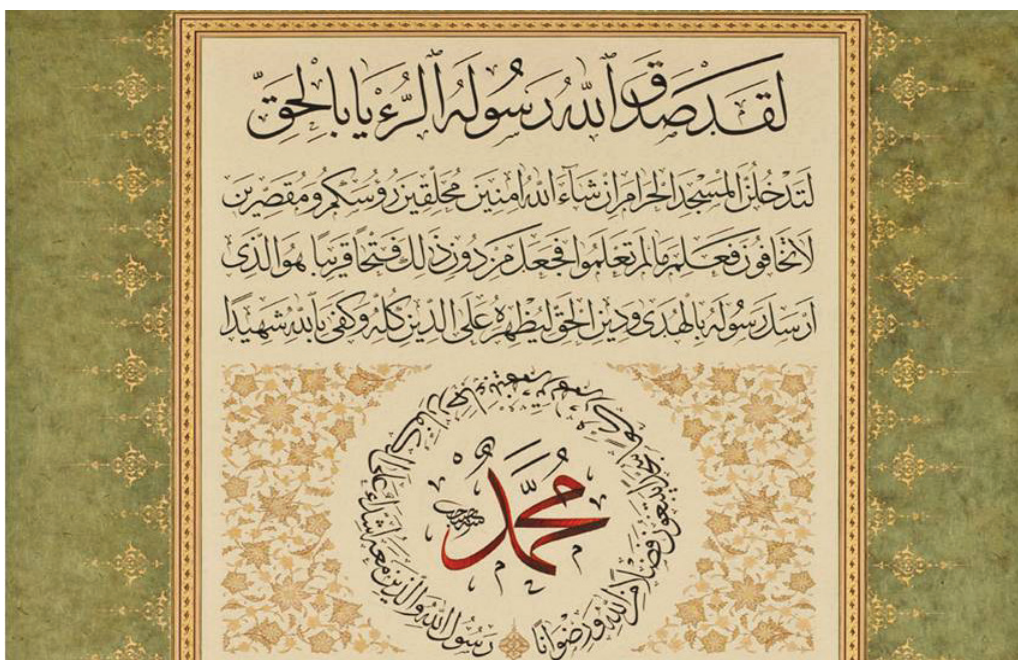
### INTRODUCTION

Islam can be summarized by the Prophet's statement ﷺ: "So give to each that has a right its right."<sup>60</sup> Out of His Justice and Mercy, God gave rights to the creation to ensure their wellbeing. An important aspect of worshipping Him is to fulfill those rights.

The Prophet ﷺ exemplified the role of a well-rounded servant of God. He faithfully and completely fulfilled his responsibilities and carried out the trust given to him by God. He was a supportive husband, a gentle father, an inspiring leader, a steadfast friend, a courteous neighbor, and a humble servant and Messenger of

God ﷻ. In each of his roles, he not only demonstrated his own excellence, but also imparted to his followers the importance of having balance and fulfilling the rights of others.

The Prophet's high standards ﷺ were also manifested in the praiseworthy traits of his noble wives and Companions ﷺ. As the first generation of Muslims, most of them were converts to Islam who faced many of the same challenges you might face as a new Muslim. Their lives and experiences provide us with beautiful examples of how to successfully nurture all of our relationships: with God, ourselves, our families, our communities, our societies, and the world at large.



“God’s right over the servants is that they worship Him and associate nothing with Him, and the servants’ right over God is that He does not punish those who do not associate anything with Him.” —THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

The Prophet ﷺ said: “The religion is sincere advice.”<sup>61</sup> And so, in the spirit of sincere advice, or *naṣīḥa*, this section offers practical tips for you to put into practice. Knowledge of the rights others have over us and fulfilling these rights are essential elements of success on the path.

## THE RIGHTS OF GOD

God’s right over us is the most important right and it is to worship Him alone. The Prophet ﷺ asked one of his young Companions: “O Mu‘ādh! Do you know God’s right over the servants and the servants’ right over God?” Mu‘ādh replied: “God and His Messenger know best.” The Prophet ﷺ said: “God’s right over the servants is that they worship Him and associate nothing with Him, and the servants’ right over God is that He does not punish those who do not associate anything with Him.”<sup>62</sup>

In essence, God’s rights upon His servants encompass the three components of the religion: Islam, Iman, and Iḥsān. God has a right upon us that we believe in Him with certainty and sound knowledge, negating all false conceptions of Him—this is the realm of Iman. He has a right upon our bodies that we use them to worship Him and fulfill that which He has made obligatory upon us—this is the realm of Islam. And He has a right upon our hearts that we rely upon Him, love Him,

hope in Him, and have consciousness of Him—this is the realm of Iḥsān.

It is only by fulfilling God’s rights upon us that we can give everyone and everything their rights in due proportion. Fulfilling the rights of others is in fact fulfilling God’s right over us.

### NAṢIḤA

Grow closer to God by remembering Him often and by learning more about His beautiful Names.

Remember to be patient with whatever befalls you, trusting in God’s wisdom.

Take time when you are alone to pray to God, asking Him from the depths of your heart.

## THE RIGHTS OF THE MESSENGER ﷺ

God’s final Messenger, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the best of creation and the Seal of the Prophets. By virtue of his lofty rank and exalted position, he has many rights over us. Success on the path depends on our learning and fulfilling these rights.

### BELIEVING IN HIM ﷺ

First and foremost, it is the Messenger’s ﷺ right upon us that we believe in him with certainty and affirm that he is God’s final Messenger sent to all humanity. God says: *﴿Believe in God and His Messenger and the light which He revealed﴾* (QUR’ĀN 64:8).

“Surely, you have in the Messenger of God a most excellent example.”

—QUR’ĀN 33:21

### FOLLOWING HIM ﷺ

As our example and guide on the path of Islam, it is the Messenger’s right upon us that we follow his commands and abstain from his prohibitions. God says: *«O you who believe! Obey God and His Messenger»* (QUR’ĀN 8:20). God also says: *«Whoever obeys the Messenger obeys God»* (QUR’ĀN 4:80).

### LOVING HIM ﷺ

Not only is it his right that we outwardly follow his example ﷺ, but it is also his right that we love him more than anyone else. Once a man came to the Messenger of God ﷺ and asked: “O Messenger

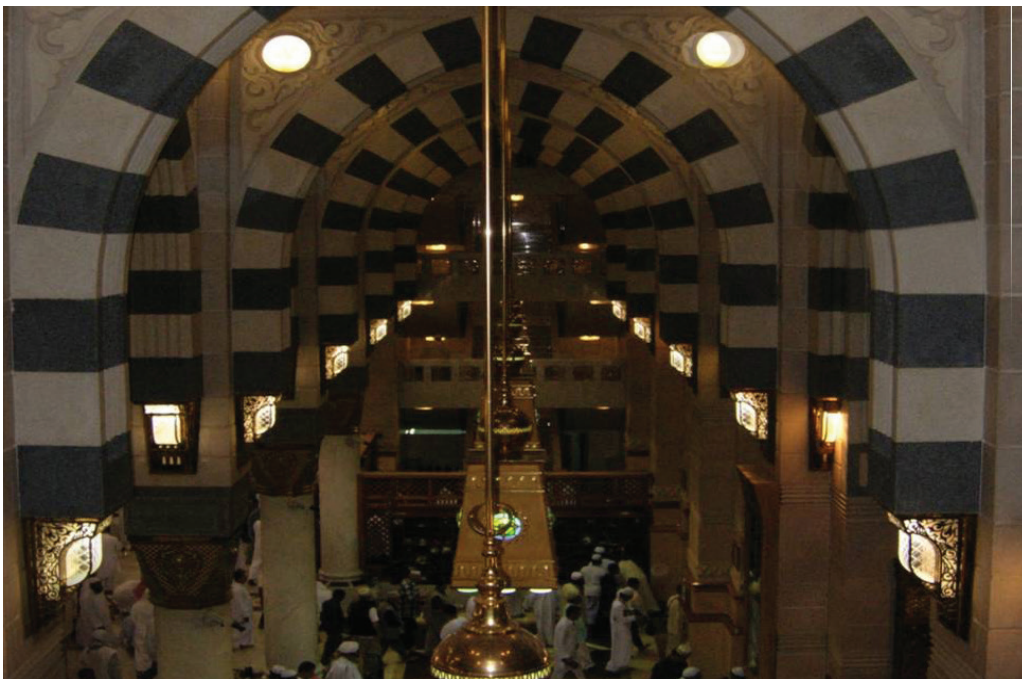
of God! When is the Final Hour?” The Messenger ﷺ said: “What have you prepared for it?” The man said: “I have not prepared for it with a lot of prayer, fasting, or charity, but I love God and His Messenger.” The Messenger ﷺ said: “You will be with the one you love.”<sup>63</sup>

### NAṢIḤA

Learn more about the Prophet’s character, life, and physical appearance by reading his biography ﷺ.

Try to follow the Prophet’s Sunna ﷺ in word and deed and associate with those who embody his noble character.

Send frequent blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ throughout the day, especially on Fridays.



[Above] The interior of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina

# THE SELF: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## BALANCE

Religious enthusiasm, especially when first becoming a Muslim, can cause some people to exert themselves too soon and too fast until they become overwhelmed. Finding a steady pace and balance in this life-long journey is essential to reaching the Final Destination with safety.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “This religion is easy, and no one makes his religion excessively difficult except that it overwhelms him. So remain steadfast, do your best, and be of good cheer.”<sup>64</sup>

## MODERATION

The Prophet ﷺ was once informed of three men who sought to improve their worship by resolving to pray throughout the night without sleeping, to fast the entire year without breaking the fast, and to forgo marriage and sexual relations. He ﷺ went to them and advised against this approach, saying: “By God, I am more observant of God than you and more conscious of Him than you, yet I fast and break my fast, I sleep and pray, and I also marry women. He who does not follow my Sunna is not one of my followers.”<sup>65</sup>

Excessiveness in religious devotion not only opposes the Prophetic way, but it also denies the rights of others. True religious devotion is found in conformity with the Prophet’s Sunna ﷺ and concern for the rights of others in one’s life. God says: *«Thus have We made you a middle nation»* (QUR’ĀN 2:143).

God does not require us to renounce the world or the good things in life to attain piety. Between the clear commands and prohibitions of the Revealed Law, there is a whole range of things that are permissible for us to engage in, provided they are done in moderation.

*«God desires ease for you; He does not desire difficulty for you»* (QUR’ĀN 2:185).

The Prophet himself ﷺ divided his time into three parts so that each area of his life would be given its proper right: one part for devotional worship, one part for his family, and one part to listen to people and fulfill their needs.

## NAṢIHA

Accustom yourself to performing the obligatory acts properly and on time.

Turn your routine day-to-day acts into worship by making noble intentions.

Remember that fulfilling the rights of others is also a part of serving God.

## EATING PURE FOOD

God says in the Qur’ān: *«O you who believe! Eat of the good things We have provided you, and be grateful to God, if it is indeed He whom you worship»* (QUR’ĀN 2:172).

One’s entire being, body, and spirit are trusts from God and have a right to be taken care of. To fulfill its earthly purpose, the body must have its physical needs maintained with moderation.

“Hearts soften just by eating from a lawful source of income.”

—IMAM AḤMAD B. ḤANBAL

Eating pure and nutritious food plays an integral role in nourishing the body and fulfilling its rights. The Revealed Law does not put a restriction on the dietary practices that vary from region to region and culture to culture. Rather, its guidelines allow for flexibility. Most foods are considered permissible (*ḥalāl*) to eat, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, fish, and dairy products. Animal meat, such as beef and poultry, is rendered permissible to eat if the animals are properly slaughtered according to Islamic Law.

As for foods that are impure and impermissible (*ḥarām*) to eat, God says: *«He has only forbidden you carrion, blood, swine, and that over which other than God has been invoked. But there is no sin or blame on those who are compelled by necessity without transgressing or going too far. For God is Forgiving, All-Merciful»* (QUR'ĀN 2:173).

## THE MANNERS OF EATING

When eating, there are several important manners that should be observed. Begin your meal by saying *bismillāh* (in the name of God) and end it by saying *al-ḥamdu lillāh* (all praise is due to God). The Prophet ﷺ also used to sit when eating and used his right hand. He ﷺ advised others to eat what is in front of them rather than reach about for the best foods only. If he didn't like a certain food, he would simply set it aside and would not criticize it.

## NAṢĪHA

Locate a *ḥalāl* shop in your area for access to readily available *ḥalāl* food.

Eat fresh food as much as possible and avoid unhealthy processed food.

Eat with others when possible and share in the blessings of God.

## HARMFUL SUBSTANCES

Besides impermissible foods and their by-products, there are other substances prohibited by the Revealed Law due to the addiction they create and their detrimental effects on the mind and body. A general rule in Islam is that it is forbidden to intentionally harm the self or others. Substances like alcohol and other intoxicants are prohibited since they cause their users to lose their mental faculties and self-control, bringing about many individual and societal ills.

God warns us against these harms: *«Satan only wants to stir up enmity and jealousy among you by means of alcohol and gambling, and to hinder you from praying. So will you stop?»* (QUR'ĀN 5:91).

Drugs are also prohibited as they create crippling long-term addiction, lead to self-destructive behavior, and prevent the remembrance of God. As for tobacco products, their harmful effects are well-known and should be avoided altogether.

“The good of this world and the next is in five character traits: self-contentment, prevention of harm to others, earning lawful livelihood, dressing in a way that shows consciousness of God, and trust in God in every state.”

—IMAM MUḤAMMAD B. IDRĪS AL-SHĀFI'Ī

## CLOTHING AND MODESTY

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Modesty does not bring anything except goodness.”<sup>66</sup> Modesty permeates the life of the believer and reflects in his or her speech, manners, gaze, actions, and clothing.

There is no specific article of clothing prescribed as “Islamic clothing” that must be worn; no set of clothes are considered more Islamic than others since there is a great range and diversity of accepted styles from country to country and culture to culture. You can choose to wear the clothes that are commonly worn in your own society as long as they properly cover your body.

God says: *«O children of Adam, we have sent down to you clothing to cover your nakedness and as an adornment, but the clothing of piety is best»* (QUR'ĀN 7:26).

For men and women this means covering the *‘awra*, which is the minimum parts of the body that should be covered when in the presence of someone of the opposite gender who is not an immediate relative, such as a parent, sibling, spouse, or child. A man’s *‘awra* is the area between his navel and knees, and a women’s *‘awra* is generally the entire body except the face and hands.

### NAṢIḤA

Wear modest clothing for the sake of God alone.

When going out wear clothing that is non-transparent and loose fitting.

Dress neatly and ensure your clothing is always clean and free of impurities.



## 21

# FAMILY RELATIONS

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

Maintaining family ties is a duty and the Prophet ﷺ spoke out strongly against those who sever family relations. He said ﷺ: “There is no sin more deserving of God’s punishment in both this life and the next than oppression and the severing of family ties.”<sup>67</sup>

As a new Muslim, the rights your family has over you are binding. Treating them with courtesy and respect is obligatory.

God says: *﴿And We have entrusted man with the care of his parents: his mother bore him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning was in two years; so give*

*thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the return﴾ (QUR’ĀN 31:14).*

On one occasion, a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him who was most entitled to good treatment. The Prophet ﷺ replied: “Your mother.” When the man asked who was most entitled after that, the Prophet ﷺ repeated: “Your mother.” When asked a third time, the Prophet ﷺ gave the same answer. Only on the fourth time did the Prophet ﷺ say: “Then your father.”<sup>68</sup>

Although some families may initially accept one’s decision to convert, they may not be fully aware of the lifestyle changes that it entails. As a result, there may be



“*The most perfect of the believers in faith is he who has the best character, and the best of you is the best toward his wives.*” —THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

resistance or even hostility from relatives who feel betrayed or bewildered by the visible changes fostered by your new faith.

Enduring these potential trials certainly requires patience and forbearance. We should keep in mind that many of the early Muslims in the Prophet’s time ﷺ experienced great hardships from their families and communities as a result of their conversions. Muṣ‘ab b. ‘Umayr ﷺ, for example, was tied up by his angry mother when he converted. Others, like Bilāl b. Rabāḥ ﷺ, were beaten in an attempt to make them recant their Islam. They all bore their trials with patience, clemency, and steadfastness until God opened a way for them.

In most instances, families can be very understanding if given the time to see the beneficial changes in the life of the new Muslim.

### NAṢIḤA

Avoid arguing over religious issues.

Make an extra effort to show kindness to your parents and demonstrate to them the positive changes Islam has brought to your life.

Obey your parents in matters that do not entail disobedience to God.

## THE SUNNA OF MARRIAGE

The Prophet ﷺ stressed the importance of marriage by describing it as comprising half of a person’s religion. He said ﷺ: “Marriage is my exemplary way;

whoever loves my character should follow my example.”<sup>69</sup>

God says: *«And of His signs is that He created for you spouses from yourselves that you might find rest in them, and He placed between you love and compassion. In this are signs for people who reflect»* (QUR’ĀN 30:21).

God also describes men and women as garments for each other. A husband and wife should cover each other’s faults and weaknesses. They should treat each other with courtesy and good character. The Prophet ﷺ said: “The best of the believers in faith is he who has the best character and is the gentlest towards his family.”<sup>70</sup>

## THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MARRIAGE

Husbands are legally obligated to support their families financially and wives are entitled to keep all of the money they earn. At the same time however, both husbands and wives should take the needs of their families into consideration. Men should help around the house and in the raising of their children, and they should also be sensitive to their wives who are a trust for them. Although both men and women are equal in the rulings of the Revealed Law, a healthy marriage requires that they go beyond their legal responsibilities in order to foster love and good companionship.

“He who marries secures one half of his religion, so let him be conscious of God regarding the other half.”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

The Prophet ﷺ was an active participant in his domestic life. He helped around the house and supported his wives. His first wife was Khadija ؓ, who was fifteen years his senior. He was devoted to her and would often turn to her for advice. She helped him through the difficult early years of his message when he faced the hostility of a pagan Meccan society.



## ADVICE ON GETTING MARRIED

New Muslims generally should wait some time before considering marriage. They should allow themselves time to adjust to their new lives as Muslims without the added complexities and responsibilities of marriage.

Women converts in particular should take their time and approach marriage with caution. They should not rush to accept marriage proposals without proper consultation and consideration. The Muslim community, just like any other community, has members with varying levels of religious observance.

In some cases, new Muslims may have already been married before entering Islam and so their spouses are not Muslims. Such situations require wisdom, sensitivity, and tact. Each individual's case will be different, especially if there are children involved, so it is important to consult with a knowledgeable scholar for further advice.

As for general interactions between men and women outside of marriage, we should keep in mind that Islam's defining characteristic is modesty. The Revealed Law aims to protect people's religion and honor by facilitating marriage and nurturing family. As such, it defines people's relation to each other on the basis of marriage and family ties.

“And of His signs is that He created for you spouses from yourselves that you might find rest in them, and He placed between you love and compassion. In this are signs for people who reflect.”

—QUR’ĀN 30:21

Someone of the opposite gender whom a person cannot marry is called a *maḥram*. Conversely, a non-*maḥram* is any person whom one can marry, even if there is no desire to marry that person, such as a cousin, a brother-in-law, or a sister-in-law.

With *maḥrams* such as a parent or child, one can have the usual day-to-day interactions. Interactions with non-*maḥrams*, however, require one to observe stricter bounds of modesty and appropriate behavior.

Intimate relationships outside of marriage, such as dating, physical touching, or being alone with someone of the opposite gender are impermissible. The Prophet ﷺ warned that non-*maḥram* men and women are not alone except that the Devil is the third of them.<sup>71</sup>

God says: *«Tell the believing men to lower their eyes and guard their private*

*parts. That will be purer for them. God is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their eyes and guard their private parts, and that they display not their ornaments except what appears of them»* (QUR’ĀN 24:30–31).

### NAṢIHA

Study the rights and responsibilities of marriage in Islam.

If you’re a new Muslim woman, find a knowledgeable elder to represent and assist you with potential candidates for marriage.

If you’re a new Muslim man seeking marriage, approach the representative of a potential candidate for marriage.

## CHILDREN

Those fortunate to have children should realize the great responsibility that parenthood brings. Children, both boys and girls alike, have a right to education and

### MAḤRAM FOR A MAN

Mother  
Grandmother (and on up)  
Daughter  
Granddaughter (and on down)  
Sister  
Niece  
Aunt  
Grandaunt (and on up)  
Mother-in-law  
Grandmother-in-law (and on up)  
Wife of his father  
Wife of his son

### MAḤRAM FOR A WOMAN

Father  
Grandfather (and on up)  
Son  
Grandson (and on down)  
Brother  
Nephew  
Uncle  
Granduncle (and on up)  
Father-in-law  
Grandfather-in-law (and on up)  
Husband of her mother  
Husband of her daughter

“Gentleness is not found in anything except that it beautifies it, and it is not removed from anything except that it defiles it.” —THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

a right to learn the obligatory matters of the religion. By fulfilling these rights the believers contribute to the future health of society and are rewarded for their efforts. The Prophet ﷺ reminded people that they will be accountable for those in their care, saying: “Each of you is a shepherd and each of you shall be questioned about his flock.”<sup>72</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ was very considerate of the needs of children. If he heard the cry of a baby while he was leading the group prayer, he would shorten it so the mother could tend to her child and be relieved of her distress.

Once a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and declared: “I have ten children and I never kissed even one of them.” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “He who does not show mercy shall not receive mercy [from God].”<sup>73</sup>

### NAṢIḤA

Be compassionate, patient, and kind to your spouse.

Remember that your children look up to you. Be kind, gentle, and loving and they will love everything that you represent, including your religion.

Think well of your children and you will see that they will strive to meet your opinion of them.



## 22

# THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

## THE SANCTITY OF A MUSLIM

Through the bonds of faith, every believer is owed certain rights and is in turn responsible for fulfilling the rights of others. The Prophet ﷺ described six basic rights that a Muslim has over another Muslim. He said ﷺ: “The believer has six rights over his fellow believer: that he visits him if he is sick; that he attends his funeral if he dies; that he responds to his invitation if he invites him; that he greets him with peace when he meets him; that he blesses him when he sneezes; and that he behaves sincerely towards him in both his presence and absence.”<sup>74</sup>

By categorizing these common courtesies as rights, the Prophet ﷺ set a threshold beneath which no Muslim should fall.

The Prophet ﷺ also stressed the great sanctity of Muslims. He said ﷺ: “The whole of a Muslim for another Muslim is inviolable: his blood, his property, and his honor.”<sup>75</sup> He ﷺ also defined the Muslim as “one from whose hand and tongue people are safe.”<sup>76</sup>

He ﷺ strictly forbade Muslims from intentionally harming one another or doing things that will sow the seeds of enmity and discord between them. He said ﷺ: “Do not envy one another; do not inflate prices one to another; do not hate one another; do not turn away from one another; and do not undercut one another, but be you, O servants of God, brothers. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim: he

neither oppresses him nor does he fail him. He neither lies to him nor does he hold him in contempt. Piety is right here [and he pointed to his breast three times]. It is evil enough for a man to hold his brother Muslim in contempt.”<sup>77</sup>

When the Prophet ﷺ immigrated to Medina he wished to highlight the new-found unity of Islam. One of the first things he did upon arrival was pair the Meccan Muslims and the local Medinan Muslims together in a special bond of brotherhood so they could help each other through the challenges of those early days.

## DEALING WITH OTHER MUSLIMS

Initially you may feel overwhelmed with the unfamiliar customs and nuances of the Muslim community. But keep in mind that the members of the Muslim community are from diverse ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. There is no racial or cultural monopoly on Islam. You belong to it just as much as other Muslims.

The Prophet ﷺ was sent to all of humankind, thus you are not expected to abandon your cultural heritage, language, or ethnic group. God informs us: ﴿O humankind! We created you from a male and a female, and We made you races and tribes for you to get to know each other﴾ (QUR’ĀN 49:13).

Furthermore, this religion does not eradicate the unique cultural practices of each

“O Believers! Be upright for justice, witnesses for God; even if it is against yourselves.”  
—QUR’ĀN 4:135

ethnic group, as long as those customs are good and in conformity with the principles of the Revealed Law.

You may come into contact with some enthusiastic Muslims who are excited to hear about your conversion. Out of their enthusiasm, they may attempt to help you by offering unsolicited advice. Although well-intentioned, their advice may not be accurate or appropriate for your unique situation. Moreover, being bombarded with advice can often cause confusion and anxieties. Prepare yourself to respond tactfully and pleasantly.

## INCREASING THE BOND BETWEEN MUSLIMS

The Prophet ﷺ said: “None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.”<sup>78</sup> By being of service to others and dealing with one another in the spirit of generosity, we can increase the sense of brotherhood and sisterhood between us.

The Prophet ﷺ advised us to greet our fellow believers, regardless of their race and social status, and he recommended the exchanging of gifts. Both of these practices reinforce love between people.

We are further encouraged to visit each other for God’s sake. We should make such visits easy for the host by not staying too long or being too demanding. Hosts on the other hand should be hospitable and see to the needs of their guests, offering refreshments and any other comforts that may ease their stay.

### NAṢIHA

Try to always be first in offering greetings with “*as-salāmu ‘alaykum.*”

Do not look at anyone with suspicion or contempt. Rather, be patient until things become clearer.

Respect and love people for the sake of God and their connection to the Prophet ﷺ.

## SOCIETAL AND CIVIC DUTIES

### LIVING IN NON-MUSLIM SOCIETIES

In addition to being members of the Muslim community, new Muslims also continue to be members of the wider society in which they live. Although they may initially feel a sense of estrangement or confusion regarding their place in a non-Muslim environment, God does not require them to leave or withdraw from such a society. On the contrary, they should interact with society and avoid isolation.

The Prophet ﷺ interacted with Meccan society well before receiving his Prophetic mission. On one occasion he took part in a solemn communal oath to uphold justice for the weak and oppressed. On another occasion he helped in the rebuilding of the Ka'ba, playing an important role in restoring the Black Stone to its walls.

Even after the advent of Islam, the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ continued to live among the non-Muslims of Mecca, trading and interacting with them. The Prophet's wife, Khadīja ﷺ, was a successful businesswoman and many of the other Muslims such as Abū Bakr ﷺ and even the Prophet himself ﷺ were merchants with many business dealings with non-Muslims.

When the Prophet ﷺ eventually sent a group of Muslims to live abroad due to

persecution by hostile elements in Mecca, it was to the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia) that he sent them. There, in the lands of a Christian king, they found refuge and justice. In time, the Muslims in Abyssinia even prayed for the King's victory when he faced external attacks.<sup>79</sup> For them there was no contradiction between the preservation of their faith and good dealings with people of other faiths.

As citizens we generally receive and enjoy many rights and advantages from society. From healthcare and education to resources and public infrastructure, we benefit in many ways. It is a sign of one's ingratitude to receive so much and then hold his or her society in contempt or disown it. The Prophet ﷺ said: "The one who does not show gratitude to people does not show gratitude to God."<sup>80</sup>

Certainly there are aspects of society that one may disagree with. Nonetheless, as Muslims, we are still required to fulfill our responsibilities to society and to our fellow citizens, no matter their faith. It is important that we cultivate the positive traits of humility and mercy and not allow ourselves to be filled with the negative traits of arrogance and hate. We should be of benefit to others and treat them with gentleness and Iḥsān. The Prophet ﷺ said: "The best of people are those of benefit to others."<sup>81</sup>



“God does not forbid you from being benevolent and equitable to those who have neither made war on your religion nor driven you from your homes. Indeed, God loves the equitable.” —QUR’ĀN 60:8

## INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

Those on the path of Islam are encouraged to have good relations with people of all faiths, whether they are relatives, neighbors, co-workers, old friends, or others. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Let him who believes in God and the Last Day either speak good or keep silent; let him who believes in God and the Last Day be generous to his neighbor; and let him who believes in God and the Last Day be generous to his guest.”<sup>82</sup>

Regarding the Prophet’s statement ﷺ: “None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself,” many scholars, such as Imam al-Nawawī, interpreted the word “brother” to include the wider brotherhood of humanity. It is important that we wish goodness for people of other faiths and treat them with courtesy and respect, thereby demonstrating the beauty of Islamic etiquette and manners.

When interacting with people of other faiths, it is perfectly acceptable to invite them to our homes or to accept their invitations. The Prophet ﷺ would

visit his non-Muslim acquaintances, and would inquire about their health and well-being if he had not seen them for some time. In Medina, the Prophet ﷺ lived near a Jewish family and visited and counseled their young son when he fell ill.

As for your non-Muslim friends with whom you associated prior to Islam, you may find the nature of your relationship with them changing due to your new path and lifestyle. Yet, such friends still have rights and you should not simply cut off contact with them. At times it requires tact and self-discipline to maintain old relationships while politely declining to participate in old habits and activities that are prohibited by your faith.

## THE WISDOM OF DIVERSITY

By living together in a society we are exposed to a diversity of people. In our daily interactions we encounter a wide range of differences in race, language, religion, and even social status. Rather than allowing these differences to be sources of conflict and division, we should accept them and see them as manifestations of God’s wisdom and creative power.

﴿And among His Signs is the creation of

“O people! Your God is One and you have a single father, Adam. The best of you is he who is most pious; and there is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab except through piety. ”

—THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

*the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors. Verily, in that are Signs for those who know* ﴿QUR'ĀN 30:22).

The people of piety bear no ill feelings towards their fellow humans. They are sure in their faith and they strive to extend their generosity to everyone as a means of showing gratitude to their Creator.

### NAṢĪHA

Obeys the laws of the land and remembers that you are an ambassador of Islam.

Be dignified and know that self-respect is a part of good character. Do not contribute to fruitless argumentation or debate.

Be aware of the social and economic problems in your society and be a positive force of change.

## 24

# FINANCIAL INTERACTIONS

## SEEKING GOD'S BOUNTY

As integrated members of society, Muslims earn a living wherever they reside. Those who understand the true meaning of reliance upon God interact with the means that He placed before them and they seek financial well-being and economic prosperity from His bounty.

God says: *﴿And from His mercy God has made for you the night and the day to rest therein and to seek of His bounty and that you may be thankful﴾* (QUR'ĀN 28:73).

## SUPPORTING OTHERS

With the right intention, earning a living to support yourself and fulfill the rights of your family is a form of worship. Although the responsibility of supporting a family usually falls on the man, both men and women will be rewarded for their sincere efforts to provide for their families. The Prophet ﷺ said: "You never spend anything but you will be rewarded for it, even the morsel of food that you lift to your wife's mouth."<sup>83</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ also said: "What you feed yourself is a charity for you; what you feed your child is a charity for you; and what you feed your wife is a charity for you..."<sup>84</sup>

## THE NOBILITY OF WORK

By fulfilling one's financial responsibilities to others, earning a living becomes a noble and commendable activity, regard-

less of how much a person may earn or the status he may occupy in society, as long as the work is lawful and done honestly. In Islam, contentment with God is the true wealth and ungratefulness to Him is the true shame.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Successful is he who is guided to Islam, given sufficient provision, and made content by God for what He has given him."<sup>85</sup>

Those who are wealthy should be grateful to God and acknowledge His favors by giving of their wealth and helping others. God says: *﴿For those who give in charity, men and women, and loan to God a beautiful loan, it shall be increased manifold, and they shall have a generous reward﴾* (QUR'ĀN 57:18).

Contentment with God's decree means that one avoids earning income by cheating, stealing, exploiting, and dealing in things that are prohibited in the Revealed Law.

## EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Employers and employees have rights and responsibilities that must be observed. Employees should work hard and fulfill their duties with care, striving to incorporate *Iḥsān* in their work. The Prophet ﷺ said: "God loves that when you do something, you do it with perfection."<sup>86</sup>

Employers are accountable for how they treat their workers. They are commanded to treat them fairly and are prohibited

“I served the Messenger of God ﷺ ten years. He never uttered an expression of disapproval to me. He never asked ‘Why did you do this or why did you not do that.’”

—THE COMPANION ANAS

from cheating them of their wages. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries.”<sup>87</sup>

## DEBTS AND INTEREST

The Prophet ﷺ was very careful to fulfill his trusts and settle his debts. As he was preparing to emigrate from Mecca to Medina, he saw to it that all the things he had been entrusted with for safekeeping were returned to their owners. Likewise, towards the end of his life he ensured that all of his debts were paid off.

Another area of finance to be careful about is interest, which is a fee charged to borrowed money. Interest-based transactions encourage the accumulation of debt and take advantage of people who are in difficult situations. Financial dealings in Islam should be done in the spirit of fairness and contain benefit to the creditor, the debtor, and the society as a whole.

One can and should avoid debts and interest by watching his or her spending habits and by being careful to resist the

modern trends of consumerism and materialism. Those on the path of Islam make do with what they have and spend within their means; they do not go into debt to acquire more than they can afford.

As for those with interest-bearing bank accounts, the interest gained does not belong to them nor can they use it lawfully. Instead, they should look into non-interest bank accounts, if available. God warns against interest and condemns it in the strongest terms. He says: *«O you who believe! Do not consume interest multiplied and compounded; and be conscious of God that you may be successful»* (QUR’AN 3:130).

### NAṢIḤA

Pursue your studies or career with the intention of gaining self-sufficiency.

Bring blessings to your wealth by regularly giving charity to those in need.

Devise a plan to repay any outstanding debts you may owe as soon as possible, even if these debts were acquired before becoming Muslim.

## 25

# NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## A SIGN OF GOD

The connection between man, nature, and the Qur'ān is inherently intrinsic to Islam. The verses of the Qur'ān are called *āyāt*, or signs; and similarly, the wonders and beauties of nature are also called *āyāt*.

God says: *«We shall soon show them Our signs in the furthest regions of the earth, and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth»* (QUR'ĀN 41:53).

As one contemplates God's signs in creation, his or her relationship with nature deepens. For many, this deep appreciation of nature with a reading of its signs becomes a starting point for a transforming relationship with God.

## STEWARDSHIP

As stewards, we are the earth's guardians and caretakers; and although this lofty position gives us added responsibilities, we are not its lord and master. The Prophet ﷺ said: "The world is sweet and green, and verily God has placed you as stewards in it to see how you act."<sup>88</sup>

As guardians and caretakers of the earth, we have the responsibility of using its resources wisely and maintaining the world's delicate ecological balance for the benefit of future generations.

God says: *«The All-Merciful. He taught the recital [Qur'ān], created man, and He*

*taught him expression. The Sun and the Moon follow calculated courses and the stars and the trees bow down; and heaven—He raised it up and set the balance that you transgress not the balance»* (QUR'ĀN 55:1–8).

## CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

God says: *«There is not a moving creature on earth, or a bird that flies with its wings, but they are communities like you (humans)»* (QUR'ĀN 6:38).

In order to fulfill the role of being the earth's guardians, we cannot simply rely on the enforcement of environmental laws: we must also attune ourselves to the divine command and follow the Prophetic example. God warns us of the dangers of over-consumption and greed which lead to both environmental and spiritual degradation. He says: *«Vying for more diverts you until you go to the graves. But you will certainly know; oh, you will certainly know! If only you knew with certain knowledge, you will see blazes; and you will see with the eye of certainty. And then you will, on that day, be questioned about the bountiful things [you enjoyed]»* (QUR'ĀN 102:1–8).

In addition to the environment, other living creatures have rights. The Prophet ﷺ was asked if there is a reward for being good to animals and he answered: "Any good act done to a living creature receives a reward."<sup>89</sup>

“Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people have earned with their own hands, to make them taste some of what they have done, that they may turn back.” —QUR’AN 30:41

He ﷺ told one of his Companions ﷺ of a man who had fetched water from a well to give drink to a thirsty dog on a hot day, and how God rewarded that man and forgave him his sins. He ﷺ also spoke of a woman who had imprisoned a cat until it starved to death, and how she would be accountable for what she had done.

Islam provides us with a balanced and holistic view of the natural environment and offers us the tools for its preservation. By viewing nature as a sacred trust and sign of God’s oneness, we are able to care for it as an act of worship and not as a pursuit of material gain.

### NAṢIḤA

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Purification is half of faith.”<sup>90</sup> Purity should manifest in our dress and appearance as well as our urban areas and natural environment.

Preserve the environment by decreasing your use of non-biodegradable products, and when possible, buy local food in your community.

Reestablish a relationship with the natural environment by taking trips to nature reserves or parks.

## THE JOURNEY AHEAD CONTINUING ON THE PATH

This book has presented the religion of Islam in a broad outline, providing a general map of the way. Although you have taken the first step, it is just the beginning, for this path leads to the eternity of the Hereafter. There is still much to learn, practice, and consolidate in your life as a new Muslim, all of which will require discipline, hard work, patience, perseverance, and most importantly, a longing for God.

As you continue to learn and grow in your faith, you will discover that there are many levels of detail in the Revealed

Law. The fundamentals of the religion, the basics of Iman, the obligatory status of the forms of worship, and the moral and ethical virtues are the subject of universal agreement to which every Muslim must subscribe. Beyond those, however, there are details and secondary issues over which Islamic scholars have disagreed. There is no harm in these disagreements. In fact, such disagreements are a necessary expression of divine wisdom and mercy.

We should respect these scholarly differences because the Prophet ﷺ said: “If an independent scholar (*mujtahid*) makes a



“O son of Adam so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done...”<sup>91</sup>

—ḤADĪTH QUDSĪ

judgment and is correct, he receives two rewards, and if he makes a judgment and is incorrect, he receives one reward.”<sup>91</sup>

In deciding what to study next, you should focus on those duties that are immediately obligatory upon you. As such, you should ensure that you have sound knowledge of the pillars of Iman and know how to correctly perform the daily and re-occurring acts of worship such as the ritual purification, the prayers, and fasting.

Once a firm grounding has been established in these areas, you can then learn about the other obligatory duties as the need arises, such as the Ḥajj, for example. In addition, you can also consider studying topics that will deepen your faith, such as Arabic, Qur’ānic recitation, ḥadīth, and the Prophetic biography ﷺ (*sīra*) and the biographies of his Companions ﷺ.

To help facilitate these next steps, a list of recommended readings has been included at the end of this book to provide some direction. As a new Muslim, you are highly encouraged to attend classes or gatherings on Islam in your local community and contact qualified teachers who can further teach you the main acts of worship with greater detail or answer any questions that you may have.

Finally, the authors and editors of *The Revealed Path* series pray that you benefit from the knowledge and counsel presented in these pages and that you are brought into the company of good people who will assist you towards your destination in this lifelong journey with ease and grace.

﴿O tranquil soul! Return to your Lord pleased and accepted: enter the company of My servants; enter into my garden﴾  
(QUR’ĀN 89:27–30).



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### A

**adab:** Highly refined manners and noble etiquette.

**adhān:** The Islamic call to prayer.

**AH:** See *after Hijra*.

**after Hijra:** The Islamic measurement of years that starts after the Prophet's emigration to Medina; this date system was instituted by ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, the second Caliph.

**amāna:** Trustworthiness.

**Anṣār:** The "Helpers". The Muslims of Medina who welcomed and supported the Prophet ﷺ when he emigrated from Mecca.

**Arafat:** A sacred plain near Mecca where pilgrims gather for the most important part of the Ḥajj.

ʿ**awra:** The parts of the body that must be covered in the presence of the opposite gender.

**āyāt:** The verses of the Qurʾān.

### B

**baqāʾ:** The divine attribute of Endlessness.

**al-Baqīʿ:** The graveyard in Medina wherein the Prophet's family and many of his Companions ؓ are buried.

**Basmala:** The phrase by which Muslims begin daily tasks: "In the name of God the Most Merciful and Compassionate."

**baṣar:** The divine attribute of Sight.

### C

**caliph:** The leader of the Muslim community after the Prophet's death ﷺ.

### D

**dhikr:** The remembrance of God.

**duʿā:** Supplications or prayers.

### E

**Eid:** An annual or semi-annual festival. There are two Eids in Islam.

**Eid al-Adḥā:** The festival commemorating the Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. This Eid falls during the time of Ḥajj.

**Eid al-Fiṭr:** The festival marking the end of Ramaḍān.

## F

**ḥard:** That which is obligatory according to Islamic Revealed Law.

**ḥaṭāna:** Intelligence.

**ḥiṭra:** The natural or inherent state of purity that each person is born with.

## H

**ḥadīth:** A saying or recorded action of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, the second source of Islamic knowledge after the Qur'ān.

**ḥadīth qudsī:** A preserved and authenticated record of God's words as narrated by the Prophet ﷺ. This is separate and different from Qur'ānic revelation.

**Ḥajj:** The major pilgrimage to the Ka'ba in Mecca.

**ḥalāl:** That which is permissible according to Islamic Revealed Law.

**ḥarām:** That which is impermissible according to Islamic Revealed Law.

**ḥayā':** Modesty.

**ḥayāt:** The divine attribute of Life.

## I

**iftār:** The act of breaking the fast at the end of a day of fasting.

**iḥrām:** The state of ritual sanctity during Ḥajj symbolized by wearing simple, seamless garments.

**Iḥsān:** The third level of the religion of Islam that aims towards excellence and perfection in worship.

**ijmā':** The consensus of qualified scholars on a particular legal issue; one of the main sources of Islamic Revealed Law.

**ikhlāṣ:** Sincerity.

**ilm:** The divine attribute of Knowledge.

**imam:** In prayer, the person leading the group.

**Iman:** Faith or belief; conviction and belief in what the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ brought.

**irāda:** The divine attribute of Will.

**Islam:** The last and final religion revealed by God to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ for all of humanity until the end of time.

**istikhāra:** The prayer for seeking guidance from God.

## J

*janāza*: The prayer over the deceased.

*jinn*: Beings made of fire and usually invisible to the human eye; they are legally accountable and some are Muslims and some not.

*jumu'a*: The Friday group prayer.

## K

*Ka'ba*: The Holy Mosque in Mecca. The first structure built for the purpose of worshipping the One True God.

*kalām*: The divine attribute of Speech.

*khawf*: The state of fearing divine punishment for sins and transgressions.

*kufrān*: Ingratitude to God for one's blessings.

## L

*Laylat al-Qadr*: The Night of Destiny in which the Qur'ān was first revealed; generally believed to fall in the last ten nights of Ramaḍān.

## M

*madhhab*: A recognized and accepted legal school of Islamic jurisprudence.

*Medina*: The city in Arabia, north of Mecca to which Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ immigrated.

*mahram*: Someone of the opposite gender whom one can never marry, such as one's parent, sibling, child, et

*makrūb*: That which is disliked according to Islamic Revealed Law.

*mandūb*: That which is recommended according to Islamic Revealed Law.

*Marwa*: One of the two hills between which pilgrims run during Ḥajj.

*masjid*: The Muslim house of worship; it also serves as a community center.

*Mecca*: The city in Arabia where the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was born.

*Mīna*: A location near Mecca where pilgrims during Ḥajj throw pebbles at stone pillars representing the Devil.

*mosque*: See masjid.

*mubāḥ*: That which has a neutral ruling according to Islamic Revealed Law.

*muezzin*: The one who performs the Islamic call to prayer.

*mujtahid*: A highly qualified Islamic scholar who is capable of extracting rulings from the sources of Islamic Revealed Law.

***mukallaf***: A person who is legally accountable; someone who is considered by the Revealed Law to be responsible for fulfilling religious obligations.

***mukhālaḥa lil-ḥawādith***: The divine attribute of Transcendence; God's complete dissimilarity to all created things.

**Muslim**: One who has accepted Islam as a religion by declaring the Shahāda.

## N

***naṣīḥa***: Sincere advice.

***niṣāb***: The minimum amount of wealth above which Zakat becomes payable after one year. See *Zakat*.

## Q

***qadr***: divine destiny.

***qibla***: The direction of prayer facing towards the Ka'ba in Mecca.

***qidam***: The divine attribute of Beginninglessness.

***qiyām bil-naḥs***: The divine attribute of Self-subsistence.

***qiyās***: The use of analogy to apply established legal ruling to other cases; one of the main sources of Islamic Revealed Law.

***qudra***: The divine attribute of Power.

**Qur'ān**: The Holy Book of Islam; the words of God dictated to the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ through the Angel Gabriel ﷺ.

## R

***rajā'***: The state of hope for divine mercy.

**Ramaḍān**: The holiest month of the Islamic calendar; the month in which the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ received the first revelation of the Qur'ān; a time in which Muslims fast from dawn to dusk.

**Rawḍa**: An area inside the Prophet's Mosque ﷺ in Medina between his grave and pulpit.

## S

***ṣabr***: Patience and fortitude.

***ṣadaqa***: A voluntary act of charity.

**Safa**: One of the two hills between which pilgrims run during Ḥajj.

**Ṣalāh**: The ritual prayer; one of the five pillars of Islam.

***sama'***: The divine attribute of Hearing.

**Ṣawm:** Fasting from dawn to sunset. The fasting in the month of Ramaḍān is one of the five pillars of Islam.

**Shahāda:** The testimony of faith declaring that there is no god but God, and that Muḥammad ﷺ is the Messenger of God; the first pillar of Islam by which a person becomes a Muslim.

**Shariah:** Islamic Revealed Law.

**shaykh:** Generally a title of respect for a religious teacher or scholar.

**shirk:** Idolatry; the act of associating partners with God.

**shukr:** Gratitude to God for one's blessings.

**ṣidq:** Truthfulness.

**ṣifāt al-ma'ānī:** The seven affirming attributes of God.

**al-ṣifa al-naḥsīya:** The self-signifying attribute of God that refers to His Being.

**ṣifāt al-tanzīh:** The five negating attributes of God.

**sīra:** Prophetic biography.

**ṣirat:** The narrow bridge over the chasm of Hell.

**suḥūr:** The pre-dawn meal eaten before beginning the fast for the day.

**Sunna:** 1) The way the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ did things. 2) A category of rulings for acts that when done, entail reward but are not obligatory.

**sūra:** A chapter of the Qur'ān. There are 114 chapters in the Qur'ān.

## T

**tablīgh:** Conveyance.

**tabajjud:** Extra prayers in the middle of the night before dawn.

**takbīr:** The proclamation that "God is the greatest."

**taqwā:** The state of piety by which a person is conscious of the divine presence.

**tarāwīḥ:** The special prayer performed during Ramaḍān after the night prayer.

**ṭawāf:** Walking around the Ka'ba; this is an ancient form of worship that Muslims uphold.

**tawba:** The act of turning back to God in repentance.

**tawḥīd:** The act of affirming God's absolute oneness and unity.

**W**

*waḥdānīya*: God's attribute of oneness.

*Wājib al-Wujūd*: The Necessary-Existent; a description of God that distinguishes Him from everything besides Him, all of which are merely possible-existents.

*al-wujūd*: God's Self-Existence.

**Z**

**Zakat**: The obligatory alms, giving 2.5 percent of one's wealth each year. One of the five pillars of Islam. See niṣāb.

*Zakat al-Fiṭr*: A small charity given specifically during the month of Ramaḍān.

**Zamzam**: The sacred well in Mecca that provides water for pilgrims.

## RECOMMENDED READINGS

### TRANSLATIONS OF THE QUR'ĀN

*The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary.* Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Tahrike Tarsile Quran Inc., 1987.

*The Qur'an: A New Translation.* Thomas Cleary. Starlatch Press, 2004.

*The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English.* Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley. Bookwork, 2006.

*Tafsir al-Jalalayn: Complete English Translation.* Aisha Bewley. Dar al Taqwa Ltd., 2008.

### HADĪTH TRANSLATIONS

*Forty Hadith.* Yahya Ibn Sharaf al-Din al-Nawawi, Translated by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies. Dar El-Shorouk, 2002.

*Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik ibn Anas.* Aisha Bewley. Medina Press, 1989.

*The Content of Character: Ethical Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.* Shaykh Al-Amin Ali Mazrui, Hamza Yusuf. Sandala LLC, 2005.

*Provision for the Seekers, a Manual of Prophetic Hadiths with Commentary.* Abdur-Rahman Ibn Yusuf. White Thread Press, 2005

*The Book of Hadith: Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad from the Mishkat al Masabih.* Charles Le Gai Eaton & Jeremy Henzell-Thomas. The Book Foundation, 2008.

*The Seventy-Seven Branches of Faith.* Imam al-Bayhaqi, translated by Abdal-Hakim Murad. The Quilliam Press, 1990.

### BOOKS ON THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

*Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources.* Martin Lings (Abu Bakr Siraj ad-Din). Inner Traditions International, 1983.

*Muhammad Messenger of Allah, Ash-Shifa of Qadi 'Iyād.* Aisha Bewley. Madinah Press, 1991.

*Our Master Muḥammad ﷺ.* Abdallah Sirajuddin al-Husayni. Sunni Publications, 2008.

*A Day With the Prophet ﷺ.* Ahmad Von Denffer. The Islamic Foundation, 1979.

### BOOKS ON THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

- Inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship.* Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, translated by Muhtar Holland. The Islamic Foundation, 1992.
- Al-Maqasid: Nawawi's Manual of Islam.* Nuh Ha Mim Keller. Amana Publications, 2002.
- Understanding the Four Madhhabs: The Facts About Ijtihad and Taqlid.* Abdal-Hakim Murad. Islamic Publications International, 1999.
- The Absolute Essentials of Islam.* Faraz Fareed Rabbani. White Thread Press, 2008.
- One Thousand Roads to Mecca.* Michael Wolfe. Grove Press, 1997.
- Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning.* Burhan al-Din al-Zarnuji. The Starlatch Press, 2001.
- Submission: Faith and Beauty.* Dr. Joseph Lombard. Zaytuna Institute, 2008.
- Islam and the Destiny of Man.* Charles Le Gai Eaton. The Islamic Texts Society, 1985.
- The Heirs of the Prophet.* Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, translated by Zaid Shakir. Starlatch Press, 2001.
- Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence.* Mohammad Hashim Kamali. The Islamic Foundation, 2005.

### BOOKS ON IMAN

- The Lives of Man.* Imam ʿAbdallah ibn ʿAlawi al-Haddad, translated by Mostafa al-Badawi. The Quilliam Press Limited, 1991.
- Key to the Garden.* Ahmad Mashhur al-Haddad, translated by Mostafa al-Badawi. Starlatch Press, 2003.
- The Creed of Imam Al-Ṭāḥāwī.* Abu Jaʿfar al-Tahawi, translated by Hamza Yusuf. Zaytuna Institute, 2007.
- Al-Ghazali On the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God.* Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, translated by David Burell. The Islamic Texts Society, 1992.

### BOOKS ON IḤSĀN

- Two Treatises On Mutual Reminding & Good Manners.* Imam ʿAbdallah ibn ʿAlawi al-Haddad, translated by Mostafa al-Badawi. Starlatch Press, 2002.
- The Book of Assistance.* Imam ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAlawi al-Haddad, translated by Mostafa al-Badawi. The Quilliam Press Limited, 1998.
- Purification of the Heart.* Hamza Yusuf. Starlatch Press, 2004.
- Wayfarers to God.* Habib ʿAli Zain Al ʿAbideen Al Jifri, translated by Shaykh Mohamed Mlamali Adam. Guidance Media, 2006.



*Treatise for the Seekers of Guidance.* Abu al-Harith al-Muhasibi, translated by Zaid Shakir. NID Publishers, 2008.

*Al-Ghazali On the Remembrance of Death & Afterlife.* Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, translated by T.J. Winters. The Islamic Texts Society, 1989.

*Al-Ghazali on Invocations and Supplications.* Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, translated by Kojiro Nakamura. The Islamic Texts Society, 1990.

### BOOKS ON INTERACTIONS

*Islam Our Choice: Portraits of Modern American Muslim Women.* Debra L. Dirks. Amana Publications, 2003.

*On the Duties of Brotherhood.* Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, translated by Muhtar Holland. The Overlook Press, 1993.

*The Proper Conduct of Marriage in Islam.* Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, translated by Muhtar Holland. Al-Baz Publishing Inc., 1998.

*The Sun Is Rising In the West: New Muslims Tell About Their Journey to Islam.* Muzaffar Haleem. Amana Publications, 2007.

*Initiating and Upholding an Islamic Marriage.* Hedaya Hartford. Dar Al-Fath, 2007.

*Your Islamic Marriage Contract.* Hedaya Hartford. Dar Al-Fath, 2007.

*Motherhood in Islam.* Aliah Schliefer. The Islamic Texts Society-USA, 1996.

*Financial Transactions in Islamic Jurisprudence.* Dr. Wahba al-Zuhayli. Dar al-Fikr, 2008.

## RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

### SITES FOR NEW MUSLIMS

The Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore:

<http://www.darul-arqam.org.sg>

Easy Guide For New Muslims:

<http://www.dawanet.com/newmuslim>

International Association For New Muslims:

<http://www.4newmuslims.org>

Guide to Islam For New Muslims:

<http://www.islamicedfoundation.com/guide1.htm>

Prayer Times:

<http://www.islamicfinder.org/>

### Q&A SITES FOR MUSLIMS

SunniPath:

<http://www.sunnipath.com/>

Reading Islam:

<http://www.readingislam.com>

IslamOnline.net:

<http://www.islamonline.net>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>2</sup> Al-ʿAsqalānī Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*.  
Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliya, vol 1, p. 324.
- <sup>3</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>4</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>5</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>9</sup> Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya al-Awliyāʾ*.
- <sup>10</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>11</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*.
- <sup>14</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>15</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>16</sup> Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*.
- <sup>17</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*.
- <sup>24</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>25</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>26</sup> Imam al-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>27</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>28</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Imam al-Dārimī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>31</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>32</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>33</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>34</sup> Imam al-Baghawī, *Maʿālim al-Tanzīl*.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>38</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*.
- <sup>40</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>41</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>42</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>43</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*.
- <sup>47</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>48</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>49</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>50</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*.
- <sup>52</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>55</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>56</sup> Imam al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>57</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*.
- <sup>60</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>61</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.

- <sup>62</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>65</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>66</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>67</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>68</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*.
- <sup>70</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>74</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>75</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>76</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>77</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>78</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>79</sup> Imam Aḥmad, *Musnad*.
- <sup>80</sup> Imam al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>81</sup> Imam al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam*.
- <sup>82</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>86</sup> Imam al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan*.
- <sup>87</sup> Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*.
- <sup>88</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>89</sup> Imam al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
- <sup>90</sup> Imam Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

This work presents to the new Muslim an engaging and well-rounded explanation of the fundamentals of Islam, the basics of Iman, and the path of Ihsān. Furthermore, it provides some key ethical virtues and practical counsel that every new Muslim needs. Its contents are arranged according to the Prophetic order presented in the famous Ḥadith of Gabriel ﷺ. The elaboration in each section is introductory, personal and tailored for new comers to the religion. The language is clear and deliberately non-academic. Comprehensive proofs and theological details are kept to minimum.



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