



Perhaps **You** Would
Reflect...

A TRANSLATION OF “PESANAN ILAHI, CERMINKANLAH”
BY USTAZ DR MUHAMMAD HANIFF HASSAN



Translated into English by

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PERHAPS YOU WOULD REFLECT...

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First published in Malay as *Pesanan Ilahi... Cerminkanlah*
(Singapore: Darul Tafsir Al-Khair, 2023)
by Muhammad Haniff Hassan

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ISBNAPP2402211.

Published by
Darul Tafsir Al-Khair
Al-Khair Mosque
1 Teck Whye Crescent Singapore 688847

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Acknowledgment

The translation of this book is sponsored by EI.
May Allah Ta'ala rewards the sponsor with the
best rewards.

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Foreword



One of the biggest challenges faced by the Muslim community is to make Islam relevant for the postmodern world. Does the Qur'an possess a role in today's life? Does the Qur'an have the capability in dealing with serious tribulations faced by various groups of Muslims and other religions in this modern society?

There shouldn't be any doubt that the Qur'an plays a huge role in our life. It provides primary guidance, a beacon of hope, and solutions to all.

This is based on the following Qur'anic Verses:

“[This is] a Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that you might bring mankind out of darknesses into the light by permission of their Lord—to the path of the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy.” (Surah Ibrahim: 1)

“We sent down the Book (the Qur'an) to you which makes everything clear, and serves as a guidance and mercy and

glad tidings to those who have submitted to Allah.” (Surah Al-Nahl: 89)

However, how can we use the Qur’an as the card that scans us past our entire afflictions and tribulations? Because one may ask that the Qur’an will never possibly change, whereas a man’s life is constantly changing?

Yes, it is true that the Qur’an is a revelation that is final (*mu’tamad*) and will not accept any plus nor minus adjustments to its contents. But, one should not forget that every single verse and the historical contexts in which the verses were revealed (*Asbab Al-Nuzul*) are open to various interpretations. These interpretations deduced from right methodology are the actual critical factors that will make the book a relevant source of solution to problems in the modern age today. For that reason, Darul Tafsir Al-Khair has collaborated with Ustaz Dr. Muhammad Haniff Hassan in producing short articles focusing on thematic Qur’anic exegesis and interpretations suitable with both Singaporean and the modern context.

This book is published with the idea to bridge connections between the holy verses of Allah Ta’ala and our daily life. We have all affirmed that the Qur’an is a revelation that is relevant from time to time, therefore the study of the sciences of the Qur’an and the analysis of its context are both imperatively necessary to understand its true meaning so that it would be rightfully implemented to all parts of the community.

Lastly, I would like to express my highest appreciation to Ustaz Dr. Muhammad Haniff Hassan for approving the publication of his personal articles by Darul Tafsir Masjid Al-Khair and I highly hope that this book will strengthen our connections with Allah Ta’ala and enroot us to the path that is pleased by Him.

May Allah Ta'ala accept and bless this contribution and make this effort a light of guidance for all mankind.

MUHAMMAD FAHEEM BIN ABDUL KHALIL
DARUL TAFSIR, MASJID AL-KHAIR

Foreword



Prophet Muhammad ﷺ mentioned in a *hadith* which goes:

“The best amongst you is the one who learns the Qur’an and teaches it.” (Narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari)

The Qur’an is revealed as a book of guidance for the believers and life solutions for all because it contains words of Allah Ta’ala that were sent down to His holy messenger through His holy angel, not a book consisting of ordinary writings.

The Qur’an is a miracle that could not be sensorily felt, but is graspable through emotions, mind, and deep reflection. This book is published to help readers experience this miracle.

This book is a compilation of articles written by Ustaz Dr. Muhammad Haniff Hassan, a person who is no stranger to the Singaporean society, with the purpose of enabling readers to

expand their knowledge and understanding regarding Qur'anic interpretations. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to express my utmost appreciation to Ustaz Dr. Muhammad Haniff Hassan on his efforts in producing such articles and granting the permission for it to be published by Darul Tafsir of Al-Khair Mosque.

I hope that the studies and research on the Qur'an will continuously be encouraged in various ways possible in this modern society. The Qur'an today is the same as the Qur'an during the time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions. Considering that the Qur'an was able to change the history of life from the past, as a persistent generation today, we need to likewise affiliate our efforts in reviving the spiritual value of the Qur'an.

Finally, we welcome any feedback and suggestion for the better of Al-Khair Mosque, Darul Tafsir's future publications with a hope that they would enrich and expand readers', Singaporeans in particular, vision and thoughts, In Shaa Allah.

HAJI ABDUL WAHAB AHMAD
SENIOR MOSQUE LEADER

Preface



All praise be to Allah Ta'ala, this book is the third volume of “*Pesanan Ilahi...*” series. The first volume was “*Pesanan Ilahi... Renungkanlah*” and the volume was “*Pesanan Ilahi... Fikirkanlah*”. This third volume goes by the title, “*Pesanan Ilahi... Cerminkanlah*” to preserve the same concept of the previous two collections; only a minor difference in its title as a sign to distinguish every collection.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to Allah Ta'ala for the publication of this book. This book would not have been in the hands of the readers without His will and guidance. Also, my special thanks to the management board of Al-Khair Mosque for the support and the staff for the assistance that make the publication of this book possible.

This book compiles 40 topics, which total up to 100 topics for the entire three volumes.

The chosen cover theme I have picked for this volume portrays a transformation of a green bean growing to become a bean

sprout. This theme paints a message in line with the main concept of these volumes, that not a single God's creation, as small as the size of a young green bean or a premature bean sprout, should be overlooked by a Muslim from his reflection because Allah Ta'ala, the Creator Himself, "does not disdain to propound a parable of a gnat, or of something [even] less than that" (Surah Al-Baqarah:26) for mankind to ponder. In another verse, the Qur'an says,

"O mankind! A similitude has been coined, so listen to it (carefully): Verily! Those on whom you call besides Allah, cannot create (even) a fly, even though they combine together for the purpose. And if the fly snatched away a thing from them, they would have no power to release it from the fly. So weak are (both) the seeker and the sought." (Al-Hajj:73)

Lastly, I ask Allah to grant the readers of this book the strength to continuously read and ponder upon the verses of the Qur'an and may this book be the encouragement and motivation for readers to do so.

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Encouraging Positiveness and the Favourable (Pros) When Conducting *Da‘wah*



وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ
شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“We cautioned, “O Adam! Live with your wife in Paradise and eat as freely as you please, but do not approach this tree, or else you will be wrongdoers.” (Al-Baqarah: 35)

أُحِلَّتْ لَكُم بَهِيمَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ

“... All grazing livestock has been made lawful to you—except what is hereby announced to you ...” (Al-Maidah: 1)

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلْمَيْتَةُ وَالِدَمُّ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أَهَلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ
بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْفُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبْعُ
إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصَبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَمِ
ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ

“Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, and swine; what is slaughtered in the name of any other than Allah; what is killed by strangling, beating, a fall, or by being gored to death; what is partly eaten by a predator unless you slaughter it; and what is sacrificed on altar. You are also forbidden to draw lots for decisions. This is all evil...” (Al-Maidah: 3)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 In the verse from Surah Al-Baqarah mentioned above, Allah Ta‘ala mentioned actions that were lawful (*halal*) for Prophet Adam a.s, followed by an action that was otherwise (*haram*) for him. The *halal* actions are mentioned in a general and straightforward manner because they are quantitatively more, and as a consequence, it is not practical to mention every single of them, compared to the *haram*, which is limited to eating the fruit from the forbidden tree.
- 2 The same style can be observed from the other two verses, verse 1 and 3 of Surah Al-Maidah which reveal about the *halal* and *haram* foods in this world.

This similarity informs that Allah’s command to both Adam and Hawa a.s in heaven has relevance to His command to the verses in Surah Al-Maidah for Muslims living in this world.

- 3 Valuable points on *da‘wah* work could be deduced from the connections between all the abovementioned verse.
- 4 Islam enjoins Muslim, when doing *da‘wah*, to promote and introduce those that are beneficials and positives first (e.g.,

foods that are permitted by Allah Ta'ala) in order to win the people's hearts.

- 5 This *da'wah* approach aligns with human psychological nature—the beneficials and positives (*halal* in Islam) are naturally more attractive to human, than the opposites (*haram* in Islam). It must be noted that the human tendency to commit what is *haram* is due to the perceived pleasure gained from it, although the perception is misguided.
- 6 Islam offers numerous good and positive things for inviting people to the religion. In fact, this gives advantage to this *da'wah* approach—that *da'wah* possesses plenty of capital to winning the hearts of people.

Thus, it can be concluded that *da'wah* that often capitalises on the less mentioned (*haram*) to the extent that it overpowers the more mentioned (*halal*) lacks wisdom.

- 7 Islam prefers *da'wah* with positivity (e.g., this is *halal*, this is permissible, this is okay, Allah Ta'ala favours this, doing this will bring great bounties from Allah Ta'ala), than negativity (e.g., this is *haram*, this is *bid'ah*, this is sinful, this will lead you to Hellfire).
- 8 This approach is relevant too for children's upbringing in the family setting. It is highly effective to attract children in embracing the love for Islam by introducing to them the good, benefits, and virtuousness of Islam, which emphasises more on the do(s) and *halal* than the don't(s) and *haram* in Islam.
- 9 This approach is captured by many Muslim scholars in a famous maxim, "*Al-Targhib Qabl Al-Tarheeb*," which means encouragement to practice moral good, before warning against committing evil.

Leadership Values (Family Setting in Particular)



الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ
وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ
بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَاللَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي
الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاصْرَبُوهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنِ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

“Men are the caretakers of women, as men have been provisioned by Allah over women **and tasked with supporting them financially**. And righteous women are devoutly obedient and, when alone, protective of what Allah has entrusted them with. **And if you sense ill-conduct from your women, advise them (first), (if they persist,) do not share their beds, (but if they still persist,) then discipline them (gently)**. But if they change their ways, do not be unjust to them. Surely Allah is Most High, All-Great.” (Surah Al-Nisa’: 34)

وَإِنْ أَمْرَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ

“If a woman **fears indifference or neglect from her husband**, there is no blame on either of them if they seek ‘fair’ settlement, which is best ...” (Surah Al-Nisa’: 128)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 In verse 34 of Surah Al-Nisa’, Allah Ta’ala mentions that power and authority bestowed to the husband come after the fulfillment of his responsibilities (*nafaqah*) to the wife.
- 2 The Qur’an teaches that rights and authority come together with responsibilities to be fulfilled. The former are not free or privilege (Al-Nisa’: 34).
- 3 The Qur’an mentions the husband as *qawwaamoon* (caretaker/guardian) first, then duty of the wife to be *solihat* (righteous) and *qaanitat* (devoutly obedient) (Al-Nisa’: 34).
- 4 With this, the Qur’an teaches the concept of authority and leadership—they are to be earned by fulfilling the required responsibilities, rather than owning the sense of authority without being responsible (false sense of entitlement).
- 5 Also, in the same verse (Al-Nisa’: 34), responsibilities are mentioned before issues relating to *nushooz* (ill-conduct or disobedience of the wife). One can conclude that *nushooz* only takes place when husband (or leader) has fulfilled his duties to his wife (or people).

This implies that the husband (or leader), to whom the rights and authorities are given, is not worthy of obedience, should he failed at fulfilling his responsibilities.

- 6 The same applies when taking disciplinary actions. They are mentioned after Allah's command for the husband (or leader) to fulfill his responsibilities (Al-Nisa': 34).
- 7 A Muslim husband (or leader) must be aware that, despite the rights and authority they have on others, Allah Ta'ala is the Most Powerful. Therefore, he should not be smug with arrogance with the entitled rights and mistreats his wife (or followers) by neglecting his responsibilities, or by abusing his rights.
- 8 The Qur'an likewise clarifies that *nushooz* does not only happen to a wife (or people) who disobeys the husband (or leader) but applies as well to the husband (or leader) who transgresses the rights of the wife (or followers).

Be “Forward-Thinking” Transcending Several Upcoming Generations



رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا
مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Our Lord! Make us both (fully) submit to You **and from our descendants a nation that will submit to you. Show us our rituals and** turn to us in grace. You are truly the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.” (Al-Baqarah: 128)

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

“Our Lord! Raise from among them a messenger who will recite to them Your revelations, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Indeed, You (alone) are the Almighty, All-Wise.” (Al-Baqarah: 129)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 Both verses 128 and 129 from Surah Al-Baqarah indicate the supplications made by Prophet Ibrahim a.s for himself and his son Prophet Ismail a.s upon the completion of building the Ka'abah as commanded by Allah Ta'ala.
- 2 The abovementioned verses portray Prophet Ibrahim's a.s. good character for reflection—his concern towards not only the righteousness of his beloved family or the incumbent generation, but also several forthcoming generations as well.

This is showed in Prophet Ibrahim's a.s supplications—praying from Allah Ta'ala righteousness for his offspring and for the following generations. He prayed that Allah Ta'ala does not leave his followers without any form of guidance and to raise among them a messenger like himself to carry on with his task.

- 3 A good Muslim should embody the same exemplary thought in his life concerning many generations to come.
- 4 An effective *da'wah* does not concern only the uprightness of the current generation, but also includes the future generations. Logically, the exemplary thought must be manifested in a form of action as well, such as mapping out long-term plans.

A starting point in mapping out an effective plan to achieve future righteous generations must include the acquisition of knowledge about the future. This necessitates methodological and extensive study on the potential trends and challenges in the future for effective analysis and planning of contingencies.

Without a thorough study, any anticipation will be based on weak assumptions and furthermore result in unproductive efforts and waste of resources.

- 5 Western (non-Muslim) societies are ahead of the Muslim societies in the area of futuristic thinking when planning for the future. Muslim societies and *da'wah* organisations should learn from this because thinking of the future is strongly supported by the Qur'an.

Another verse from the Qur'an that portrays the same message is in Surah Al-Hashr verse number 18, "*O believers! Be mindful of Allah and let every soul look to what (deeds) it has sent forth for tomorrow. And fear Allah, (for) certainly Allah is All-Aware of what you do.*"

Though in this verse, the word "tomorrow" particularly refers to the Day of Judgement, Allah's Ta'ala command in the abovementioned verse conveys a message that encourages Muslims to constantly think about the future and, thus, engage in long-term planning pertaining to matters in this *dunia* that are of beneficial for the Hereafter.

- 6 Prophet Ibrahim's a.s supplications of asking Allah Ta'ala to appoint a messenger that can guide the upcoming generations can also be interpreted as a message that encourages current Muslim leaders and *da'wah* organisations to have succession planning by grooming and nurturing *da'wah* activists for leadership roles in the future.

This is because supplication in Islam should not be understood as praying to Allah Ta'ala for the fulfillment of a need. It must incorporate efforts on the part of Muslims who make the supplication to fulfill their needs, as Allah Ta'ala does not

answer supplications of those who do not strive to change their current condition.

- 7 This highlights the necessity for *da'wah* organisations to prepare for the development of *da'wah* organisation members and activists consistently and diligently. *Da'wah* should be carried out by activists and leaders who have been systematically recruited, developed, and trained, and not “by chance”.
- 8 All points and reflections listed above can be embodied daily as a Muslim to achieve greatness in life, which are as follows:
 - a. Having a forward-thinking mind.
 - b. Having consciousness of what lies ahead in the future.
 - c. Having long-term planning (e.g., in 5,10, or 20 years to come) for self and family.
 - d. Be prepared always for the future.

Qur'anic Guidance on Becoming Knowledgeable and Making Judgments and Decisions



فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا ءَاتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِمَّنْ
لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا

“There they found a servant of Ours, to whom We had granted mercy from Us and enlightened with knowledge of Our Own.” (Al-Kahf: 65)

قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَيْتَ عَلَىٰ أَن تَعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا عَلَّمْتَنِي رُشْدًا

“Moses said to him, “May I follow you, provided that you teach me some of the right guidance you have been taught?” (Al-Kahf: 66)

قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَن تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا

“He said, “You certainly cannot be patient (enough) with me.” (Al-Kahf: 67)

وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا

“And how can you be patient with what is beyond your (realm of) knowledge?” (Al-Kahf: 68)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses in Surah Al-Kahf presents the story of Prophet Musa’s a.s conversation with a righteous man known as Khidir.
- 2 The story begins with Allah’s Ta’ala command to Prophet Musa a.s to seek knowledge from Khidir, to whom Allah Ta’ala has granted *rasyd*, as mentioned in verse 66 of Surah Al-Kahf.

Upon meeting with Khidir, Prophet Musa a.s informed him of his reasons although Khidir hesitated in the beginning as he assumed that Prophet Musa a.s would not have patience while being under his mentorship.

After several assurances, Khidir agreed to the request with a condition that Prophet Musa a.s would observe him without questioning any of his actions whilst being under his supervision. (Al-Kahf: 67–68)

However, Prophet Musa a.s unwittingly went against the agreement, which led Khidir to stop the learning process. Khidir then clarified all his actions, assuring Prophet Musa’s curiosity. This part of the story was mentioned in the same Surah after the abovementioned verses, referable in books of Qur’anic interpretations and exegesis.

- 3 The main point of the abovementioned verses encompasses the quality of knowledge and the level of study that needs to be attained by a Muslim to be knowledgeable and capable in making wise judgements and good decisions as exemplified by Khidir and to avoid the errors made by Prophet Musa a.s in this story.
- 4 This story informs that the “high order thinking” concept existed in the Qur’an long before it was popular in modern education of today.

The abovementioned verse 66 highlights the word “*rusyd*”. It sets the difference between attaining knowledge simply through information compared to attaining knowledge through guidance (*rusyd*). “*Rusyd*” can also be a poly-semantic term referring to a level of intelligence gained through seeking knowledge, applying a depth of comprehension, and understanding through wisdom or having a level of cognizance in perceiving various context and nuances.

Ideally, in educating oneself, Muslims should strive towards achieving wisdom to the level of “*rusyd*”.

The interaction between Prophet Musa a.s and Khidir did not give a clear meaning to the term “*rusyd*”. However, there were the traits that separated Khidir from Prophet Musa a.s. Khidir’s knowledge was attained through lived experiences borne over a long period that carried him through by bearing patience. It was this “*rusyd*” Khidir intended to exemplify to Prophet Musa a.s.

- 5 Let’s look into specific factors that are crucial towards achieving “*rusyd*”.

- 6 Just as a fruit requires time to ripen, information also requires time to mature into knowledge and wisdom. One can argue that an inherent high level of intellect, perseverance, and financial resources are important in the attainment of knowledge. However, it is the continuous pursuit of seeking knowledge through rigorous training, the application of patience over time that is more important.
- 7 This highlights the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) alongside IQ. EQ enables Muslims to have a wider window of tolerance in coping with chronic hardships and stress. A person with high EQ has a keen sense of self-awareness in observing their environment and peers. They are comfortable with being in a state of perplexity and uncertainty. They abstain from making decisions or statements before thoroughly understanding the issues and the starting point of all stakeholders on hand. Muslims with high EQ are also open-minded and mindful in seeking out and grasping many different points of view.

High EQ means their relational awareness are keenly felt where they are able to perceive their own and other's emotions and attitude. A high EQ person can evaluate whether a thought process has depth or whether it is superficial and lacking in substantive knowledge.

- 8 However, we must not fall into the trap of procrastination and passivity in the name of seeking more knowledge or being patient. This will result in worsening personal problems or neglect of community interests.

Giving Chances to People Who Have Committed Mistakes



قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ أُحَدِّثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ
ذِكْرًا

He responded, “Then if you follow me, **do not question me** about anything until I (myself) clarify it for you.” (Al-Kahf: 70)

فَأَنْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا ۖ قَالَ أَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ
أَهْلَهَا لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا إِمْرًا

So they set out, **but after they had boarded a ship, the man made a hole in it. Moses protested, “Have you done this to drown its people? You have certainly done a terrible thing!”** (Al-Kahf: 71)

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَن تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا

He replied, “Did I not say that you cannot have patience with me?” (Al-Kahf: 72)

قَالَ لَا تَوَاخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا

Moses pleaded, “Excuse me for forgetting, and do not be hard on me.” (Al-Kahf: 73)

فَأَنْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ قَالَ أَقْتَلْتَنِي بِنَفْسٍ زَكِيَّةٍ بِغَيْرِ
نَفْسٍ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُّكْرًا

So they proceeded until they came across a boy, and the man killed him. Moses protested, “Have you killed an innocent soul, who killed no one? You have certainly done a horrible thing.” (Al-Kahf: 74)

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا

He answered, “Did I not tell you that you cannot have patience with me?” (Al-Kahf: 75)

قَالَ إِنْ سَأَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصَحِّبْنِي ۖ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنَ
لُدُنِّي عُذْرًا

Moses replied, “If I ever question you about anything after this, then do not keep me in your company, for by then I would have given you enough of an excuse.” (Al-Kahf: 76)

فَأَنْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَيَا أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَطَعَمَا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبَوْا أَنْ
يُضَيِّقُوهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقَضَ فَأَقَامَهُ ۗ قَالَ لَوْ

شَأْتٍ لَّتَّخَذَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا

So they moved on **until they came to the people of a town. They asked them for food, but the people refused to give them hospitality. There they found a wall ready to collapse, so the man set it right. Moses protested, “If you wanted, you could have demanded a fee for this.”** (Al-Kahf: 77)

قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ ۗ سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

He replied, **“This is the parting of our ways. I will explain to you what you could not bear patiently.”** (Al-Kahf: 78)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The dialogue between Prophet Musa a.s and Khidir in Surah Al-Kahf affirms that Khidir accepted Prophet Musa a.s to be under his guidance, with the condition that Prophet Musa a.s must be patient and abstain from questioning Khidir’s actions until he received further clarifications from Khidir himself. (Al-Kahf: 70)

Prophet Musa a.s accepted but unwittingly went against the condition that he agreed to (Al-Kahf: 71). Prophet Musa a.s then begged for another chance after receiving a warning from Khidir. (Al-Kahf: 73) Given a second chance, Prophet Musa a.s complied but then repeated the same mistake. (Al-Kahf: 76)

The relationship between Prophet Musa a.s and Khidir eventually ended at Prophet Musa's a.s request (Al-Kahf: 76) after failing to comply with the earlier agreement for the third time. (Al-Kahf: 78)

- 2 This story in the Qur'an informs that Islam encourages Muslims to give several chances to those who have committed sins and mistakes, as how it was demonstrated by Khidir towards Prophet Musa a.s.

The bottom line is, Muslim should not rely only on punitive approaches when standing up against wrongful actions, but to also provide opportunities for wrongdoers to reflect and rectify their actions.

- 3 This is also supported by a story in a *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that describes a man who was seeking repentance and reforming himself after taking away the lives of 100 people. He was eventually granted a chance but was advised to migrate to a different place so that it would be easier for him to live a new life.

Also found in another *hadith* whereby Allah Ta'ala granted numerous chances and remains ever ready to accept the repentance of His servant despite continuously committing sins.

“A servant had sinned with an immoral act/sin, then he said, O my Lord, forgive me my sin. So Allah Ta'ala said: My servant has sinned with a sinful act, and he knows that his Lord forgives sins and punishes sinful acts. Then the servant sinned again, and then prayed (again) namely: My Lord, forgive me my sins. So Allah Ta'ala said: My servant commits a sinful act, and he knows that his Lord forgives sins and punishes

sinful acts. Then the servant sinned again, and then prayed again, namely: My God, forgive me my sins, then Allah Ta'ala said: My servant has sinned, and he knows, he has a God who forgives sins and punishes sinful deeds. Do whatever you wish, for I have truly forgiven you.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari)

- 4 These two abovementioned *hadiths* align with how Khidir behaved in Surah Al-Kahf. This gives a lesson that Muslims should not quickly give up or close the doors of opportunity for sinners and wrongdoers to change and amend their actions, even after consecutive failures in the past.

This also affirms that a Muslim should not be too quick to denounce the sinners for their wrongful actions even after being given chances to change.

However, this does not mean that chances should be given without limits as Khidir also limited the number of chances for Prophet Musa A.s. In addition to that, the broadness of Allah's Ta'ala chances given for His servant to repent and change also has its limits—which is before death.

- 5 Surah Al-Kahf and these *hadiths* represent the necessity in building initiatives that provides a platform for criminal offenders to reform and rehabilitate their lives as part of their development programme, albeit from the government or community organisations such as Yellow Ribbon Programme (<https://www.yellowribbon.gov.sg/>) and FITRAH (<https://msha.ke/fitrahsg/>).
- 6 As Muslims, we are highly encouraged to conduct or support these worthy initiatives.
- 7 While these reflections on Surah Al-Kahf refers to any sinners or wrongdoers in general, it is even more important for us

to embody these lessons within our own lives, our own household and family members who have done wrong to us such as our husbands or wives, children, parents, and siblings.

Virtues of Working in a Group or an Organisation



إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ
فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ
عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Surely those who pledge allegiance to you (O Prophet) are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. **Allah’s Hand is over theirs. Whoever breaks their pledge, it will only be to their own loss.** And whoever fulfils their pledge to Allah, He will grant them a great reward.” (Al-Fath: 10)

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ
اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

The believers, both men and women, are guardians of one another. They encourage good and forbid evil, establish prayer and pay alms-tax, and obey Allah and His Messenger. **It is they who will be shown Allah's mercy.** Surely Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. (Al-Tawbah: 71)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًا كَأَنَّهُمْ بِنِيٍّ
مَرْصُوصٍ

Surely Allah loves those who fight in His cause in (solid) ranks as if they were one concrete structure. (Al-Saf: 4)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 Verse 10 of Surah Al-Fath was revealed in relation to an event known as the Pledge of Divine Pleasure (*Bai'ah Al-Ridhwan*). Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his fellow companions made this pledge prior to the Treaty of Hudaibiyah between Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Quraysh tribe of Mecca.

The pledge was made by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ upon receiving the rumours that Uthman r.a was murdered by the Quraysh tribe. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had sent him to Mecca to discuss with the people that he and his followers be granted permission to perform *umrah* and visit the Ka'abah. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ then gathered his companions and pledged to avenge the rumoured death of Uthman r.a. and would not return to Medina until they had fulfilled their pledge.

However, the pledge did not come to fruition upon finding out that the death of Uthman r.a. was untrue. Uthman r.a. was only detained and eventually released to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Allah Ta'ala revealed this verse to praise the reaction of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions who collectively showed commitment and unity in seeking justice for fellow Muslim.

- 2 The verse relating to the Pledge of Divine Pleasure (*Bai'ah Al-Ridhwan*) is one of many *dalils* (theological bases) that make collective *da'wah* (*da'wah* in organization) a duty upon Muslims.
- 3 The phrase—“Allah’s Hand is over theirs”— represents Allah’s direct commitment to support collective *da'wah* and provide great reward for Muslims who engage in it (Al-Fath: 10).

This implies that Allah Ta'ala favours collective *da'wah* more than individual ones. The same meaning is echoed in verse 71 of Surah Al-Tawbah whereby Allah Ta'ala expresses His Mercy to believers who work together to “enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give *zakah* and obey Allah and His Messenger”, and verse 4 of Surah Al-Saff that likens Muslims who engage in collective *da'wah* and teamwork as if they are one concrete structure and promises them with God’s love.

- 4 Performing collective *da'wah* is also among the *sunnah* of the prophets that can be referred in the following verses and examples below:
 - i. Prophet Isa a.s with *Hawariyyun* (Al-Saf: 14)

- ii. Prophet Musa a.s with Prophet Harun a.s (Surah Taha: 29–32) and 70 appointed followers (Al-A'raf: 155)
- iii. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ with his companions (Al-Fath: 18)

5 Collective *da'wah* has also rational advantages:

- challenges and hardship that accompany *da'wah* work requires collective effort and the likeliness of overcoming them is higher than individual effort
- studies on social movements recognise the advantages in collective action to effect change, compared to acts by an individual or separate individuals
- if Prophets who were guaranteed with God's assistance and support engaged in collective *da'wah* as highlighted in the above examples, ordinary Muslims will need it more to succeed.

6 Admittedly, collective *da'wah* has its own "hassle", such as bickering among individuals in a group due to contradicting opinions and organisational bureaucracy that might hinder the efficiency of work and quick decision making.

Allah Ta'ala is indeed aware of this matter. Therefore, He promises His Mercy (Al-Tawbah: 71) and His Love (Al-Saff: 4) to those who steadfastly tolerate the challenges of collective *da'wah* and patiently put aside the comforts of working individually.

For Muslim, nothing is more desired than Allah's mercy and love. Thus, a good Muslim will always strive to seek the path that will lead. He will then prefer to spend his time and energy in collective *da'wah*, instead of working alone.

Be Careful with Claims in the Name of God and the Religion



وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهَ
عَلَىٰ مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ

“There are some (hypocrites) who impress you with their views regarding worldly affairs **and openly call upon Allah to witness what is in their hearts, yet they are your worst adversaries.**” (Al-Baqarah: 204)

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّىٰ سَعَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ
وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ

“**And when they leave (you), they strive throughout the land to spread mischief in it and destroy crops and cattle. Allah does not like mischief.**” (Al-Baqarah: 205)

وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ

“And he swore to them, “I am truly your sincere advisor.”

(Al-A'raf: 21)

فَدَلَّهِمَا بِغُرُورٍ ۖ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْءُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا
يُخَصِّفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۗ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا
عَنِ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلَّ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

“So he brought about their fall through deception. And when they tasted of the tree, their nakedness was exposed to them, prompting them to cover themselves with leaves from Paradise. Then their Lord called out to them, “Did I not forbid you from that tree and (did I not) tell you that Satan is your sworn enemy?” (Al-A'raf: 22)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 Verses 204 and 205 of Surah Al-Baqarah warn Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to be cautious with a group of people in the community during his time. They had the audacity to swear and call upon Allah Ta'ala as their witness that their words and beliefs were the truth and well-intended (Al-Baqarah: 204), whereas, in reality, they were lies and ill-intended (Al-Baqarah: 205).
- 2 The same can be understood through verses 21 and 22 of Surah Al-A'raf which explain the steps that Iblis took that caused Prophet Adam a.s and his wife Hawa to violate what Allah Ta'ala had prohibited them.

Iblis disguised himself as a sincere advisor and swore upon Allah's name of his deceiving intentions, in which Prophet Adam a.s and Hawa fell for it.

- 3 In today's context, the caution in the abovementioned verses could be applied to any sorts of rhetorical ideas, slogan, and selling products presented under the name of Allah Ta'ala as it might just be a scam by groups of people who utilise religion as a label for their personal benefit, and, as a result, leading people astray.
- 4 The Qur'an educates Muslim to think critically and to not be easily deceived by beautiful words, ideas, rhetoric, and slogans. Muslims should not easily accept something from a person, judging only from his style of appearance and background. Even so, swearing upon the name of Allah Ta'ala does not necessarily determine the validity of one's statement nor his honesty.
- 5 The right attitude for a Muslim in ensuring what is authentic from the religion is to test any theological claims with scriptural evidence (the Qur'an and *hadiths*), works of reputable Muslim scholars, scientific facts and rational thinking, and not relying merely on rhetoric and slogans that may falsely represent Islam. This can be done by asking those who make the claims to provide with supporting evidence.

Muslims must also conduct due diligence in checking the authenticity of verses from the Qur'an, the veracity of *hadiths*, and the accuracy of the viewpoints from scholars on a matter, which can be done by consulting a few *asatizah* or scholars.

- 6 Muslims are reminded that the lack of criticality in ensuring truth in a claim may result in serious consequences to their

faith, and, consequently, commit disobedience to Allah Ta'ala commands (Al-A'raf: 21) that cause harm to themselves (Al-Baqarah: 205).

Parables in the Qur'an



إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنْ السَّمَاءِ فَأَخْتَلَطَ بِهِ
نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ حَتَّى إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ
زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَدِرُونَ عَلَيْهَا أَتَمَّهَا أَمْرُنَا
لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنَبِ بِالْأَمْسِ ۚ كَذَلِكَ
نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“The life of this world is just like rain We send down from the sky, producing a mixture of plants which humans and animals consume. Then just as the earth looks its best, perfectly beautified, and its people think they have full control over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, so We mow it down as if it never flourished yesterday! This is how We make the signs clear for people who reflect.”
(Yunus: 24)

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ صَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا
ثَابِتٌ وَفُرُوعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

“Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches reach the sky,”
(Ibrahim: 24)

تُؤْتِي أَكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ يَأْذِنُ رَبُّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

“(always) yielding its fruit in every season by the Will of its Lord. This is how Allah sets forth parables for the people, so perhaps they will be mindful.” (Ibrahim: 25)

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ
مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ

“And the parable of an evil word is that of an evil tree, uprooted from the earth, having no stability.” (Ibrahim: 26)

يُنَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي
الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ

“Allah makes the believers steadfast with the firm Word (of faith) in this worldly life and the Hereafter. And Allah leaves the wrongdoers to stray. For Allah does what He wills.”
(Ibrahim: 27)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses are some examples of “parables” in the Qur’an. Parables are metaphorical expression used in the Qur’an to express a message with the purpose of cultivating a thinking mind. The use of parables invites mankind to ponder, comprehend and search for the meanings hidden behind those verses. However, this exercise must be applied not only to the parables, but to all Qur’anic verses. In fact, each Qur’anic verse must be presumed to contain deep and hidden meanings because it represents Allah’s infinite knowledge.

Seeking meaning from parables in the Qur’an exemplifies Qur’anic motivation to Muslims to reflect upon its deeper meanings.

- 2 The objective of parables in the Qur’an is to raise interest towards the intended divine message. The ambiguity of Qur’anic parables seeks to develop curiosity in seeking its true meanings, and it must go beyond shallow reading of the verses.

Parables promote teaching and learning the Qur’an that stimulate critical minds. Thus, Muslim educators are recommended to practice this approach among their students.

- 3 Parables also exemplify creative thinking in the Qur’an. The existence of parables informs that the Qur’an acknowledges benefits in creative thinking.
- 4 Creatively connecting abstract ideas of a divine message with a concrete subject such as a tree is an effective way in guiding mankind towards a deeper understanding with better memory retention.

- 5 Parables of the Qur'an also signify that the Qur'an is purposefully designed by Allah's Ta'ala to have various possible meanings. The ambiguity within Qur'anic parables means different opinions and interpretations are bound to happen.

Yes, not all differing interpretations are valid. However, the use of parables also means there may not necessarily be a singular true and valid interpretation. Thus, differences in interpretations should not be faulted, although it is necessary to invalidate the erroneous ones. Differences that conform with recognised and accepted methodology should be respected because they are intended by the Qur'an itself.

- 6 On this matter, Muslim scholars have developed sciences, known as *'Ulum Tafsir*, to provide guidance in interpreting the Qur'an. The objective is to provide methodological ways of understanding the Qur'an, not to deny creativity, or promote literal understanding, or suppress critical mind.

It must be noted that past Muslim scholars differed in Qur'anic interpretations despite having a common accepted methodology. However, they also showed mutual respect for each another despite their differences.

Therefore, it is not the differences of ideas itself but rather the methodologies deployed which set the differences between a valid and an invalid interpretation (*tafsir*).

- 7 All the points above also contain values for *da'wah* which are:
- a. The truth does not have to be necessarily conveyed in a straightforward manner.
 - b. Encourage deep critical thinking, instead of superficial understanding.

- c. Craft innovative and imaginative elements to attract interest and stimulate the minds. Avoid the dry topics to keep engagement high.
- d. Utilise various approaches for maximum effectiveness.
- e. Accept differences in understanding the Qur'an.

Reflections from the Story of Prophet Ibrahim a.s. Searching for the True God



وَكَذَلِكَ نُرَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلِكُوتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلِيَكُوْنُ مِنَ
الْمُوْقِنِيْنَ

“We also showed Abraham the wonders of the heavens and the earth, so he would be sure in faith.” (Al-An’ām: 75)

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ الَّيْلُ رَءَا كَوْكَبًا ۗ قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۗ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ
لَا أُحِبُّ الْاَفْلِيْنَ

When the night grew dark upon him, he saw a star and said, “This is my Lord!” But when it set, he said, “I do not love things that set.” (Al-An’ām: 76)

فَلَمَّا رَءَا الْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۗ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِيْ
رَبِّيْ لَأَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّيْنَ

Then when he saw the moon rising, he said, “This one is my Lord!” But when it disappeared, he said, “If my Lord does not guide me, I will certainly be one of the misguided people.” (Al-An’am: 77)

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسُ بِازِعَةً قَالِ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ
قَالَ يَتَقَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

Then when he saw the sun shining, he said, “This must be my Lord—it is the greatest!” But again when it set, he declared, “O my people! I totally reject whatever you associate (with Allah in worship). (Al-An’am: 78)

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا
مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“I have turned my face towards the One Who has originated the heavens and the earth—being upright—and I am not one of the polytheists.” (Al-An’am: 79)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses highlight the process Prophet Ibrahim a.s went through when searching for the true God.

Prophet Ibrahim a.s utilised his rational faculty when searching for God. In the beginning, he assumed the star, the moon, and then the sun was the true God. Eventually, he concluded that his assumption was a mistake as each and every one that he

had seen had its own flaws and did not deserve to be God. Ultimately, Prophet Ibrahim a.s believed and was assured that the true God was Allah Ta'ala.

Some scholars opined that the abovementioned verses are not referring to the experience that Prophet Ibrahim a.s underwent in searching for God. Instead, they elaborate on Prophet Ibrahim's a.s steps in preaching to his people to believe in Allah Ta'ala by clarifying that all the stars, the moon, and the sun that were being worshipped are unworthy to be considered as God.

- 2 The story above affirms that the Qur'an approves the use of our rational mind in the process of getting to know the true God. Each of us have different ways in our thought processes. Some of us are inclined to recognise and believe in God through divine revelations. Meanwhile, others attain this spiritual conviction through the use of logical reason.
- 3 There is also no correct sequential path in attaining faith in God. Faith is not necessarily derived from Qur'anic revelations prior to the use of our rational mind to ponder upon those divine revelations. The utilisation of the mind prior to divine revelation can also lay the foundation towards spiritual enlightenment. This can be attained through the analysis of the natural world, scientific study, or philosophical inquiry.
- 4 The process of seeking God through a logical approach necessitates a trial-and-error process before arriving to the true faith as per the abovementioned verses.

Thus, Qur'an allows space for hypothetical experiments in the process of seeking the truth.

- 5 Allah's Ta'ala guidance may arrive via complicated process, as demonstrated in the verses.

This gives us the realisation that Muslims should not easily and quickly condemn those who have been struggling to discover God's presence as it might be their unique path of guidance that Allah Ta'ala has intended for them.

- 6 In the abovementioned verses, Allah Ta'ala does not condemn any of the mistakes that were made by Prophet Ibrahim a.s pertaining to his consideration that the stars, moon, and sun were the God. Instead, He chooses to observe the results of Prophet Ibrahim's a.s efforts towards discovering the true faith.
- 7 Allah Ta'ala values genuine and sincere efforts in searching for truth, despite the failures along the way. Therefore, we should not be quick to condemn those who have yet to reach their end goals. It must be pointed out that reaching the intended destination, i.e., the truth, is not merely the result of a person's efforts but it also depends on Allah's Ta'ala will and guidance.
- 8 If Allah Ta'ala Himself tolerates mankind's error in seeking Him, the most important pillar of Islam, Muslims themselves should practise being more compassionate and empathetic in handling people's mistakes in all matters—a necessary process of personal discovery, education and development.
- 9 The abovementioned verses give credence to the importance of "experiential learning" as a means to bring people towards true faith and for other purposes.

Relevant values for *da'wah* include:

- a. *Da'wah* does not necessarily have to be in the form of a formal lecture. It can also be conducted via experiential learning. This method can be useful for religious education of children in the family by parents and at schools by Muslim educators.
- b. Different groups of people have different paths towards divine guidance because of their different learning styles.
- c. Muslims are encouraged to experiment, not being spoon-fed.
- d. Cultivating logical thinking, not dogmatic style, should be highly valued in learning Islam.

Virtue in Details



وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

“And Allah has (perfect) knowledge of all things.” (Al-Taghabun: 11)

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبُرِّ
وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلْمَةٍ
الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

“With Him are the keys of the unseen—no one knows them except Him. And He knows what is in the land and sea. Not even a leaf falls without His knowledge, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth or anything—green or dry—but is (written) in a perfect Record.” (Al-An’am: 59)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The verses above describe the characteristic of Allah Ta'ala, The All-Knowing. The first verse gave a brief description for the All-Knowing, meanwhile the same characteristic is described by the following verse in more details.

In reality, the first verse is sufficient to inform the All-Knowing nature of Allah Ta'ala.

- 2 The phrase "Allah has perfect knowledge of all things" has encompassed the meaning that everything is within the knowledge of Allah Ta'ala and there is not a single thing that is hidden from Him, not even a bacterium in the darkness.
- 3 The second verse which provides some examples detailing Allah's knowledge must be revealed with a purpose because there is nothing in the Qur'an that was revealed without any purpose to ponder.
- 4 One insight that can be concluded from the second verse is Allah's Ta'ala attention to detailed information.

This, thus, informs Muslims on the virtue of having detailed information in pursuit of knowledge as exemplified by Allah Ta'ala Himself.

Knowing details is useful as it:

- a. enables the production of quality products and initiatives
- b. facilitates in identifying solution in problem-solving process.
- c. helps in anticipating future circumstances for precaution purposes or in exploring opportunities

- d. benefits in understanding one's strengths and weaknesses
 - e. enables competitive advantage.
- 5 The *Da'wah* community should also give attention to detailed information because it is a recognised virtue in the Qur'an in addition to producing more quality, effectiveness, and competitiveness in *da'wah*.
 - 6 Knowing details demands dedication of energy, time, and financial resources. Many Muslims including the *da'wah* community tend to overlook this issue as they regard putting efforts into gathering detailed information as an inconvenience. They are also reluctant to provide a budget for the effort. This incorrect mindset must be changed as it is not in line with the abovementioned verses because the lack of detailed information can be a detriment to an individual and the *da'wah* community.
 - 7 Admittedly, human's knowledge will never be perfect. However, this should not be a reason for Muslims to shun away from acquiring details when comprehending relevant *da'wah* matters. Should Muslims stop studying, considering that their knowledge will always be imperfect regardless of their high qualifications? The answer is an emphatic no!

Encouraging “Differentiated Approach”



وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ

“Divorced women must **wait three monthly cycles...**” (Al-Baqarah: 228)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ طَلَقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ
أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ تَعْتَدُونَهَا فَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ
وَسَرَّحُوهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا

“O believers! If you marry believing women and then divorce them before you touch them, **they will have no waiting period for you to count**, so give them a (suitable) compensation, and let them go graciously.” (Al-Ahzab: 49)

وَاللَّيِّ يَسِّنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ إِنْ أَرَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ
أَشْهُرٍ وَاللَّيِّ لَمْ يَحِضْنَ وَأُولَتْ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ

حَمَلُهُنَّ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا

“As for your women past the age of menstruation, in case you do not know, their waiting period is three months, and those who have not menstruated as well. As for those who are pregnant, their waiting period ends with delivery. And whoever is mindful of Allah, He will make their matters easy for them.” (Al-Talaq: 4)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The three verses mentioned above are about rulings of *'iddah* for a wife that has been divorced by her husband.

'Iddah is a “waiting period” a divorced woman must observe during which she is not allowed to marry another man. One of its purposes is to provide a calm period for the husband and wife to reconcile. It serves also to ascertain that the wife does not carry the child of the prior husband to clearly establish the lineage and responsibility towards the unborn child.

- 2 Allah Ta‘ala established different rulings for wives after divorce prior to the circumstances mentioned in the three verses above, which are:
 - a. Three *quruu'* (three cycles of menstruation) for divorced women who experience menstruation (Al-Baqarah: 228)
 - b. Three lunar months for divorced women who have not menstruated or past the age of menstruation (Al-Talaq: 4)

- c. Giving birth for divorced women who are pregnant (Al-Talaq: 4)
 - d. There is no *'iddah* for a divorced woman whose marriage is not consummated. (Al-Ahzab: 49)
- 3 The point that will be focused on here is the reason why Allah Ta'ala established different rulings for *'iddah* and not a single uniform one.
 - 4 Different rulings on *'iddah* represent the evidence that Islam recognises contextual differences when establishing a ruling (*hukm*).

This also validates that the principle of contextualising Islamic rulings based on human circumstances is found in the Qur'an, and not necessarily an attempt to suit one's whims and fancy or a violation of Islamic principles.

- 5 This also confirms that a differentiated approach to formulating Islamic ruling has validation from the Qur'an.
- 6 Differentiated approach in thinking should be regarded as a virtue for Muslims to acquire because it represents Allah's Ta'ala principle for His *shari'ah*.
- 7 Having one fixed ruling pertaining to the issue of *'iddah* is indeed easier but it does not provide justice to those observing this ruling.

On the contrary, a tendency towards one fixed ruling for any issues may potentially result in developing a simplistic mindset which is not in line with Islam's idea of an excellent Muslim.

An excellent Muslim is determined by his intellect and

a good and quality intellect is “the one that is capable to perform complex thinking process such as putting things into different categories methodologically and accurately, instead of lumping everything in one single “basket”. This is a basic function of scientific thinking and endeavour.

Fixating everything into one uniform ruling is also inconsistent with Allah’s Ta’ala creations. The Qur’an clearly affirms that Allah Ta’ala creates the universe with diversity, and variety, not with rigid uniformity.

Inability of Muslims to think in differentiated approaches will have effect on their ability to perform the role of *khalifah* of Allah Ta’ala in this world successfully.

Differentiated approach in *da’wah* is more challenging, but also a virtue enjoined upon Muslims by the Qur’an.

A Verse of the Qur'an Enough for Becoming a Righteous Muslim



لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ
الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ
وَعَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ
السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَعَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ
وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ
وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

“Righteousness is not in turning your faces towards the east or the west. Rather, **the righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Books, and the prophets; who give charity out of their cherished wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, (needy) travellers, beggars, and for freeing captives; who establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and keep the pledges they make; and who are patient in times of suffering, adversity, and in (the heat of) battle. It is they**

who are true (in faith), and it is they who are mindful (of Allah).” (Al-Baqarah: 177)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verse describes the traits of *taqwa* (piousness), what it takes to become a pious person (*muttaqin*)—the core value of Islam and aim of *da'wah*.
- 2 The traits of *taqwa* are as follows:
 - a. Belief in Allah Ta'ala, the Day of Judgement, angels, the holy books that Allah Ta'ala revealed, the prophets, or in a simpler term, belief in the Six Articles of Faith.
 - b. Performing obligatory prayers and extracting *zakat*, or in another words, practising the Five Pillars of Islam.
 - c. Having care and concern towards the surrounding.
 - d. Showing compassion through charity work—providing aid to those who are less fortunate among family members and community and those who are oppressed (e.g., poor, travelers and slaves).
 - e. Fulfilling all promises and contractual obligations or in the modern term known as professional duties.
 - f. Patience in facing life challenges.
 - g. Having wealth. Without the possession of wealth, a Muslim will not have the capability to give charity or *zakat*, as commanded by the above verse. This highlights

the importance of hard work because wealth cannot be earned and accumulated without due effort.

- 3 A righteous Muslim is someone who is:
 - a. diligent in various fields:
 - i. *Ibadah* (act of worship, in spiritual dimension)
 - ii. Doing charity work in the community (society and political dimensions)
 - iii. Hardworking (economical dimension)
 - b. unselfish
 - c. thoughtful of other people
 - d. actively contributing for the society
 - e. philanthropist
 - f. not a liability to others
 - g. patient (also steadfast, resilient, and other related meanings) when enduring hardship
 - h. loving and caring
 - i. trustworthy, truthful, honest, responsible, and professional
 - j. abstaining from cheating, unprofessional conduct, bribery, etc.
 - k. responsible towards oneself, family, and the community
 - l. intellectually and ethically excellent.
- 4 The abovementioned verse is sufficient to guarantee a Muslim's righteousness and success if pondered upon deeply.

- 5 If this single Qur'anic verse is capable in displaying its potential in shaping mankind towards becoming better; we can just imagine the immense positive effect of the entire Qur'an when its contents are embraced and applied in our daily life.

Lower the Voice



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ

“O believers! **Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak loudly to him** as you do to one another, or your deeds will become void while you are unaware.” (Al-Hujurat: 2)

وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَأَعْضُضْ مِن صَوْتِكَ ۚ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ

“Be moderate in your pace. **And lower your voice**, for the ugliest of all voices is certainly the braying of donkeys.” (Luqman: 19)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 Verse 2 from Surah Al-Hujurat was revealed as a reminder for several companions who were conversing between one another with loud voices in the presence of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, causing him some discomfort.
- 2 Meanwhile, verse 19 of Surah Luqman represents one of Luqman's advice to his son on good conduct (*akhlaq*) as a lesson for every Muslim.
- 3 Both verses consist of an important etiquette for Muslims to observe when having a conversation—speak softly and avoid loud voices when speaking among themselves or in the presence of others.

Though it might not seem to be a problem to speak loudly with the group of people involved in the conversation, it is still recommended to avoid such a practice as it may cause discomfort to others. In addition, speaking softly when having a conversation is a good universal ethic that Muslims should be exemplary to others.

- 4 Islam dislikes loudmouth behaviour as it is impolite and uncomfortable for most people. Islam regards this seriously in view of the harsh warning mentioned in Al-Hujurat: 2 and the donkey description given to those who practise such behaviour in Luqman: 19.

A thoughtful Muslim should avoid this rude behaviour and should not do this intentionally just for the sake of public attention.

An exception can only be given to those with a naturally high pitch voice. Therefore, they are blameless as the choice of

their voices is not in their hands. However, they are likewise encouraged to avoid any unnecessary loudness.

- 5 Muslims must also be mindful of the tone and pitch of their voice, which is to lower their voice in situations such as:
 - a. Meetings, particularly when discussing heated and controversial matters.
 - b. Conversing through mobile phone or with friends in public places such as MRT, buses, airplanes, or when queuing.
 - c. Cheering when watching a game.
- 6 The abovementioned lessons are also relevant in modern modes of communication such as texting. The etiquette also applies for online communication.
- 7 Islam is a religion that promotes good manners and etiquette to the extent that even a Muslim's tone of voice has guidelines. Muslims should strive as much as possible to show good example by practicing good manners and etiquette.
- 8 The objective of the etiquette is to avoid causing nuisance and annoyance in the presence of others. This consideration is supported by an authentic *hadith*, where The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue or his hands. And a *Muhajir* (an emigrant) is the one who gives up (abandons) all what Allah has forbidden." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari)

This lesson in manners and etiquette can be applicable to all relationships, even though the *hadith* speaks on relationships amongst Muslims.

Qur'anic Guidance on Receiving and Spreading of News and Information



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا
قَوْمًا بِجَهْلَةٍ فَتُصِحُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

“O believers, **if an evildoer brings you any news, verify (it) so you do not harm people unknowingly**, becoming regretful for what you have done.” (Al-Hujurat: 6)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verse describes an etiquette that Muslims should observe before spreading or upon receiving news and information.
- 2 This verse applies to news brought by *any* person, although it was revealed specifically referring to a *fasiq* (impious person).

- 3 This verse commands Muslims to verify the authenticity of the information received, and before forwarding it to others. Believing in unverified news and information may result in unjust treatment of others such ill-feeling, suspicion and prejudice.
- 4 The command for Muslims to verify the validity of news or reports implies Islam's warning against spreading news and information that are not confirmed to be true yet, i.e., rumours, hearsays, and gossips.
- 5 This, thus, informs that spreading news that have been verified as fake, false or slanderous are much more reprehensive in Islam.
- 6 It is *haram* for a Muslim to deliberately spread fake news or slander, even if he is not the person who created the news or slander. Doing so will be regarded as equal as the one who created the fake news and slander. He must repent and immediately stop the act or retract the news or statements that have been shared.
- 7 This verse recommends the verification of the news coming from an impious person, not outright rejection because of the probability of it being true, despite the person's flawed character. This highlights an important point for Muslims not to be quick in dismissing and to abstain from being prejudice towards an impious (*fasiq*) person because it does not automatically make him a liar.

Likewise, this verse provides guidelines for Muslims in handling doubtful information and news sources. Thorough investigations should be conducted through other authentic sources instead of outright rejection.

- 8 There are also legal ramifications in spreading false news and information. A perpetrator will be at risk of prosecution under the Protection of Online Falsehood and Manipulations Act or may face criminal charges or civil suits for defamation.
- 9 A Muslim who hides behind a false identity in the cyberspace while spreading false news and information may be safe from the legal authorities but be aware that Allah Ta'ala is the most Vigilant and the All-Knowing and He will surely reckon and judge every action in this world and the Hereafter.
- 10 The lessons from the abovementioned verse are also beneficial for those who are involved in research, journalism, social media content creation and many other fields.

Qur'anic Guidelines on Managing Conflicts



وَإِن طَآئِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأْضَلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاِذَا
بَغَتْ اِحْدَهُمَا عَلَى الْاُخْرَى فَقْتُلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَقِيءَ اِلَى
اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ فَاِذَا فَاَءَتْ فَأْضَلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَاَقْسَطُوا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

“And if two groups of believers fight each other, then make peace between them. But if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight against the transgressing group until they (are willing to) submit to the rule of Allah. If they do so, then make peace between both (groups) in all fairness and act justly. Surely Allah loves those who uphold justice.” (Al-Hujurat: 9)

اِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ اِخْوَةٌ فَأْضَلِحُوا بَيْنَ اٰخْوَانِكُمْ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تُرْحَمُونَ

“The believers are but one brotherhood, **so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allah** so you may be shown mercy.” (Al-Hujurat: 10)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses provide guidelines for Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and Muslims on managing conflicts between individuals or groups within the community during the time of revelation.

However, the verses were generally applied by classical Muslim scholars to matters pertaining to rebellion (*bugha*) against Muslim rulers.

- 2 Although the verses specifically refer to conflicts between Muslims, they can also be applied for conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims, or amongst non-Muslims.
- 3 It is learned from the verses that the first step in handling conflicts between two parties is to make peace between conflicting parties—to manage the disagreements so as not to cause conflict that would harm social harmony or public security.
- 4 It must be pointed out that the verses should not be understood to prohibit differences in opinions because Islam regards them as inevitable and natural. In fact, Islam encourages diverse views as long they do not lead to conflict that may cause hatred and devastation to public harmony.

- 5 The verses do not command Muslims who deal with conflicts between two parties to identify and choose the correct side. Muslims should give priority to immediate de-escalation or de-conflict, even if the truth side is known.

This is because conveying truth is difficult during conflict situation as it involves emotions of both sides that may debilitates one's rational mind.

Furthermore, a party may be right in its claims but may express their rights defense with incorrect manners such as the use of aggression. In such circumstances, the right party is also to be blamed and should be corrected as Islam demands Muslims to not only stand for their rights, but to do so with wisdom and kind advice. (Refer to Surah Al-Nahl: 125)

Therefore, wisdom lies in de-escalating conflicts first, rather than choosing sides.

- 6 This understanding co-relates with Islam's pro-peace and justice inherent character in *da'wah*.
- 7 The phrase "...But if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight against the transgressing group until they (are willing to) submit to the rule of Allah..." informs that punitive action is permissible against those who insist to resume the conflict when peaceful options are made available or choose to breach conflict cessation terms that have been agreed upon. The punishment can be in the form of armed action if it involves armed group, even if the party is on the side of truth.
- 8 Although the verses permit armed action against any party that transgresses and are disobeys the rule of Allah Ta'ala, the

majority of Sunni scholars are of the view that such action should not be applied against oppressive Muslim leaders.

- 9 The scholars are remarkably strict when it comes to allowing Muslims to raise weapons against Muslim rulers even if they are tyrannical and oppressive because, often, such an act will result in greater harm to the Muslim community. However, this does not mean that Muslims are to be passive when facing tyrannical ruler. But rather, they are encouraged to utilise peaceful *da'wah*, patience, and perseverance to effect positive change as mentioned in verse 125 of Surah Al-Nahl, and Allah's Ta'ala guidance for both Prophet Musa a.s and Prophet Harun a.s when told to deliver *da'wah* to Fir'aun in verses 43 and 44 of Surah Taha.

- 10 It can also be deduced from the verses that conflicts may possibly occur amongst Muslims. There were conflicts that occurred amongst the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ such as the Battle of Siffin between Mu'awiyah r.a and Ali r.a and the Battle of the Camel between Aisyah r.a and Ali r.a.

Thus, Muslims should be realistic with their relationship amongst fellow Muslims and avoid romanticising it. Being realistic allows Muslims to think of preventive measures and to have the right attitude whenever such conflicts occur within Muslim community.

Therefore, conflict management is an important skill for *da'wah* leaders and activists.

- 11 The Qur'an regards warring parties as the believers, which means a person is not out of the religion of Islam even though he is involved in an armed conflict with other Muslims.

This means the parties may be considered sinners, but not necessarily ruled as disbelievers.

If Muslims who have transgressed God's limits are labelled as disbelievers, it is even more important to be mindful not to use derogative language for Muslims holding a different view in religious or life issues.

- 12 Verse 10 of Surah Al-Hujurat highlights the importance of *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) and *taqwa* (piety) when managing conflicts. Undoubtedly, cultivating such values require long-term efforts. Thus, it is important to cultivate these values among Muslims so they can be garnered should conflicts emerge in the future.
- 13 This informs on the importance of values in shaping Muslims' behaviour. Islam is a religion that encourages the good behaviour of an individual not only through social conditionings, but also through internalisation of good values.

Avoiding Mockery and Name-calling



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا
خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ ۗ وَلَا
تَمْرُؤُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَرُوا بِاللِّقَابِ ۗ بئْسَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ
الْإِيمَانِ ۗ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُم الظَّالِمُونَ

“O believers! **Do not let some (men) ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let (some) women ridicule other women, they may be better than them. Do not defame one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames.** How evil it is to act rebelliously after having faith! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the (true) wrongdoers.” (Al-Hujurat: 11)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verse serves as Allah's Ta'ala admonishment towards numerous incidents involving several male and female Muslims uttering offensive remarks and names towards other Muslims.
- 2 Islam forbids the immoral act of mockery, spewing insults, and making fun of someone in all forms.

They are forbidden because those who committed them are not necessarily better, even though they may be objectively richer or having higher qualifications or superior rank. The receiving party of such insults might possess more qualities that are hidden from others. Furthermore, one's honourable status in the eyes of Allah Ta'ala is based on the quality of *ibadah* and purity of his heart.

In today's context, actions that can fall under the above verse may include:

- a. Creating or sharing of "memes", "sticker", "gif" that contain images that belittle or mock a person.
 - b. Committing pranks that degrade one's dignity in front of others.
 - c. "Trolling" online or ridiculing a person's characteristics.
- 3 The abovementioned verse also serves as evidence for the forbiddance of exposing someone's flaws (*'aib*) in the real or virtual world.

Such examples are:

- a. Shaming and making fun of a friend by snapping a picture of him drooling while sleeping with his mouth wide open and sharing it with others that may eventually hurt his feelings.
 - b. Shaming an individual in the presence of others in a meeting by angrily exposing his flaws and weaknesses on the account of his mistakes.
- 4 This verse forbids acts that degrade a person's dignity which may include referring to a person with offensive and insulting nicknames such as "shorty", "fatty", "kaypoh king" and "Peah Pekak".

However, the most despised is the act of name-calling that indicts a person's piety without valid evidence (e.g., labelling someone as *fasiq* (morally corrupt), *ahlul bid'ah* (heretic), or *munafiq* (hypocrite). Should these claims be untrue, it may eventually bounce back to the accusers themselves.

- 5 The acts mentioned in the verse are admonished because they may potentially lead to hatred and animosity amongst mankind.
- 6 The abovementioned verse represents one of many verses in the Qur'an that underscore Islam's attention to good *akhlaq*. Thus, a good Muslim must strive to practise good *akhlaq* all the time.

Avoiding Prohibited Assumptions (Excessive Suspicions)



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ
إِثْمٌ

“O believers! **Avoid many suspicions, (for) indeed, some suspicions are sinful...**” (Al-Hujurat: 12)

إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنفُسُ ۗ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِّن
رَّبِّهِمُ الْهُدَىٰ

“...They follow nothing but (inherited) assumptions and whatever (their) souls desire, although (true) guidance has already come to them from their Lord.” (Al-Najm: 23)

إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ ۗ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا

“...They follow nothing but (inherited) assumptions. **And surely assumptions can in no way replace the truth.**” (Al-Najm: 28)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 Allah Ta'ala commands through the abovementioned verses to abstain from having wrongful suspicions towards others (Al-Hujurat: 12) and to abstain from believing something on the basis of assumptions. (Al-Najm: 23 and 28)
- 2 Foul assumption must be abstained as it opens doors of sin such as having prejudicial thought, backbiting, gossiping, slandering and spreading rumours in real or virtual life.

Acting on foul assumption may have legal ramifications and lead to lawsuits concerning slander and spreading of rumours.
- 3 The Qur'an disallows Muslims to believe something based on mere conjecture. Muslims should verify the authenticity and veracity of the information they come across; in particular, divine knowledges concerning *aqidah*, *akhlaq*, and *'ibadah*.
- 4 It should be understood that the abovementioned verses is not an argument for outright rejection of assumptions, and the obligation to hold onto knowledge which is absolute in its authenticity. Such understanding may lead to rejection of many scientific studies and limiting right knowledge to those that are based on divine revelations only, experienced before by the Christians.
- 5 Forbidden assumptions meant by the verses refer to those that are purely speculative, random in nature or unmethodological. Knowledge derived from methodological scientific research does not fall under the prohibited assumptions mentioned in the verse because Islam recognises the imperfection in Man's

knowledge—a trait that Allah Ta‘ala created in Man and reserves for Himself.

- 6 If all speculative information is bound to be rejected by the Qur’an, Muslims in the past would not have achieved advancement in civilisation.
- 7 Also, outright rejection of all speculative evidence will affect justice system. If judges are required to make decisions or orders based on absolute truth only, many people would lose their rights due to the lack of evidence that that is hundred percent true. Many criminals too would escape from justice as evidence presented against them would be rejected for its speculative nature.
- 8 The Qur’an itself was designed by Allah Ta‘ala to contain verses open to various interpretations with the purpose of enabling mankind to analyse and ponder deeper towards deeper understanding. The Qur’an’s openness to diverse interpretations and opinions enables Islam to be a religion that is versatile and adaptable across different places, cultures and generations.
- 9 There is an agreement between the Qur’an and modern science on the use of speculative evidence and opinions, that they can be used to support a theory or theological view/ruling if they are based on accepted scientific methodology, not random speculation.

The Prohibition of Backbiting



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ
إِثْمٌ ۖ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن
يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ

رَحِيمٌ

“O believers! Avoid many suspicions, (for) indeed, some suspicions are sinful. **And do not spy, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of their dead brother? You would despise that!** And fear Allah. Surely Allah is (the) Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.” (Al-Hujurat: 12)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 This verse contains prohibition of backbiting. Backbiting is when a person speaks about another person's flaws or shortcomings behind his back as mentioned in the *hadith* below;

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: "Do you know what is backbiting? They (the Companions) said: Allah and His Messenger know best. Thereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: Backbiting implies your talking about your brother in a manner which he does not like." (Narrated by Muslim)

- 2 Muslims scholars have concluded that backbiting is a grave sin because it is mentioned together with other heinous acts (i.e., having ill assumptions and spying), akin it to eating the flesh of dead person (Surah Al-Hujurat: 12), and requires repentance from whoever committing it.
- 3 It is interesting to note the sequential mention of the act of backbiting which comes after the act of having ill assumptions and the act of spying on a person's personal affairs. This signifies the connection between these three acts.
- 4 This verse contains a valuable lesson in highlighting how sin begets more sin. Therefore, a Muslim should strive to abstain from committing any sinful act. They must also repent as soon as they realise their error.
- 5 Gossip appears when one holds an ill assumption towards another person. Consequently, this results in peeking into the privacy and secrets of the other party. What follows is the leaking of secrets to others. At times, when it does not involve

digging into a person's secrets, the act of backbiting may still exist due to one's evil desires and the whispers of *shaitan*.

- 6 Thus, it is important for Muslims to avoid having ill assumptions and listening to false rumours (Al-Hujurat: 6) because they beget other serious sins such as spying and backbiting.
- 7 The prohibition in the mentioned verse is expressed in a general manner therefore it applies to backbiting of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The verse likens the equivalently *haram* acts of backbiting with the act of eating the flesh of his own kind regardless of the flesh belonging to a righteous or non-righteous person.

- 8 "Backbiting" can be permissible. Muslim scholars permit "backbiting" under following circumstances:
 - a. When reporting a person's wrongdoings and crimes to authorities.
 - b. When filing complaint to authorities for seeking justice.
 - c. When seeking *fatwa* from a Mufti pertaining to actions that were committed by another person.
 - d. When there is a need to warn others about the evil of a corrupt person such as scammers.

The Prohibition of Spying



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ
إِثْمٌ ۖ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن
يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ
رَّحِيمٌ

“O believers! Avoid many suspicions, (for) indeed, some suspicions are sinful. **And do not spy**, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of their dead brother? You would despise that! And fear Allah. Surely Allah is (the) Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.” (Al-Hujurat: 12)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 This verse contains Allah’s Ta’ala prohibitions pertaining to the act of spying and infringing on other’s privacy.
- 2 The act of spying refers to the act of collecting another party’s personal details without any authorisation or his permission. Its purpose could be to attain details pertaining to the other party’s flaws or personal details normally kept private.
- 3 A *hadith* mentions the same prohibition on spying:

“A man peeped into the house of the Prophet ﷺ through a hole while the Prophet ﷺ was scratching his head with a *midrai* (a certain kind of comb). On that the Prophet ﷺ said (to him): If I had known you had been looking, then I would have pierced your eye with that instrument, because the asking of permission has been ordained so that one would not see things unlawfully.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari)
- 4 According to Muslim scholars, the prohibition in the *hadith* has a preventive purpose—to prevent other prohibited acts such as looking at a person’s *awrah*, flaws or private affairs leading to backbiting, gossiping and others.
- 5 The prohibition is applicable to any form of personal space (physical or electronic) such as workspace, mobile phone, letter, note, or email, etc.
- 6 In today’s context, the act of spying is synonymous with other actions such as:
 - a. Doxxing; which is the act of finding, exposing, or leaking a someone’s personal information and identity online without their consent for harassment purpose.

- b. Planting hidden cameras in someone's private spaces such as bathrooms, bedrooms, hotel rooms, and workspaces.
 - c. Voyeurism: spying onto someone in their private space directly or through any implanted devices for sexual pleasure.
 - d. Accessing someone's personal information by hacking into their personal account and devices.
 - e. These acts mentioned above are not only prohibited under the laws of Islam, but also criminally punishable under the laws of Singapore.
- 7 However, these prohibited acts are permissible under exceptional circumstances such as:
- a. Enforcement officers with a warrant and authority to gain access to a person's personal spaces for investigative purposes.
 - b. Exposing someone's crimes and wrongful actions for the purpose of warning others when proper channels are no longer effective.
- 8 There is a story of Caliph Umar that can be found relating to the mentioned topic. The story reports that Caliph Umar r.a would conduct night patrols with his assistant supervising the affairs of his people. During one of his night patrols, Umar r.a and his assistant heard mumbling voices from a house. They both climbed onto the perimeter walls of the house to get a better view and discovered that the voice came from a person who was drunk from alcoholic drinks. Umar r.a. informed his assistant his resolve to arrest the person, but was reminded that they had crossed into the person's private space

(house) without his consent and transgressed the prohibition stipulated in verse 12 of Surah Al-Hujurat: 12. Umar r.a realised the mistake and left the place without taking any action against the person.

Muslim scholars offers this story as argument for the importance of ascertaining the truth through proper and right processes. Thus, it is not permissible to use unethical methods such as spying for the purpose of establishing truth or justice. This should be a guiding principle too in journalism, academic research, judiciary, and law enforcement.

- 9 However, there are exceptions to the rule. The act of spying does not apply to intelligence agencies whose primary role is to protect national security from internal and external threats.

There are many *dalils* reporting the Prophet's ﷺ use of intelligence gathering operations to maintain the security of Madinah and Muslims during his lifetime:

- a. Rasululllah ﷺ once appointed a spy or an informant in Mecca to provide information regarding the movement of his enemies.
 - b. Rasululllah ﷺ sent reconnaissance teams or individuals to spy on the enemies before heading into battle. Rasululllah ﷺ kept a name list of hypocrites to surveil them for the security of Madinah.
- 10 However, there are boundaries in the use of spying that must not be transgressed, even by national intelligence agencies. Unless the purpose is for protection of national security, the act of spying is considered *haram* in such situations:

- a. Spying for the purpose of taking away people's basic rights and controlling their freedom.
- b. Spying for the purpose of strengthening tyrannical power.

This is because the Qur'an condemns tyrannical figures such as Firaun and Nimrud.

Admittedly, there are grey areas pertaining to this issue. Conversion and consultation between the people, government and scholars should be the way in coming to a decision in this matter.

From Muslim to *Mu'min*



قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ ءَامَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا
يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ
مِّنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“(Some of) the nomadic Arabs say, “We believe.” Say, (O Prophet,) “You have not believed. But say, ‘We have submitted,’ for faith has not yet entered your hearts. But if you obey Allah and His Messenger (wholeheartedly), He will not discount anything from (the reward of) your deeds. Allah is truly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Al-Hujurat: 14)

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا
بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ

“The (true) believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger—never doubting—and strive with their

wealth and their lives in the cause of Allah. They are the ones true in faith.” (Al-Hujurat: 15)

قُلْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ اللَّهَ بِدِينِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

Say, “Do you inform Allah of your faith, **when Allah (already) knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth? And Allah has (perfect) knowledge of all things.**” (Al-Hujurat: 16)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses were revealed upon leaders of several Arab tribes who had just converted to Islam. Proud of their status and power in the eyes of other Arab tribes, they boasted Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was indebted to them as their conversion to Islam had contributed to his expanding power.

However when the Prophet ﷺ invited them to migrate to him so they could provide direct contribution to Madinah and participate in *jihad*, they refused and gave excuses.

The verses were revealed to condemn their actions and to serve as a reminder for the Muslims.

- 2 Verse 14 of Surah Al-Hujurat highlights that people of those tribes had only become Muslims and are yet to be regarded as true believers (*Mu'min*).

In this perspective, Muslim is a station lower than *Mu'min*. Every *Mu'min* is a Muslim, but not every Muslim is a *Mu'min*.

The perspective is supported by a popular *hadith* in which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ explained the meaning of *Islam* first, followed by the meaning of *Iman* and *Ihsan*, when he was asked by Jibril in front of his companions

- 3 The traits of a *Mu'min*, are revealed in verse 15 of Surah Al-Hujurat:
 - a. Belief in Allah Ta'ala as the only God and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is His Messenger
 - b. Having the belief with conviction or without doubt
 - c. Ever ready to perform *jihad* in the cause of Allah Ta'ala.
- 4 The phrase “without doubt” does not mean having zero doubt. It refers to the type that will lead to apostasy as exemplified by Arab tribes who embraced Islam after the downfall of Quraysh or after the conquest of Makkah due to the change in political circumstances, or out of convenience, rather than attesting their true belief in Islam. Many of them returned to their old, misguided religion after the passing of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Doubt in a Muslim may happen throughout his life. It reflects the imperfect nature of human being and a form of test from Allah Ta'ala so Muslim will constantly strive to strengthening his faith in life. There are many reports and stories of righteous scholars and figures who experienced doubts during their lifetime that validate it as a natural and inevitable life phenomenon.

- 5 “Without doubt” refers to firm conviction in a Muslim’s heart —not based on verbal expression of the *shahadah* only, or due to birth or glorified social status.
- 6 From the Qur’an’s perspective, this must be achieved through attainment of right knowledge, acquired from the study of God’s “*kawniyyah*” (creations) and “*Qur’aniyyah*” (Qur’anic) verses (*ayat*).
- 7 Islam recognises the positive role of social status and material power for *da’wah*. However, both should not be mistaken as the true indicator of a strong faith. *Da’wah*’s main priority is to cultivate strong faith in people, not merely to take advantage of their social status and material power.
- 8 The word *jihad* mentioned in verse 15 of Surah Al-Hujurat must be understood in a wider meaning which encompasses any form of contribution in the cause of Allah’s Ta’ala religion, not narrowly restricted to armed *jihad*.

Jihad is mentioned after *Iman* in the verse which implies the command to strengthening *Iman* first, before engaging in *jihad* in the cause of Allah Ta’ala.

This is also the principle of *da’wah* where Muslims are educated with basic foundations of the religion (belief in God and the Prophet) first, before doing *da’wah*.

- 9 This serves as reminder for *da’wah* organisations when promoting *da’wah* activism among youths. It is important to establish systematic development of *da’wah* activists that gives attention to cultivating strong faith and acquiring good religious knowledge. *Da’wah* that is carried out solely on youthful enthusiasm will experience “shortness of breath”

when facing intense hardships and tribulations. Poorly prepared *da'wah* activists may bring disrepute to *da'wah* due to their misconduct.

- 10 Both *iman* and *taqwa* that are attached to the heart of a believer can only be known by Allah Ta'ala (Al-Hujurat: 16), but they must be manifested in direct contributions to *da'wah* to Allah's Ta'ala religion, and not just performance of rituals (*'ibadat*).
- 11 Do not be too contented or comfortable with our own level of *iman* and *taqwa* as we might probably be regarded to be otherwise in the eyes of Allah Ta'ala.

Likewise, do not judge a person being unrighteous solely from their appearance as the quality of *iman* in their hearts may be more valuable than of ours in the eyes of Allah Ta'ala.

Bragging about One's Own *Da'wah* Accomplishments



يَمُنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسَأَمُوا قُلَّ لَا تَمُنُوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُمْ بَلِ اللَّهُ
يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَيْتُكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“They regard their acceptance of Islam as a favour to you. Tell (them, O Prophet), “Do not regard your Islam as a favour to me. Rather, it is Allah Who has done you a favour by guiding you to the faith, if (indeed) you are faithful.” (Al-Hujurat: 17)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Surely Allah knows the unseen of the heavens and earth. And Allah is All-Seeing of what you do.” (Al-Hujurat: 18)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The revelation of the abovementioned verses serves as reminder towards several leaders of Arabian tribes who were boasting about their contributions towards Islam to an extent that they believed Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was indebted to them.
- 2 The verses above serve as reminder for Muslims who are actively involved in *da'wah* works to be mindful when it comes to highlighting their *da'wah* contributions. They must not follow the condemned actions of the Arabian tribes mentioned above.
- 3 Verse 17 of Surah Al-Hujurat states the proper character for Muslims who have had or are willing to contribute to the cause of Allah Ta'ala by expressing gratitude towards Allah Ta'ala for allowing this contribution to happen which enables their actions to count for their deeds in life of the Hereafter.

A Muslim's involvements in *da'wah* will not be possible without Allah's Ta'ala guidance. There are other worldly things that can preoccupy our time, energy, resources such as hobbies like sports, socialising, pets, etc. It is precisely Allah's Ta'ala guidance itself that has moved the faith as well as encouraging Muslims to contribute in *da'wah*.

- 4 Other than Allah's Ta'ala holy guidance, He is the One who grants the strength to consistently be involved in *da'wah* efforts despite the challenges that lie ahead.
- 5 Through this perspective, every *da'wah* activist is technically indebted to Allah Ta'ala as the "boss" of their *da'wah* works as He is the one that has appointed a person to contribute to His

religion whereby He could appoint and send His guidance to another. This sentiment is mentioned in several verses of the Qur'an such as verse 133 of Surah Al-Nisa', verse 54 of Surah Al-Ma'idah, verse 19 and 20 of Surah Ibrahim, and verse 38 of Surah Muhammad.

- 6 This does not mean that Muslims are prohibited from speaking about their contributions in *da'wah*. As a matter of fact, the Qur'an permits Muslims to speak on good deeds that they have done (Al-Baqarah: 271). Prophet Ibrahim a.s likewise prayed to Allah Ta'ala that people would mention or remember his name for the contributions and the legacy that he had left behind. (Al-Shu'ara': 84).

However, it should be carried out with the sole purpose to encourage and inspire others to perform good deeds and make contributions in the cause of Allah Ta'ala. The issue lies in the attitude of bragging or leveraging their actions over other people that ultimately results in humiliating and hurting the feelings of others. Such attitudes stem arrogance and insincerity.

- 7 Verse 18 of Surah Al-Hujurat serves as reminder that the value of *da'wah* lies in neither its quality nor its quantity but instead on the faith and sincerity contained in the heart, hidden from the eyes of many, yet visible to the eyes of Allah Ta'ala, who is the Most Knowing of all that is in our hearts.
- 8 Large contributions for the sake of Allah Ta'ala are valuable for both the community and the contributors themselves in this world. However, it is invaluable in the eyes of Allah Ta'ala and unbeneficial for them in the Day of Judgement should they have no faith nor sincerity.

- 9 Therefore, Muslims must be cognizant of Allah's Ta'ala pleasure (*rida*) first and foremost, before seeking recognition and praise from other people. Muslims must not be disappointed should there be no or little recognition from others. Allah's Ta'ala recognition is far more valuable. Unlike human beings, Allah Ta'ala does not overlook even the smallest deeds of His servants. (Al-Hujurat: 18)

Allah's Ta'ala Holistic Approach When Judging Mankind



وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا فَتُحْتَأَمُّ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا ۗ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَىٰ الْكَافِرِينَ

“Those who disbelieved will be driven to Hell in (successive) groups. When they arrive there, its gates will be opened and its keepers will ask them: “Did messengers not come to you from among yourselves, reciting to you the revelations of your Lord and warning you of the coming of this Day of yours?” The disbelievers will cry, “Yes (indeed)! But the decree of torment has come to pass against the disbelievers.” (Al-Zumar: 71)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verse highlights Allah's Ta'ala comprehensive approach before throwing His servants to the Hellfire for their disbelief and disobedience towards His commands which were revealed to His prophets.
- 2 The Qur'an informs various factors Man are ordered to be thrown to the Hellfire:
 - a. the presence of Allah's Ta'ala messengers among them
 - b. the truth was duly explained with irrefutable evidence by the appointed messengers, not mere conveyance or delivery
 - c. the consequences of rejecting the truth were comprehensively explained.
- 3 The above points imply the presence of gradual and complex process to ensure that the truth has been delivered correctly and clearly before being *kufir* or disobedient be ruled.
- 4 This also points to a fact that Allah Ta'ala creates a systematic standard in determining whether someone is a disbeliever (*kafir*) or disobedient (*fajir*).
- 5 Allah's Ta'ala comprehensive approach can also be seen in the way He judges and punishes those who disbelieve and disobey Him. They will be asked once again to firmly ensure that they are guilty of their own wrongful belief before been thrown to the Hellfire.
- 6 One may ask why such events should occur when Allah Ta'ala is indeed the Most Knowing and the only Ruler in the

Hereafter—the Time where there will be no one capable in questioning Allah’s Ta’ala knowledge or challenging His judgements.

The answer is to provide lessons for Muslims on how justice should be carried out:

- a. Justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done.
 - b. Justice is not only about sentencing the guilty, but also about the processes before arriving to the sentence.
 - c. Even a sinner (whose sins are already known by Allah Ta’ala) has the right to be given due processes before a justice system. It is more important for the accused person whose guilt is uncertain in this life, be given due process too before being judged guilty.
 - d. Do not be too quick in judging a person, even if he is known to be sinner or disbeliever.
- 7 All the above points are important reflections in *da’wah*—do not be too quick to judge when dealing with someone whose *kufr* and sins are visible to the eyes. Muslims must not “play God”.
- 8 Before putting blame on disbelievers and sinners for their disbelief and disobedience, Muslims must be sure beforehand that proper *da’wah* process has been put for truth to be considered clearly and truly explained, not mere conveyance and delivery, to them.

Miracles of the Qur'an—Human Body Parts as Witnesses in the Hereafter



حَتَّىٰ إِذَا مَا جَاءُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“When they reach it, **their ears, eyes, and skin will testify against what they used to do.**” (Al-Fussilat: 20)

وَقَالُوا لِمَ لَجُّوهُمْ لِمَ شَهِدْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ
كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

“They will ask their skin (furiously), “Why have you testified against us?” **It will say, “We have been made to speak by Allah, Who causes all things to speak. He (is the One Who) created you the first time, and to Him you were bound to return.**” (Al-Fussilat: 21)

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَنَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلَهُمْ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“On this Day We will seal their mouths, their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will testify to what they used to commit.” (Yaasin: 65)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 All three verses above affirm that the human body will have the capability to testify the sins committed in this life by their masters. None will be able to lie with his own tongue, deny the charges or accuse God for being unjust.
- 2 When these verses were revealed during the time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, it was mocked by Arabs who refused to accept the faith professed by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
- 3 However, many companions of the Prophet, as well as past Muslim scholars, who truly believed in the matter could only understand it as a metaphor (*majaz*). Others would only be able to say, “Allah Ta‘ala, the Most Powerful is capable in doing whatever He wills even if it cannot be comprehended by the human mind.”
- 4 However, modern scientific developments in DNA studies and modern digital technology may have given the revelation in this verse a new light, validating what is mentioned in the Qur’an 1500 years ago:
 - a. Scientific discoveries today have concluded that the human’s DNA chain can be used for data storage which can be then downloaded with the use of data retriever.

- b. Data retriever today likewise has the capability to automatically convert data to voice.
- 5 Therefore, it is not impossible that human DNA is capable to keep records of the actions of a human being which can be then downloaded and presented in forms of voices as though human bodies are able to speak.
- 6 It is important to note that this possibility is based only on current scientific developments compared with events 1500 years ago. Technologies will inevitably progress and develop in the future beyond our imagination today, as experienced by the Arabs and Muslims during the period of revelation. In addition, the “technology” that Allah Ta‘ala already has with Him are far more advanced as He is the Most Powerful and His knowledge are beyond human limits at present and the future.
- 7 The verses point to a miracle of the Qur’an to prove it is not a book written by a human being, but rather a true revelation from Allah Ta‘ala the Greatest of All and the All-Knowing.

Do *Da'wah* with Transparent and Clear Identity



فَأُصَدِّعُ بِمَا تُوْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضُ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“So proclaim what you have been commanded, and turn away from the polytheists.” (Al-Hijr: 94)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 Verse 94 in Surah Al-Hijr represents Allah's Ta'ala command to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to proclaim *da'wah* openly.
- 2 Open proclamation of *da'wah* in the verse refers not only to the message, but also to the Prophet's ﷺ identity, i.e., identify yourself as the Prophet ﷺ and make your message and mission known to all.

- 3 Some scholars believe this verse was revealed to end the period of behind closed door *da'wah* where Prophet Muhammad ﷺ practiced *da'wah fardiyyah* (interpersonal *da'wah*) during the first three years of prophethood. Despite this, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did not hide himself nor his identity from anyone. During these years, the people of Quraysh knew that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was conducting *da'wah* and calling people to Islam. However, they did not take any action against Prophet Muhammad ﷺ nor his followers because it did not pose a challenge to the existing status quo. This is a more accurate opinion pertaining to Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ preaching in the early years.
- 4 An important lesson here is that the Qur'an requires Muslims to be transparent in their identity when doing *da'wah* as how it was commanded upon and demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself.
- 5 Both Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ identity and personality were transparent. He had never hidden behind a pseudonym when doing *da'wah*.
- 6 As a matter of fact, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was well known by his community for his integrity and was recognised as *Al-Amin* (the trustworthy person).
- 7 The Qur'an demands, as per verse 94 in Surah Al-Hijr, that *da'wah* be founded not only on the quality of ideas but also the integrity of *da'wah* activists. For that, the identity must be transparent so it can be scrutinised.
- 8 This notion was translated into the *sanad* (chain of knowledge transmitters) system in Islamic intellectual tradition by past Muslim scholars.

In the *sanad* system, knowledge is measured by the continuity of the chain of transmission and by the credibility of every single chain (respective transmitter or the teacher). If one chain is invalid due to lacking in integrity, it will affect the quality of transmitted knowledge. One of the reasons that affect the integrity is when the identity of one of the transmitters in the *sanad* is not known.

- 9 Muslims who aspire to carry out *da'wah* must be transparent with their identity. They must not use pseudonyms, anonymous accounts, or profiles or even worse, imitating to be someone else. Identity fraud is prohibited even if it is done for the sake of *da'wah*.
- 10 Some Muslims seek to justify the use of anonymous identity when doing *da'wah* online with an argument, "look at what is being said, not who is saying it."

This argument has its flaws. In the first place, the statement is neither from the Qur'an nor a *hadith* to be used as definite *dalil* for *da'wah*. Nevertheless, it can still be used in a manner that does not contradict what has been clearly stipulated by the Qur'an and the conduct of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. For example, the statement is valid in a scenario where a theological fact is accepted as truth after properly checked even if it comes from less pious or knowledgeable person.

- 11 However, an exception can be made for a situation where Muslims are facing severe oppressions where the safety of life, family, and wealth will be jeopardised should their true identities be known when doing *da'wah*.

Emulating Allah's Ta'ala Beautiful Name— *Al-Malik* (the Ruler) and *Al-Qahhar* (the Ever Dominating)



يَوْمَ هُمْ بَارِزُونَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ لِّمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ
لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

“The Day all will appear (before Allah). Nothing about them will be hidden from Him. (He will ask,) **“Who does all authority belong to this Day? To Allah—the One, the Supreme!”** (Ghafir: 16)

الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

“Today every soul will be rewarded for what it has done. No injustice Today! **Surely Allah is swift in reckoning.**” (Ghafir: 17)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The above two verses links two of Allah's Ta'ala character, *Al-Malik* (the Ruler of the Day of Judgement) (Ghafir: 16) and *Al-Qahhar* (the Ever Dominating), with the swiftness of His reckonings (Ghafir: 17)—a phrase that represents Allah's Ta'ala justice.
- 2 These verses provide lessons for leaders such as the head of an organisation, managers, parents, governments, teachers, and so on that power must be exercised in an equitable and just manner.
- 3 Allah Ta'ala has demonstrated an example through the above verses that while one may seek a position of power; it is equally important for him to be just with the power that he has.
- 4 These verses also highlight the meaning of justice—to give what is rightful for a person or what he deserves (e.g. doing good begets goodness, and doing bad begets punishment) (Ghafir: 17).
- 5 However, justice falls not only on providing the rights deservedly but also be done in timely manner. This can be understood from the phrase of the following verse "... Surely Allah is swift in reckoning." (Ghafir: 17) which means that a person will not only receive an instant reward for doing a good deed, but will also receive a swift punishment for a wrong deed.
- 6 The Qur'an has set a standard for a good and effective judicial system. It should rely not only on right judgment and decision by a judge, but must also be done through proper and efficient processes.

- 7 Power comes with a price and rights come with responsibilities that must be fulfilled (such as looking after the welfare of those under our authority). Thus, husbands, parents, leaders, employers, service providers, and debtors must not delay the fulfillment of their responsibilities (e.g., household support, salary bonus, wages, and credits) towards their families, employees, clients, and lenders.
- 8 Power, be it the form of physical, wealth, intellect, or technology, must be executed in a just manner too.
- 9 Power that Allah Ta'ala has bestowed to a Muslim must be used to serve justice. Thus, Muslims must always take necessary precaution to avoid abuse of power such as using the position of power to bully, usurp the rights, or plot the downfall of others.

Facilitating Non-Muslims to Perform Their Religious Duties



وَقُلْ ءَامَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ ۖ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ۖ
اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ۖ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ ۖ لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۖ
اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

“...And say, “I believe in every Scripture Allah has revealed. And I am commanded to judge fairly among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. We will be accountable for our deeds and you for yours. There is no (need for) contention between us. Allah will gather us together (for judgment). And to Him is the final return.” (Al-Shura: 15)

وَلَوْلَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفُتَّتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ
وَالْجِبَالُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ كَانَتْ تَكْفُرُ ۗ وَلَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْصُرْنَا اللَّهُ لَمَا
كُنَّا مِنَ الْخَائِرِينَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

“...Had Allah not repelled (the aggression of) some people by means of others, destruction would have surely claimed monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which Allah’s Name is often mentioned. Allah will certainly help those who stand up for Him. Allah is truly All-Powerful, Almighty.” (Al-Hajj: 40)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses contain lessons regarding the relationship of a Muslim with people of other religions.
- 2 Verse 15 of Surah Al-Shura is a command from Allah Ta’ala to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that he must be fair and just to people of other religions. This should include a guarantee of their freedom to practise their own religions.
- 3 In another words, Non-Muslims living in a Muslim country cannot be prevented from practising their religious practices, as an individual or a community.

The right to practise the laws of their religion and operate their religious institutions such house of worships, schools, and religious courts should be granted.

Islam makes such treatment as a responsibility that is commanded upon Muslims Therefore, disobeying this command is *haram* and sinful in the eyes of Allah Ta’ala.

- 4 An example of such treatment can be found in a letter written by Saiyyidina Umar r.a to the Christians of Bayt Al-Maqdis.

The letter was recorded by Imam Al-Tabari in his well-known history book when describing the conquest of Bayt Al-Maqdis;

“In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is the assurance of safety which the servant of God, Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, has given to the people of Jerusalem. He has given them an assurance of safety for themselves for their property, their churches, their crosses, the sick and healthy of the city and for all the rituals which belong to their religion. Their churches will not be inhabited by Muslims and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their property will be damaged. They will not be forcibly converted...”

- 5 It is also reported in a *hadith* that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ once permitted a group of Christian priests from Najran to perform their prayers in his own mosque when they visited Madinah to gather information about Islam.

For more clarification, one can refer to a commentary by Dr. Zulkifli Albakri, Mufti for the Federal Territory of Malaysia, in *Risalah Bayan Linnas* no.89, who notes that the story is reported by Ibn Ishaq in *Sirah Ibn Ishaq*, Imam Ibn Kathir in *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azim*, 2/42, and Ibn Qayyim in *Ahkam Ahl Al-Zimmah*, 1/397 and *Zad Al-Ma'ad*, 3/549 and confirms that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ gave permission to Christians of Najran to perform their prayers at a corner of his mosque. However, the Mufti makes the following notes too:

- a. The narration of the story is weak due to the broken chain of transmission. It was transmitted by Ibn Ishaq from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through another narrator with the name of Muhammad bin Jaafar bin Al-Zubair.

Muhammad Bin Jaafar was not amongst the companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and only had the experience to study from scholars from junior Tabi'in (generation of Muslims who were born after the death of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and during the time of the companions).

- b. Ibn Qayyim makes a condition that such permission be given only when necessary and should not be made as a norm.
 - c. There are no other narrations mentioning Prophet Muhammad ﷺ allowing non-Muslims to perform their prayers in his mosque.
 - d. Syeikh Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Syeikh views, based on this story, that such incident can be allowed only if there is an urgency or a need to do so.
- 6 Verse 40 of Surah Al-Hajj provides further clarification whereby Allah Ta'ala even commands Muslims to protect non-Muslims' houses of worship and prohibits their destruction.
- 7 It can be concluded that Islam is a religion that:
- a. guarantees non-Muslims the freedom to carry out their religious responsibilities within the Muslim community.
 - b. permits actions that facilitate people of different faith to practise their respective religion as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ treatment of Christian priests from Najran.
 - c. protects places of worship belonging to other religions from any aggressions and destructions.

d. defends non-Muslims from any aggressors (those that deny the freedom of religious practices and impose punishments on people based on their faith).

8 In today's context, all the abovementioned points can be extended in other situations such as:

a. Issuance of permit to set up a place of worship by a Muslim ruler.

b. The act of Muslim firefighters putting out a fire that is burning a place of worship belonging to other religions.

The act of rebuilding or repairing places of worship of other religions after natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes.

d. Transporting passengers to their respective place of worship by taxi or Grab, Uber, and Gojek drivers.

All these are permissible and should not be regarded as affirming non-Islamic faiths, i.e., *shirk*.

Different Response to Different Audience



أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشِيدَةٍ وَإِنْ
تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ
يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلُّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ فَمَالِ هَؤُلَاءِ
الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا

“Wherever you may be, death will overcome you—even if you were in fortified towers.” When something good befalls them, they say, “This is from Allah,” but when something evil befalls them, they say, “This is from you.” Say, (O Prophet,) “Both have been destined by Allah.” So what is the matter with these people? They can hardly comprehend anything!” (Al-Nisa’: 78)

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنَ
نَفْسِكَ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

“Whatever good befalls you is from Allah and whatever evil befalls you is from yourself. We have sent you (O Prophet) as a messenger to (all) people. And Allah is sufficient as a Witness.” (Al-Nisa’: 79)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses speak about one issue—the causes of good and bad in this life.

Verse 78 of Surah Al-Nisa’ explains that both good and bad comes from Allah Ta’ala or everything is happening is destined by Allah Ta’ala.

Meanwhile verse 79 of Surah Al-Nisa’ informs that the good comes from Allah Ta’ala, and the bad is caused by human beings themselves.

- 2 Both verses speak about a common topic but with two different explanations. This might seem to be contradictory to the unlearned. However, there is no contradiction as explained below.
- 3 Verse 78 of Surah Al-Nisa’ was revealed upon the Arabs who rejected the *da’wah* of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. They believed in Allah Ta’ala as their God but would not accept Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as their messenger of Allah Ta’ala who holds the final revelation for mankind. They even accused Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a person that brought curse and misfortune to them for bringing in teachings that contradicted the Arabs’ traditional beliefs.

Allah Ta'ala then defended Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by condemning those accusations and revealing that the evils befalling on them were destined by Him and, similarly, the curse that was claimed to be brought upon them by Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ teachings. This response served to warn the stubborn Arabs who refused to believe in the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ.

- 4 Verse 79 was revealed upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the people of Islam to educate proper manners and etiquette towards Allah Ta'ala and His *taqdir*:
 - a. To self-reflect when being struck with hardship.
 - b. To be mindful of our manners towards Allah Ta'ala by maintaining good thoughts instead of bad when facing life challenges.
 - c. Do not be too quick to blame our fate when being struck with hardship.
 - d. Do not simply use fate as the cause of our difficulties in life because it will block our mind from correcting ourselves and finding the right solution to our problems.
- 5 The abovementioned verses give the following lessons:
 - a. The Qur'an recognises different responses for one issue when the target audiences are different. This should be taken into consideration too in *da'wah* works when dealing with diverse audiences.
 - b. Differences in Islamic rulings do not necessarily point to contradictions. They may occur to reflect contextual differences or the issue is viewed from multiple angles.

There could be a situation where all different opinions may be correct. Therefore, there is no need to condemn or judge differing views for heresy or misguidance.

- c. Understanding a religious ruling or a stand is by understanding both the scriptural texts and the context behind them.
- d. It is not wrong to relate one's misfortune to fate if its purpose is to express contentment and acceptance towards whatever has happened. However, it is wrong to do so if its purpose is to blame Allah Ta'ala and excuse oneself from introspection and self-correction.
- e. It is not wrong to hold to the view that all that are good come from Allah Ta'ala and all that are bad come from ourselves if the objective is to practise good *adab* towards Allah Ta'ala and to cultivate personal responsibility to misfortunes that befall oneself as long as it does not negate the belief in *taqdir*.

Ruling by the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Today's Context



فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

“But no! By your Lord, they will never be (true) believers until they accept you (O Prophet) as the judge in their disputes, and find no resistance within themselves against your decision and submit wholeheartedly.” (Al-Nisa’: 65)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verse accentuates the obligation to abide by the rulings pertaining to matters that have been judged by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

- 2 The Qur'an demands wholehearted obedience from Muslims towards the rulings legislated by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ during his lifetime.
- 3 However, understanding the verse in today's context needs contextual explanation. Without understanding the different contexts between the period of revelation and today's circumstances, Muslims could fall into erroneous understanding in the application of Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ *sunnah* in their life.
- 4 Compared to Muslims (the companions) during Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ lifetime, Muslims today and in the future have no direct interaction with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as he had passed away 1500 years ago.

The *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that today and future's Muslims have is in the form of *hadith* reports compiled by *hadith* scholars in various books of *hadiths* such as Sahih Al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslims, Al-Muwatta', Sunan Al-Tirmizi, etc.

- 5 As a matter of principle, Muslims today are obligated to obey the *sunnahs* and rulings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ reported in *hadiths* as commanded by the abovementioned verse and to regard *hadiths* as an important source of the *shari'ah*. Thus, it is prohibited for Muslims to reject all *hadiths* outrightly and deny it as a source of the *shari'ah*.
- 6 In practice, however, upholding the *sunnahs* for Muslims today cannot rely on the texts found in *hadiths* only or to accept uncritically all that are claimed to be *hadiths* or *sunnah* because:
 - a. What is claimed as *hadith* or *sunnah* must be verified

that its attribution the Prophet ﷺ is authentic.

In this matter, it must be noted that the authenticity of a *hadith* may vary from one scholar to another. Thus, the status of the ruling and/or a religious statement as the Prophet's *sunnah* ﷺ become *zanni* (speculative), not *qat'ii* (definite) truth.

- b. There are many rulings/*sunnahs* that are *zanni* in nature, whether they are found in *mutawatir* (*qat'ii* in authenticity) or *sahih* (*zanni* in authenticity) *hadiths*, because the texts in the *hadiths* are *zanni* in meaning, i.e., open to various interpretations. This means that there are possibly many interpretations among the scholars on what constitute the Prophet's ﷺ *sunnah* and ruling on a matter.
 - c. There are tens of thousands of *hadiths* recorded in *hadith* books. There is always a possibility that a ruling formulated from a *hadith* has an explanation in another different *hadith* that was not given due attention due to the imperfect nature of a scholar's knowledge.
- 7 Thus, Muslims of today should take a more prudent attitude and cultivate a critical mind and attitude when attempting to uphold the Prophet's ﷺ *sunnah* as commanded in the abovementioned verse. It must be highlighted that even the companions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would often ask and verify before accepting statements pertaining to the rulings and the *sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ. They would even ask Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to verify if his idea or opinion was based on holy revelation, and thus they were obliged to uphold absolutely such as the choice of location for the Muslim army before the Battle of Badr.

- 8 It is not necessary for Muslims to be rigid when it comes to committing to a certain ruling based on the *sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ or an authentic *hadith* to the extent of codemning others who hold to a different view for contradicting *sunnah*. This is because reasons for a ruling to be *zanni* (speculative) are many and probable.
- 9 In this situation, a person's disagreement of another person's stand on *sunnah* cannot be ruled as absolute disobedience or rejection of the Prophet's ﷺ *sunnah* because the disagreement may be related to how a *hadith* is interpreted, or the authenticity of a *hadith* which raises questions of the validity of a "claimed *sunnah*", or other factors that allows differences in opinions. As mentioned earlier, there can be a variety of interpretations.
- 10 It is acceptable to have a strong stance pertaining to a ruling that is attributed to the Prophet's ﷺ (*sunnah*) as long as the stances belonging to other people remain respected as well.

Virtue of Positive Image in *Da'wah*



تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ

“The revelation of this Book is **from Allah—the Almighty, All-Knowing**,” (Ghafir: 2)

غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ شَدِيدِ الْعِقَابِ ذِي الطَّلَلِ ۗ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۗ إِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

“**the Forgiver of sin and Acceptor of repentance, the Severe in punishment, and Infinite in bounty.** There is no god (worthy of worship) except Him. To Him (alone) is the final return.” (Ghafir: 3)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 Allah Ta'ala illustrates the following seven factors to describe Himself:
 - i. The One who sends down the revelation that serves as guidance to mankind
 - ii. The All-Mighty
 - iii. The Most Knowledgeable
 - iv. The Most Forgiving
 - v. The Acceptor of repentance
 - vi. Severe in Punishment
 - vii. Infinite in bounty
- 2 There are six positive (i, ii, iii, iv, v, and vii) and one negative character (vi; Severe in Punishment) of Allah Ta'ala.
- 3 Allah Ta'ala prioritises the mentioning of the Most Forgiving and the Acceptor of repentance and the revelation (Ghafir: 2-3) before the mentioning of His severe punishment for the disobedient (Ghafir: 3).
- 4 The abovementioned verses should not be understood as description about Allah Ta'ala that Muslims must know, but they also convey some lessons on *da'wah*.
- 5 A *da'wah* should prominently imbue a positive image as how Allah Ta'ala describes Himself in the abovementioned verses. Therefore, when doing a *da'wah*, Muslims should prioritise positive approaches such as offering *targhib* (positive

encouragement), good counsel, and positive affirmations, before deploying negative approach such as threat of punishments, fear of hell, and avoidance of sins.

- 6 *Da'wah* organisations and activists should emulate Allah's Ta'ala example of projecting positivity (the Forgiver of sins and the Acceptor of repentance) first. This requires an attitude that is open to accepting people the way they are and be ready to giving opportunities for them to change.
- 7 *Da'wah* organisations must have a positive mindset such as viewing a person's repeated sinning after repentance as his continuous struggle to be a pious individual, rather than as a sign of lack of weak commitment or faith as exemplified by Allah's Ta'ala in the *hadith* below:

“I heard the Prophet ﷺ saying: If somebody commits a sin and then says: O my Lord! I have sinned, please forgive me and his Lord says: My slave has known that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for it, I therefore have forgiven my slave (his sins). Then he remains without committing any sin for a while and then again commits another sin and says: O my Lord, I have committed another sin, please forgive me and Allah says: My slave has known that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for it, I therefore have forgiven my slave (his sin). Then he remains without Committing any another sin for a while and then commits another sin (for the third time) and says: O my Lord, I have committed another sin, please forgive me and Allah says: My slave has known that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for it I therefore have forgiven My slave (his sin), he can do whatever he likes.”
(Narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari)

- 8 Services provided by *da'wah* organisations should not discriminate and should be provided to anyone in need regardless of their social status or piousness. This is demonstrated by Allah Ta'ala as the Provider of blessings to all His servants that are in need and/or deserve to receive His blessings.
- 9 *Da'wah* works will always be prone to criticism be it from the detractors, rival competitors, or fellow Muslims.

However, *da'wah* organisations must practise forgiveness and restraint from negative responses as exemplified by Allah's Ta'ala description of Himself in the abovementioned verses.

- 10 More importantly is, for *da'wah* activists, to be forgiving and tolerant towards fellow activists and colleagues when they make mistakes. As human beings, we are all bound to make mistakes due to carelessness and negligence. At times, these mistakes are unintentional. Thus, it is imperative for us to give others, and ourselves, the chance to bounce back and improve just like Allah Ta'ala who is ever-willing to give chances of repentance to His servants.
- 11 There must be a systematic *tarbiyah* programme for the development of *da'wah* executives and activists because the lessons learned above cannot be instilled or acquired by reading alone. Continuous training and socialisation are needed so that the values and lessons from the verses could be entrenched within.
- 12 The lessons learned above are also relevant for parenting as these lessons provide a good approach too in educating Muslim children at home.

Forbidding *Munkar* (Abhorrent) Does Not Have to Be Personal



إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَسْتَضِعُّ طَائِفَةً
مِّنْهُمْ يُذَبِّحُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

Indeed, **Pharaoh** (arrogantly) **elevated himself** in the land and **divided its people into** (subservient) **groups**, one of which he **persecuted, slaughtering** their sons and **keeping their women**. He was truly one of **the corruptors**. (Al-Qasas: 4)

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِي فَأَوْقِدْ
لِي يَهْمَسُنْ عَلَى الطِّينِ فَأَجْعَلْ لِي صَرْجًا لَّعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَى إِلَه
مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ

Pharaoh declared, “O chiefs! **I know of no other god for you but myself**. So bake bricks out of clay for me, O Hamân, and

build a high tower so I may look at the God of Moses, although I am sure he is a liar.” (Al-Qasas: 38)

إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ

When **the hypocrites** come to you (O Prophet), they say, “We bear witness that you are certainly the Messenger of Allah”—and surely Allah knows that you are His Messenger—but Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are truly liars. (Al-Munafiqoon: 1)

اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ

They have made their (false) oaths as a shield, hindering (others) from the Way of Allah. **Evil indeed is what they do!** (Al-Munafiqoon: 2)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 There are many evil figures mentioned in the Qur’an and one of which is the Pharaoh (Al-Qasas: 4, 38). The Qur’an describes the characteristics of the Pharaoh’s evil character in details such as cruelty, strong disbelief, power, and many more.
- 2 The atrocious characteristic of the Pharaoh is regarded as the

peak of evilness for a human. The Pharaoh challenged God and claimed himself as one.

- 3 The Pharaoh's character is comprehensively described in the Qur'an so that people would abstain from it.
- 4 However, one thing that is not mentioned clearly is the real identity of the Pharaoh himself. Does Allah Ta'ala not know or forget or fear exposing the Pharaoh's real identity? Indeed no, as either of these is impossible for Allah Ta'ala.

The pharaoh cannot be regarded as a metaphoric figure either. It is impossible that the Pharaoh was a metaphorical figure because he had encounters with Prophet Musa a.s as mentioned in many verses of the Qur'an. It is likewise impossible for Prophet Musa a.s to be regarded as a metaphorical figure as it has been a consensus by all scholars that Prophet Musa a.s is regarded amongst the prophets whose existence must be believed.

- 5 Therefore, there must be reasons and lessons for mankind as to why the real identity of pharaoh was deliberately hidden by Allah Ta'ala, particularly *da'wah* works.

Amongst the important lessons that can be thought of:

- a. *Da'wah* should firstly focus on ideas and arguments.
 - b. Forbidding evilness and atrocious behaviour is explaining what is evil and why it is evil first, without the need to be personal.
- 6 History of *da'wah* shows that human beings have the capability to abstain from atrocious behaviour without the need of knowing the person behind those actions.

The companions were taught to abstain from and avoid the evilness of the Pharaoh without knowing his real identity.

The Qur'an solely demands the Prophet ﷺ and his companions to know only about the character and beliefs which describe the Pharaoh.

- 7 The same is applicable when the Qur'an describes a tyrannical king faced by Prophet Ibrahim a.s and who is said to be Nimrud, the King of Babylon (Al-Baqarah: 258, Al-Anbiya': 52–70).
- 8 The Qur'an also mentioned a lot about the hypocrites (*munafiqs*) within the Muslim community during the time of Prophet ﷺ. Allah Ta'ala has even dedicated two Surahs in the Qur'an—Surah Al-Munafiqoon and Surah Al-Taubah—to describe the hypocrites.
- 9 However, it is interesting to note that the head of the hypocrites who went by the name of Abdullah bin Ubay bin Salul was not mentioned in the Qur'an despite committing several blasphemous actions against the Prophet ﷺ as narrated in many *hadiths*.

Many verses of the Qur'an were revealed as direct responses to Abdullah bin Ubay bin Salul and his followers. However, some Muslims during the revelation period did not know to whom a verse was referring because the identity was not disclosed and these Muslims had to ask other fellow Muslims for clarity.

- 10 Admittedly, there are Muslim scholars who hold to the view that the identity belonging to an evildoer can be disclosed for the purpose of preventing other people from falling into his evil actions.

However, this should not invalidate or overrule the abovementioned primary and preferred approach of the Qur'an.

- 11 The Qur'an mentions a few names of evil figures too such as Qarun, Haman, Samiri, and Abu Lahab. However, amongst these names, it was only Abu Lahab whose identity was recognised by the Prophet ﷺ and his followers during his time. Whereas the likes of Qarun, Haman, and Samiri were historical figures whose identities were unrecognised by the Prophet ﷺ and Muslims due to the lack of access to historical sources during their time. Their identities were only identified through archeological discoveries in the modern times.
- 12 Truly, *da'wah* should strive to forbid and prevent evil, but must not be personal in its approaches. Muslims should do *da'wah* the way that is exemplified by Allah Ta'ala in the Qur'an: focusing on ideas and responses instead of individuals, and a *da'wah* that hate the sins, but not the sinners.

Allah Ta'ala Favours Inclusive Compassion



قُلْ أَدْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ أَدْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ ۗ أَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ
الْحُسْنَىٰ ۗ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا بِصَلَاتِكُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُوا ۚ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ
سَبِيلًا

“Say, (O Prophet,) “**Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Compassionate**—whichever you call, He has the Most Beautiful Names.” Do not recite your prayers too loudly or silently, but seek a way between.” (Al-Isra’: 110)

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ

“**the Most Compassionate**, (Who is) established on the Throne.” (Taha: 5)

الرَّحْمَنُ. عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ. خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ. عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ

“**Al-Rahman The Most Compassionate.** Taught the Qur’an. Created humanity. And taught them speech.” (Al-Rahman: 1–4)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses illustrate the nature of Allah’s Ta’ala Mercy and Compassion.
- 2 Allah Ta’ala favours Compassion and Mercy, above His other attributes. This can be seen from below:
 - a. Allah Ta’ala illustrates Himself as the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful first the first verse of the Qur’an (Surah Al-Fatihah:1) as an opening introduction of Himself.
 - b. The first message introduced in the Qur’an is Allah’s Ta’ala Mercy (the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful).
 - c. The word *rahmah* (mercy) connects Allah Ta’ala with two different attributes; *Al-Rahman* (The Most Compassionate) and *Al-Rahim* (The Most Merciful) symbolising its significance, superiority, and wideness. (Al-Fatihah: 1).
 - d. Allah Ta’ala alternatively uses *Al-Rahman* as His second name as well as the substitution for the name Allah. There are no other names describing Allah Ta’ala that

have the same special status as the word *Al-Rahman*. (Al-Isra': 110, Taha: 5, and Al-Rahman: 1).

- 3 The abovementioned points are supported by other Qur'anic verses such as verse 12 of Surah Al-An'am and verse 156 of Surah Al-A'raf.
- 4 *Al-Rahman* and *Al-Rahim* relate to His Mercy, each with its own significant meaning. Muslims scholars clarify that the word *Al-Rahman* refers to Allah's Ta'ala universal Mercy for all His creations and mankind (Muslim and Non-Muslim). Whereas the word *Al-Rahim* refers to Allah's Ta'ala Mercy that is reserved only for the Muslims in the Afterlife. In other words, *Al-Rahman* is more inclusive compared to *Al-Rahim*.
- 5 Between *Al-Rahman* and *Al-Rahim*, Allah Ta'ala favours the former because:
 - a. *Al-Rahman* is always mentioned first before *Al-Rahim* and there has never been the other way around.
 - b. *Al-Rahman* is chosen as the second name of Allah Ta'ala (Al-Isra': 110, Taha: 5, and Al-Rahman: 1).
- 6 This illustrates the nature of Allah's Ta'ala Mercy and Compassion for Muslims to emulate. Muslims, being the *khalifah* of Allah Ta'ala, should view Him as an example on how to live their life by manifesting His Mercy towards mankind.
- 7 Islam has a strong tradition for Muslims to be inclusive in compassion and mercy too—it to all human beings, Muslims or Non-Muslims alike, animals, or all creations.

- 8 The above explanations explain also the meaning of the Prophet's ﷺ mission, which is “*rahmatan lil ‘alamiin*” or a “mercy for the whole world” mentioned in verse 107 of Surah Al-Anbiya’.

The Importance of Self-Preparation and *Da‘wah* Planning



﴿ وَإِنَّ مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ لَإِبْرَاهِيمَ. إِذْ جَاءَ رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ. إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ. ﴾

“And indeed, **one of those who followed his way was Abraham.** (Remember) when he came to his Lord **with a pure heart**, and said to his father and his people, “What are you worshipping?” (Al-Saffat: 83–85)

﴿ كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

“Since We have sent you a messenger from among yourselves—**reciting to you Our revelations, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you what you never knew**” (Al-Baqarah: 151)

وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ

“And warn (all, **starting with**) **your closest relatives,**” (Al-Shu’ara’: 214)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses contain lessons regarding the preparation that needs to be made by every individual pursuing *da’wah* works as well as the prioritisation of *da’wah* objectives.
- 2 Verses 83–85 of Surah Al-Saffat describe Prophet Ibrahim a.s as follows:
 - a. firstly, Prophet Ibrahim a.s strived to acquire knowledge about the teachings of Prophet Nuh a.s (Al-Saffat: 83),
 - b. then, Prophet Ibrahim a.s. he came to Allah Ta’ala after purifying his heart (Al-Saffat: 84),
 - c. finally, Prophet Ibrahim a.s engaged in *da’wah* to his father (Al-Saffat: 85).
- 3 The above points illustrate lessons regarding the importance for Muslims to attain conviction and deep knowledge about their faith that enable them to believe and come to Allah Ta’ala with a pure heart, before engaging *da’wah* work as exemplified by Prophet Ibrahim a.s.
- 4 Several lessons also can be learned:

- a. *Da'wah* cannot be carried out by someone without preparation.
 - b. Preparation that is needed for *da'wah* requires both intellectual development and spiritual purification.
 - c. *Da'wah* requires the co-existence of spiritual and intellectual preparations.
- 5 Verse 151 of Surah Al-Baqarah explains *da'wah* tasks for Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:
- a. To teach the people the Qur'an, *hikmah* (wisdom) and other relevant knowledges.
 - b. To perform purification of souls.
- 6 Though this verse highlights the tasks that were given to the Prophet ﷺ, it also touches on the preparation that needs to be made for *da'wah*. This included the process of training the believers during his time to collectively do *da'wah* works after his passing.
- 7 *Da'wah* organisations cannot succeed without a systematic development programme for *da'wah* activists.
- 8 *Da'wah* activist development programme must equally balance both intellectual and spiritual needs. A highly intellectual activist without pure hearts may easily fall into *riya'* and produce a spiritually devoid (dry) *da'wah*.
- 9 Likewise, an activist development programme must not focus solely on spiritual development alone. This might debilitate an activist in grappling with external ideological challenges and doing *da'wah* in an old-fashioned manner.

- 10 Effective activist development programme should not be tilted towards skills development too as often practised by business corporations. It is with a pure and sincere heart that a *da'wah* activist will find longevity in *da'wah* works, given the expected hardships and tribulations in this path.
- 11 The right priorities are also needed in conjunction with the necessary preparations. The verses inform that *da'wah* to parents (Al-Saffat: 85) and relatives (Al-Shu'ara': 214) precedes *da'wah* to the larger society.

Though the abovementioned verses highlight the importance of prioritising *da'wah* to close family members, they also illustrate the principles of having the right *da'wah* priorities all the time. In other words, *da'wah* is not conducted by the whims and fancy of a person. Prioritisation must encompass the necessity of choosing the right audiences, target messages, formats, strategies of *da'wah* and so on.

Responsible Leadership—Examples from the Qur'an



إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ
بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ. وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّنَا كَرِهْنَا لَنَكْرِهَنَّ فَنَتَّبِعَنَّ مِنْهُمْ
كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنَّا كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسْرَتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا هُمْ
بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ

“(Consider the Day) **when those who misled others will disown their followers—when they face the torment—** and the bonds that united them will be cut off. The (misled) followers will cry, “If only we could have a second chance, we would disown them as they disowned us.” And so Allah will make them remorseful of their misdeeds. And they will never (be able to) leave the Fire.” (Al-Baqarah: 166–167)

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ
مِّنكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“(They are) like Satan when he lures someone to disbelieve. **Then after they have done so, he will say (on Judgment Day), “I have absolutely nothing to do with you. I truly fear Allah—the Lord of all worlds.”** (Al-Hashr: 16)

وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُونِي
 مِنْ بَعْدِي ۖ أَتَجِلُّكُمْ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ وَأَلْقَى الْأَلْوَابَ وَأَخَذَ بِرَأْسِ أَخِيهِ
 يَجُرُّهُ إِلَيْهِ ۚ قَالَ ابْنَ أُمَّ إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضَعُّفُونِي وَكَادُوا يَفْتُلُونَنِي
 فَلَا تُشْمِتْ بِي الْأَعْدَاءَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ . قَالَ
 رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِإِخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ ۖ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

When Moses returned to his people, (totally) furious and sorrowful, he said, “What an evil thing you committed in my absence! Did you want to hasten your Lord’s torment?” Then he threw down the Tablets and grabbed his brother by the hair, dragging him closer. Aaron pleaded, “O son of my mother! The people overpowered me and were about to kill me. So do not (humiliate me and) make my enemies rejoice, nor count me among the wrongdoing people.” **Moses prayed, “My Lord! Forgive me and my brother! And admit us into Your mercy. You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.”** (Al-Araf: 150–151)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses contain examples of good and bad leadership—how a leader responds to failure in performing a duty or the followers’ mistakes when performing their duty.
- 2 Verses 166 and 167 of Surah Al-Baqarah illustrate the type of leaders who misguided their followers towards the wrong path in this life. In the Afterlife, they will try to absolve any responsibility for misleading the followers to the wrong path in front of Allah Ta’ala upon seeing the Hellfire. They proclaim that the followers should blame themselves, instead.
- 3 This vile character is similar to the act of *shaitan* during the Day of Judgement in verse 16 of Surah Al-Hashr. *Shaitan* would not want to bear the responsibility of their actions of misguiding mankind despite their resolution in front of Allah Ta’ala to do so after being thrown out of heaven for despising to prostrate to Prophet Adam a.s.
- 4 The scenarios serve as a reminder for Muslim leaders to avoid the same character. Muslim leaders should not demand total obedience from the followers, but when their plan or instruction go wrong, they quickly absolve responsibility and put the blame solely on the followers for not following their plan or instruction properly so that they can escape any accountability or avoid consequences from the higher management.
- 5 In contrast, an example of good leadership is portrayed in Prophet Musa a.s being the leader for both Prophet Harun and Bani Israel as described in verse 151 of Surah Al-A’raf.

- 6 Verse 150 of Surah Al-A'raf illustrates a story of Bani Israel who committed a grave sin of worshipping a calf idol which occurred during the absence of Prophet Musa a.s who went to exclusion with some of his followers for a period of 40 days with the purpose of receiving divine guidance from Allah Ta'ala.

Before departing, Prophet Musa a.s ordered Prophet Harun a.s to take over his position as well as to guide Bani Israel during his period of absence.

When Prophet Musa a.s. found upon his return that Bani Israel had worshipped the calf idol, he expressed his outrage towards Prophet Harun a.s for failing to guide them. Prophet Harun a.s then clarified that he had tried to guide, but the people would only listen to Prophet Musa a.s and threatened to kill him. Prophet Musa a.s then prayed and asked forgiveness from Allah Ta'ala for both his sins as well as his brother Prophet Harun a.s for the incident.

- 7 The prayers made by Prophet Musa a.s symbolises the commendable and exemplary qualities of a responsible leader. Prophet Musa's a.s act of seeking Allah's Ta'ala forgiveness shows his willingness to be accountable of what has happened as described in verse 151 of Surah Al-A'raf despite his absence with valid reason that would free him from the fault of his people.

Moreover, Prophet Musa a.s also sought forgiveness for his brother, Prophet Harun a.s, although Prophet Harun a.s had offered a valid reason too. This is an example of Prophet Musa's a.s willingness to acknowledge that both of them may have contributed to the incident (if any).

- 8 A good leader must have the courage, discipline, and dignity to be accountable and bear the responsibility of his people's mistakes despite the following points below:
 - a. His best efforts in giving directions and guiding his people.
 - b. Having concrete reasons to excuse himself from any occurring mistakes or failures.
 - c. Not being the cause or solely being the minor or insignificant cause of error.
- 9 A despised leader is a person who washes his hands from any responsibility that may occur for the sake of his own interest or for the sake of avoiding punishment or being accountable.
- 10 A leader who denies responsibility when things do not go as planned. They will shift all responsibility, blame, and consequences to the subordinates. This is despicable. This is a character of the *shaitan* which Muslim leaders must abstain from. In contrast, Muslims should emulate the leadership of Prophet Musa a.s. who took responsibility in front of Allah Ta'ala, despite having excuse, for what Bani Israel did.

Subjective Nature of the Human Mind



كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهُ لَكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا
وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَن تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Fighting has been made obligatory upon you (believers), though you dislike it. **Perhaps you dislike something which is good for you and like something which is bad for you.** Allah knows and you do not know.” (Al-Baqarah: 216)

فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“... If you (polytheists) do not know (this already), **then ask those who have knowledge (of the Scriptures).**” (Al-Nahl: 43, Al-Anbiya: 7)

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ

“...and **consult** with them in (conducting) matters.” (Al ‘Imran: 159)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The revelation in verse 216 of Surah Al-Baqarah speaks about some Muslims during the time of the Prophet ﷺ who were reluctant to answer the call of *jihad* for fear of its harmful consequences to them and their family.

The verse rebukes them and reminds that what is good to their mind may not be objectively true. However, what is commanded by Allah Ta‘ala will be surely good for them, despite their thinking, because whatever that Allah Ta‘ala has commanded certainly comes with a good purpose as it is impossible for Him to command them towards harm after they accepted His call towards faith. Also, Allah Ta‘ala makes promise to support and reward those who will fight for His religion in this world and the Afterlife.

- 2 The verse (Surah Al-Baqarah: 216) highlights to Muslims the subjective nature of the human mind and its limited ability to fully comprehend what is good or bad in divine commandments.
- 3 Although the verse (Surah Al-Baqarah: 216) speaks about Muslims’ attitude towards *jihad*, it also contains lessons in making life decisions.

Every individual’s mind has inherent limitation when making assessment (good, bad, beneficial, harmful, beautiful, ugly,

etc.) for decisions in life. Due to the subjectivity of the human mind, it is important to note two possibilities when making any assessment in life that it is:

- a. only subjectively true because there could be other equally valid or better viewpoint, or
 - b. wrong because it may be based on wrong or incomplete information due to the inherent limitation of the human mind when gathering or choosing data for decision-making.
- 4 Thus, Muslims must always exercise prudence when making assessment for life decisions, such as assessing someone or a particular situation. This is so that we can prevent ourselves from making errors when:
- a. making decisions
 - b. assessing an individual or a particular issue
 - c. counselling others
 - d. carrying out commands or instructions
 - e. understanding and practicing the religion.
- 5 The consequences of these errors must be taken seriously as it may potentially result in:
- a. harming oneself as well as the beloved ones
 - b. defaming and slandering another person
 - c. breaking the law
 - d. not complying with Allah's Ta'ala commandments.

- 6 Due to the inherent limitation of the human mind that would affect his rational judgment, Muslims must take necessary steps to mitigate the risk of falling into such errors.
- 7 The abovementioned verses illustrate one important step of precaution to help Muslims in making assessment and decision —not to rely solely on his own mind and the importance of consulting good external sources.
- 8 In religious matters, the external source in helping Muslims to comprehend what is good and bad must be Allah's Ta'ala revelations to them, i.e., the Qur'an. However, prudence is still necessary when consulting the Qur'an in life and religious issues because understanding the Qur'an is often mediated by human interpretation. Thus, Muslims must take note of the following points:
 - a. Do not rely on their own interpretations or understandings only.
 - b. Consult also religious scholars for their opinions on the issue at hand for comparison with their own interpretations or understandings.
 - c. Do not rely on a single religious scholar in consultation so as to allow diverse expert opinions for consideration.
- 9 In non-religious matters such as investment, health and marriage, the external source that should be consulted will be those who are knowledgeable or experts in the matter that needs decision-making. This can be deduced from verse 43 of Surah Al-Nahl and verse 7 of Surah Al-Anbiya' which are mentioned above.

The above lessons apply to the learned and expert too.

They too should not rely on their own mind when making decisions. This because the Prophet ﷺ too was commanded to seek advice and consult his companions regarding both religious and worldly issues as mentioned in verse 159 of Surah Al ‘Imran.

If Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who received direct guidance from Allah Ta‘ala, let alone being infallible, was commanded to exercise prudence in making assessments and decisions, we, as ordinary human beings, must also exercise the same.

Developing an Inquisitive Mind



يَزَكِّرِيَا إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَى لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا

(The angels announced,) “O Zachariah! Indeed, We give you the good news of (the birth of) a son, whose name will be John—a name We have not given to anyone before.”
(Maryam: 7)

قَالَ رَبِّ أُنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا وَقَدْ بَلَغْتُ
مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا

He wondered, “My Lord! **How can I have a son when my wife is barren, and I have become extremely old?**”
(Maryam: 8)

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّئْ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ
وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْئًا

An angel replied, “So will it be! Your Lord says, ‘It is easy for Me, just as I created you before, when you were nothing!’” (Maryam: 9)

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَ لَيَالٍ سَوِيًّا

Zachariah said, “**My Lord! Grant me a sign.**” He responded, “Your sign is that you will not (be able to) speak to people for three nights, despite being healthy.” (Maryam: 10)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses describe a story regarding Angel Jibril's a.s message to Prophet Zakariyah a.s conveying that Allah Ta'ala had accepted his prayers to be granted a son that would continue his prophethood's mission.
- 2 The Qur'an informs that Prophet Zakariyah a.s did not receive the news of being gifted a child from Allah Ta'ala (Maryam: 8) blindly. He inquisitively asked how that could be possible, given the advanced age of both him and his wife. He then asked Allah Ta'ala for signs and evidence for the unusual events to occur (Maryam: 10).
- 3 Allah Ta'ala responded to Prophet Zakariyah a.s. without being infuriated of what that was being requested.
- 4 The story informs that Muslims are encouraged to develop an inquisitive mind and eagerness for good understanding even

in issues pertaining to *‘aqidah* (not to blindly accept without question) as exemplified by Prophet Zakariyah a.s.

- 5 There are many other Qur’anic verses which support Islam’s value of an inquisitive mind:
 - a. Prophet Ibrahim a.s asked Allah Ta’ala a question on how He gave life to the dead, which Allah Ta’ala did not rebuke him, but rather commanded him with an instruction which provided clues to the question. (Al-Baqarah: 260)
 - b. Prophet Ibrahim a.s hypothetically observed the stars, the moon, and the sun which he then concluded that none of the above represents the true God. (Al-An’am: 75–80)
 - c. Prophet Musa a.s asked from Allah Ta’ala to show Himself. The request was not rejected. However, Prophet Musa a.s was not able to see the true form of Allah Ta’ala because of the inherent weakness of the creations to bear the substantial strength of Allah’s Ta’ala being; even the firm mountains were levelled to dust upon the appearance of Allah Ta’ala.
 - d. Prophet Isa a.s asked Allah Ta’ala for his people to feast on a table spread of food brought down from the heavens. Allah Ta’ala accepted the request with a condition reminding that whoever denied faith afterwards would be subjected to torment like never before. (Al-Maidah: 114–115)
 - e. There are several Qur’anic verses (Al-Baqarah: 215, 217, 219, 220, 222, Al-Maidah: 4, and Al-Anfal: 1) that begin with the phrase “*Yas’alunaka*” (and they ask you O,

Muhammad) which represented the questions addressed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ seeking clarifications for various issues. Muslim scholars regard these verses as an encouragement to exercise inquisitiveness to something that is unknown, or needs to be learned or requires clarifications.

- 6 Verses 67 to 74 of Surah Al-Baqarah that condemn the characteristics of several people among the Jews for asking many questions when they were commanded to sacrifice a cow are not to be understood as the Qur'an's discouragement of Muslims from asking. The condemnation is not directed at asking many questions per se, but asking them for the wrong purposes. The Jews in the story asked many questions to deliberately delay the execution of Allah's Ta'ala command to sacrifice a cow and as a show of contempt towards Prophet Musa a.s.
- 7 With regards to verse 101 of Surah Al-Ma'idah that states, "*O believers! Do not ask about any matter which, if made clear to you, may disturb you But if you inquire about what is being revealed in the Qur'an, it will be made clear to you. Allah has forgiven what was done (in the past). And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.*", it refers to questions where its responses and outcomes receive more inconvenience than the benefits.
- 8 The above lessons inform that exercising inquisitiveness is more encouraged when dealing with worldly matters.
- 9 The lessons from the abovementioned verses here are relevant for parenting children at home for parents, teaching religious subjects for *asatizah*, and developing staff for managers at work. Muslims must welcome and contribute to cultures and learning environments that encourage inquisitiveness.

The Meaning of *Istighfar* (Seeking Forgiveness)



رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ

“Our Lord! **Forgive me, my parents, and the believers** on the Day when the judgment will come to pass.” (Ibrahim: 41)

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ؕ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلِّبَكُمُ وَمَشُونَكُم

“So, know (well, O Prophet,) that there is no god (worthy of worship) except Allah. **And seek forgiveness for your shortcomings and for (the sins of) the believing men and women.** For Allah (fully) knows your movements and places of rest (O people).” (Muhammad: 19)

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ. ءَأَخِذِينَ مَا ءَأْتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ؕ إِنَّهُمْ
كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ. كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ الْأَيْلِ مَا يَبْجَعُونَ.

وَبِالْأَشْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ.

“Indeed, the righteous will be amid Gardens and springs, (joyfully) receiving what their Lord will grant them. Before this (reward) they were truly good-doers (in the world): **they used to sleep only little in the night, and pray for forgiveness before dawn.**” (Al-Dhariyat: 15–18)

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِي مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا

“My Lord! **Forgive me, my parents, and whoever enters my house in faith, and (all) believing men and women.** And increase the wrongdoers only in destruction.” (Nuh: 28)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses represent several verses of the Qur'an that encourage Muslims to perform *istighfar* (a supplication or a prayer to seek forgiveness of sin).
- 2 Allah Ta'ala deeply favours and highly encourages the act of *istighfar* as seen in the points below:
 - a. The act of making *istighfar* was directly commanded upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as seen in verse 19 of Surah Muhammad.
 - b. Allah Ta'ala obligates Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to perform *istighfar* to Him (Muhammad: 19) and the Prophet made

istighfar no less than 70 times daily (as mentioned in a *hadith* narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari).

- c. Allah Ta'ala regards the act of *istighfar* as an important character of His righteous servants as well as the people of heavens.
- 3 *Istighfar* can be supplicated by saying “*Astaghfirullah*” (I seek forgiveness from Allah Ta'ala) at the very least, or any other forms of supplications which connote the meaning of seeking forgiveness.
- 4 However, *istighfar* should not be an oral activity that was repeatedly exercised through verbal supplications or in heart (70, 100, 1000 times) only.

Istighfar must be accompanied with deep introspection of the sins that were intentionally or unintentionally committed. The real reasons behind the act of *istighfar* are to cultivate awareness of one's sins and flaws, promote humility, engage in continuous self-improvement, and cleanse oneself from arrogance that characterises Iblis.

- 5 Muslims are also encouraged to seek forgiveness for the sins of others (Ibrahim: 41, Muhammad: 19, and Nuh: 28), particularly the sins of their parents (Ibrahim: 41, and Nuh: 28).

Thus, good Muslims are not concerned with the sins that they committed but the sins committed by others too. This means also that to be a good Muslim, one must not only strive to attain righteousness for himself, but for others too in order to reach the heavens of Allah Ta'ala. This concern is then extended to other life affairs such as the well-being of others.

- 6 Muslims perform *istighfar* with the belief that Allah Ta'ala is the Most Merciful, and the Most Forgiving.

Muslims are commanded to perform *istighfar* optimistically, believing in Allah's Ta'ala mercy to forgive their sins.

Muslims can apply the same traits of mercifulness and forgivingness by constantly forgiving the mistakes of others made against them besides seeking forgiveness for his own self.

Moreover, one of the ways in achieving Allah's Ta'ala forgiveness is by forgiving others as understood from the following *hadith*: "Forgive others, and surely you will be forgiven." (Hadith narrated by Imam Al-Tirmidhi)

It is ironic for Muslims to hope for his own sins to be forgiven but not willing to forgive the sins of others.

Forgiving others is a great virtue in Islam. One of Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ companions is assured a place in heaven for continuously forgiving others every night before going to sleep (*hadith* narrated by Imam Ahmad).

- 7 In conclusion, *istighfar* must be practiced with the following points:
- a. Continuous introspections for self-improvements
 - b. Being humble by having self-awareness of one's own imperfections
 - c. Being thoughtful by seeking the forgiveness for the sins of others
 - d. Striving to keep others away from committing sins

- e. Striving to forgive the sins of others the way we asked Allah's Ta'ala forgiveness for the sins of our own.

Allah's Ta'ala Way in Guiding Mankind Towards the Truth



وَالَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُوا فَالْحَمَلَةَ وَفِرًا. فَالْجُرَيْتِ يُسْرًا. فَالْمُقَسَّمَتِ
أَمْرًا. إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٍ. وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوُفْعٍ. وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ
الْحُبِّكِ. إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي قَوْلٍ مُخْتَلِفٍ. يُؤْفِكُ عَنْهُ مَنْ أَفَكَ. قَتَلَ
الْحَرْصُونَ. الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ سَاهُونَ. يَسْأَلُونَ أَيَّانَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ.
يَوْمَ هُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ يُفْتَنُونَ. ذُوقُوا فِتْنَتَكُمْ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ
تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ. إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ. ءَاخِذِينَ مَا ءَاتَاهُمْ
رَبُّهُمْ ءِإِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ. كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ
يَهْتَدُونَ. وَبِالْأَشْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ. وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ
وَالْمَحْرُومِ. وَفِي الْأَرْضِ ءَايَاتٌ لِّلْمُوقِنِينَ. وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ ءَافْلَا
تُبْصِرُونَ. وَفِي السَّمَاءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ. فَوَرَبَّ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ مَثَلِ مَا أَنْكُمْ تَنْطِفُونَ.

“By the winds scattering (dust), (1) and (the clouds) loaded with rain, (2) and (the ships) gliding with ease, (3) and (the angels) administering affairs by (Allah’s) command! (4) **Indeed, what you are promised is true.** (5) **And the Judgment will certainly come to pass.** (6) (And) by the heavens in their marvellous design! (7) **Surely you are (lost) in conflicting views (regarding the truth).** (8) Only those (destined to be) deluded are turned away from it. (9) Condemned are the liars— (10) those who are (steeped) in ignorance, totally heedless. (11) They ask (mockingly), “When is this Day of Judgment?” (12) (It is) the Day they will be tormented over the Fire. (13) **(They will be told,) “Taste your torment! This is what you sought to hasten.”** (14) **Indeed, the righteous will be amid Gardens and springs,** (15) (joyfully) receiving what their Lord will grant them. Before this (reward) they were truly good-doers (in the world): (16) they used to sleep only little in the night, (17) and pray for forgiveness before dawn. (18) And in their wealth there was a rightful share (fulfilled) for the beggar and the poor. (19) **There are (countless) signs on earth for those with sure faith,** (20) **as there are within yourselves. Can you not see?** (21) In heaven is your sustenance and whatever you are promised. (22) Then by the Lord of heaven and earth! (All) this is certainly as true as (the fact that) you can speak! (23)” (Al-Dhariyat: 1–23)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses illustrate lessons regarding Allah’s Ta’ala approach in guiding mankind towards believing in the

truths; specifically, towards belief in the Day of Judgement, when the universe will fall into pieces, and during which mankind will be resurrected to face the judgement of Allah Ta'ala regarding their actions in this life which will determine their final destination—be in the heavens or the Hellfire.

Understanding Allah's Ta'ala way will give the following lessons:

- a. The process needed for those who wish to seek the truth and believe in Allah Ta'ala.
 - b. *Da'wah* process of inviting others to believe in the truth brought by Islam.
- 2 Allah Ta'ala begins explaining his approach by inviting mankind to ponder that the beautiful nature of this world is unlikely possible by itself because logic dictates that something cannot possibly exist from nothing. There must be “a thing” that makes something come to existence or happen and that “thing” must be God, i.e., Allah Ta'ala the Creator (Al-Dhariyat: 23) who oversees the creations until the Day of Judgement. (Al-Dhariyat: 12).

Those who accept this logic should not rule out the possible existence of the Afterlife; knowing that if Allah Ta'ala is capable in creating a universe from nothing, He would be surely capable in recreating the entire universe that has been destroyed. Therefore, resurrecting the dead is even easier for Allah Ta'ala.

- 3 The second approach is to point to mankind the sources for them to deeply study from which they can discover the truth. The first source is the creations which bring many benefits to mankind such as the wind, the clouds, the skies (Al-Dhariyat:

1–3, and 7) and the ships that mind-blowingly sail on seas facilitating trade and economic development (Al-Dhariyat: 3), pointing to the power of Allah's Ta'ala in creating, destroying, and recreating the universe.

- 4 The second source of truth is the Messenger ﷺ sent to deliver the revelations of Allah Ta'ala, affirming the true existence of the Day of Judgement.

Allah Ta'ala condemned the people of Quraysh for their inconsistent stand towards the Prophet's ﷺ credibility. They rejected the Prophet's ﷺ *da'wah* by claiming him as a liar, an insane person, and so on, whereas they had previously testified him as an honest and a trustworthy person hence giving him the title, *Al-Amin* (honest, faithful, and trustworthy) (Al-Dhariyat: 8–9).

After the passing of the Prophet ﷺ, the Qur'an being the legacy left behind by the Prophet ﷺ takes his place as the credible and trustworthy source of truth. This can be verified and validated by many studies that prove the Qur'an is the true revelation of Allah Ta'ala and not the writings of a human being such as:

- a. *The History of The Qur'anic Text, from Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments*, by Mustafa Al-Azami
 - b. *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation: A Study of Symmetry and Coherence in Islam's Holy Text*, by Raymond Farrin
- 5 Allah Ta'ala then points to various means for the above two sources of the truth to be studied—the intellect and other human senses. This can be seen through the commands of

Allah Ta'ala to reflect and ponder everything that has been mentioned in the verses above in order to attain conviction in key beliefs in Islam (Al-Dhariyat: 20–21, and 23).

This emphasis on human faculties symbolises Allah's Ta'ala recognition of the role of the human intellect and senses in matters regarding to faith. Hence, faith does not rely on Allah's Ta'ala revelations alone.

- 6 Allah Ta'ala reminds mankind, when using the intellect, to avoid falling into trappings such as biased thinking, fallacious logic, and reliance on conjectures (Al-Dhariyat: 8–11).
- 7 Allah's Ta'ala approach to guiding mankind to the truth highlights one key trait—mankind is given the choice to either believe or disbelieve the evidence of the presented truth regarding the existence of the Day of Judgement. To facilitate the choice, Allah Ta'ala points to consequences of right and wrong choice only—the Hellfire and its punishments for the disbelievers, and the Heavens and their marvellous blessings for the believers.

There is no force or compulsion. In fact, Allah Ta'ala explicitly forbids them in verse 256 of Surah Al-Baqarah and verse 99 of Surah Yunus.

- 8 The lessons mentioned above can be applied in *da'wah* work as follows:
 - a. Introduce the people to convincing evidence that lead to right beliefs.
 - b. Invite the people to study the two sources of truth—the universe and the divine revelation.

- c. Help the people to recognise the means to study the truth—the intellect and senses.
- d. Guide the people the correct way of using the intellect and senses.
- e. Explain the right and good choices and the consequences of each of them.
- f. Empower the people to make their own decisions without force and compulsion.

Rational Approach in Forbidding *Munkar* (Sinful Act)



وَمِن ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا
حَسَنًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

“And from the fruits of palm trees and grapevines you derive intoxicants as well as wholesome provision. Surely in this is a sign for those who understand.” (Al-Nahl: 67)

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ
لِّلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ
الْعَفْوُ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“They ask you (O Prophet) about intoxicants and gambling. Say, “There is great evil in both, as well as some benefit for people—but the evil outweighs the benefit.” They (also) ask you (O Prophet) what they should donate. Say, “Whatever you can spare.” This is how Allah makes His

revelations clear to you (believers), so perhaps you may reflect.” (Al-Baqarah: 219)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلامُ
رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَأَجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“O believers! Intoxicants, gambling, idols, and drawing lots for decisions are all evil of Satan’s handiwork. So shun them so you may be successful.” (Al-Ma’idah: 90)

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمْ الْعَدُوَّةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ
وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيُصَدِّكُمْ عَنِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ

“Satan’s plan is to stir up hostility and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling and to prevent you from remembering Allah and praying. Will you not then abstain?” (Al-Ma’idah: 91)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses explain the gradual process of prohibiting intoxicants. Verse 67 of Surah Al-Nahl and verse 219 of Surah Al-Baqarah were revealed before the ruling that prohibits the drinking of intoxicants.

Verse 67 of Surah Al-Nahl describes only the fact that grapes may produce intoxicants as well as good food at the same time. The objective is to attract mankind’s attention to the possible

positives and the negatives of grapes. The negative aspect is when it is used to produce wine because of its intoxicating effect when consumed. The positive effect is when the fruit is consumed fresh because of its nutritious values.

Verse 219 of Surah Al-Baqarah represents another attempt in raising people's awareness on the repercussions of intoxicants by highlighting the fact that its harms outweigh the benefits.

Verse 43 of Surah Al-Nisa' forbids the performance of prayers during a state of intoxication which restricts the window for wine drinking because of the need to be sober during the time of prayer.

After taking time in educating the people about the pros and cons of intoxicants and they became more aware that the cons outweighed the benefits, both verses 90 and 91 of Surah Al-Ma'idah were then revealed by Allah Ta'ala to ultimately prohibit the consumption of intoxicants.

- 2 The process of prohibiting the intoxicants informs that Allah Ta'ala took a rational approach in calling upon mankind to abandon the evil habit of consuming intoxicants. Mankind is called upon to rationally evaluate the repercussions of consuming intoxicants and make an informed decision without compulsion.
- 3 Although the final ruling on the prohibition of the intoxicants is clearly stipulated in verses 90 and 91 of Surah Al-Maidah, the process offers important lessons for *da'wah* (to forbid *munkar*):
 - a. Forbidding *munkar* must not necessarily be done by proclaiming, "this is *haram*, and that is evil" alone.

- b. Important too is a rational approach that seeks to convince people that a forbidden act is harmful, and it is used by the Qur'an.
 - c. At times, a rational approach to forbidding *munkar* can be utilised first as exemplified from the process of prohibiting intoxicants in the Qur'an.
- 4 *Da'wah* requires the blending of both theological and rational approaches. *Da'wah* must not be done only by communicating what is *halal* and *haram* to change a person's behaviour. *Da'wah* also requires rationality and scientific explanation concerning the *halal* and *haram* of an issue.

On the premise that Allah Ta'ala will never forbid something unless it is harmful, there surely are rational and scientific evidence to prove the existence of harms when it is properly studied.

- 5 The same approach can be used for childhood education. Children should not be taught to abstain from committing prohibited actions solely by stating that it is a strict command from Allah Ta'ala. We must help Muslim children to discover or seek rational and scientific explanations to it.
- 6 History informs that some people could be convinced to abstain from *munkar* by rational thinking only. For example, Saiyyidina Umar r.a appealed many times to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to plead to Allah Ta'ala for the prohibition of intoxicants. Umar r.a was sure of its harms and believed a prohibition ruling on intoxicants was consistent with Islamic teachings.

It is reasonable to assume that Saiyyidina Umar r.a was not the only individual who held such views. Thus, it could be

assumed that he represented such Muslims during that period. They might not represent the majority of Muslims, but their presence should not be dismissed for being a minority. The figure of Umar r.a and his likes inform that there are people who would recognise and abstain a *munkar* by rational argument, or people who prefer to accept truth via rational argument only.

This is relevant in the context of *da'wah* in a dominantly secular community or within a non-Muslim majority—to convey Islam in a style that is not necessarily theological.

- 7 Recognising the role of rational approach in *da'wah* is not to degrade the role of theology or the status of scriptural evidence in Islam, but to highlight that changing a *munkar* is not limited to communicating *haram/halal* or relying on theological arguments.
- 8 The abovementioned verses illustrate too the validity and applicability of:
 - a. gradual change in addressing long held traditions in a community
 - b. context consideration when making a ruling or fatwa.

Mercy before Responsibility



فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُوا

“Remember Me; I will remember you. And thank Me, and never be ungrateful.” (Al-Baqarah: 152)

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا
كَثِيرَةً ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْصُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

“Who will lend to Allah a good loan which Allah will multiply many times over? It is Allah (alone) who decreases and increases (wealth). And to Him you will (all) be returned.” (Al-Baqarah: 245)

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ
ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Say, (O Prophet,) “If you (sincerely) love Allah, **then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins.** For Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Al ‘Imran: 31)

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً
طَيِّبَةً ۖ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“**Whoever does good**, whether male or female, and is a believer, **We will surely bless them with a good life**, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds.” (Al-Nahl: 97)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 The abovementioned verses inform that Allah Ta‘ala will surely respond to the good deeds of His servants and He will respond with more than what a servant could do in remembering Him and performing righteous deeds.
- 2 The same message can be found in several *hadiths* too, such as:

“... He who does not show mercy, no mercy would be shown to him.” (Narrated by Imam Muslim)

“Be merciful on the earth, and you will be shown mercy from Who is above the heavens...” (Narrated by Imam Al-Tirmidhi)
- 3 A superficial reading of the above Qur’anic verses and *hadith* texts may seemingly inform that the mercy and grace of

Allah Ta'ala are conditional after obedience and submission by His servants.

This hypothetically paints a (false) impression that Allah Ta'ala is the God that prioritises obedience and submission to Him, and that His servants' relations to Him are based on power, instead of grace and mercy. This, then, does not set Allah Ta'ala apart from any other rulers.

- 4 The fact is the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ala precede His servants' obedience and submission to Him.

This can be understood by analysing comprehensively scriptural evidence on the nature of Allah's Ta'ala relations with His creations, and the reality of Man's life.

- 5 Allah Ta'ala showers Man with His grace and mercy in various forms across Man's lifespan, from conception in the womb till death.
- 6 Allah Ta'ala only obliges mankind to obey and submit to Him when they have reached the age of puberty.

According to the rulings of Islam, puberty starts when men and women experience semen discharge and witness menstrual blood respectively, which normally occur at the age of twelve. Those who do not experience these biological signs are regarded to attain puberty at the age of fifteen.

- 7 This illustrates that humans have experienced various blessings and mercy of Allah Ta'ala long before burdened with *taklif*—duty to obey all that are commanded such as fasting during Ramadan and avoid all that are prohibited such as drinking alcohol.
- 8 Thus, the love and mercy of Allah Ta'ala supersede His

command to submit and obey Him, and that His relationship with His servants is not based on power.

This proves that Allah Ta'ala prefers to be the Most Compassionate and Most Merciful God, before His other attributes as the way He introduces Himself in the beginning of the Qur'an, "In the name of Allah The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful." (Al-Fatihah: 1), and aligned with the *hadith* narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, "... Verily, My mercy predominates My wrath."

- 9 It is not far from truth to conclude that Allah's Ta'ala mercy and grace are unconditional. This can be seen also from the fact that His blessings betide even those who are disobedient to Him.
- 10 Allah's Ta'ala promise of great rewards and severe punishment is to motivate Man to do goods and avoid evils and these commandments are for Man's own benefits. The commanded goods are beneficials and the prohibited evils are harmful to Man, not Allah Ta'ala who owns the whole universe, which Man and all their deeds are inconsequential to Him.

Dual Function Role of Muslim Women



وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ
وَأَتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ
عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

“**Settle in your homes**, and do not display yourselves as women did in the days of (pre-Islamic) ignorance. Establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only intends to keep (the causes of) evil away from you and purify you completely, O members of the (Prophet’s) family!” (Al-Ahzab: 33)

وَأذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَىٰ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا

“(Always) **remember what is recited in your homes of Allah’s revelations and (prophetic) wisdom**. Surely Allah is Most Subtle, All-Aware.” (Al-Ahzab: 34)



REFLECTIONS

- 1 Both abovementioned verses of Surah Al-Ahzab partially represent the Qur’anic verses which contain commands directed specifically towards the wives of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
- 2 Verse 33 of Surah Al-Ahzab primarily instructs the wives of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to remain in their respective houses where they should not go out without necessary reasons. The purpose is to preserve their modesty from slander and gossip as their presence outside their houses would expose them to the public attention. It is also to safeguard the Prophet’s ﷺ wives from his enemies.
- 3 Several scholars hold that the verse 33 of Surah Al-Ahzab stipulates the Qur’anic stand regarding the key role of Muslim women—to remain at home and manage household affairs.
- 4 However, a different understanding can be deduced when the verse is understood together with the following verse 34 of Surah Al-Ahzab, that the role of a Muslim woman can be wider than just staying at home and managing household affairs.
- 5 The word, “*wadhkurna*” in verse 34 of Surah Al-Ahzab is to mean, to deliver and share to others:
 - a. any Qur’anic verses they (wives) had heard of from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ upon receiving it from Jibril a.s
 - b. Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ words or teachings (*hadiths*) that they had heard in their houses

- c. Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ conduct (*sunnahs*) that they had witnessed in their houses.
- 6 The command on the wives to inform and share the words and behaviour of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is important with other Muslims because they represent the Prophet's ﷺ *sunnah* for the entire Muslim *ummah*. It is certain while being at home that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would advise and communicate with members of his family on various issues behind the closed doors, but these concern all Muslims too. Therefore, many Islamic teachings would not have reached Muslims outside the Prophet's ﷺ house had his words and behaviour not been shared by his wives.

Allah's Ta'ala revealed verse 34 of Surah Al-Ahzab to give clear instruction that the incidents at the Prophet's ﷺ home were private matters like an ordinary Muslim's home, and the sharing would not be neglected.

- 7 The two abovementioned verses explain the dual function role of the Prophet's ﷺ wives:
- a. Domestic functions related to family duties
 - b. Social functions related to the conveyance of religious knowledge or *da'wah* to the society.
- 8 There are many historical facts supporting both functions played by the Prophet's ﷺ wives:
- a. Many *hadith* reports mention about many companions (both male and female) who had studied and approached the Prophet's ﷺ wives regarding religious issues and practices in their daily lives with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

- b. Many historical records mention many of the Prophet's ﷺ wives had turned into religious scholars. They taught Muslims during the generation of the companion and the followers (*tabi'in*) after the passing of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and were active in *da'wah* in community as well.
- 9 Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ wife Saiyyidatina Aisha r.a was the most prominent in this. She was active in *da'wah* not only as a scholar, but also as a community and a political activist.
- 10 Clear evidence concerning this issue was Saiyyidatina Aisha's r.a involvement in the political turmoil after the assassination of the third Caliph, Saiyyidina Uthman r.a, that led to the Battle of Camels, which pitted Saiyyidatina Aisha r.a and her followers who wanted to avenge the death of Saiyyidina Uthman r.a, against Saiyyidina Ali r.a, the newly appointed Caliph to replace Saiyyidina Uthman r.a and his army.
- Though Saiyyidatina Aishah's r.a involvement during the Battle of Camels was regarded as a mistaken *ijtihad* in the eyes of some scholars, it does not serve as an argument to blame Saiyyidatina Aishah's r.a activism in the society.
- 11 The message in the abovementioned verses regarding the dual function of the Prophet's ﷺ wives can be extended to all Muslim women. Like the Prophet ﷺ, his wives are also role models for Muslims women.
- 12 The Qur'an recognises that Muslim women have important role in family such as the upbringing of young children. However, apart from domestic and familial roles, the Qur'an also affirms that Muslim women play a vital role in *da'wah* in community.

In fact, several issues within the community are more efficiently handled by women themselves such as defending the plight of abused women and attending to female youth delinquency.

This is also in line with other Qur'anic verses that make *da'wah* an Islamic duty of all Muslim men and women (verses 104 and 110 of Surah Al 'Imran, verse 125 of Surah Al-Nahl, and verse 41 of Surah Al-Hajj).

- 13 As far as the Qur'an is concerned, both Muslim men and women have common responsibilities—to support each other in managing family affairs and doing *da'wah* in community (verse 71 of Surah Al-Taubah).

Epilogue



Indeed, the Qur'an plays a prominent role as the ultimate guidance for every Muslim individual and society of all ages and eras. By analysing the Qur'an, it can be concluded that one of the miracles of Qur'an is the presence of apt and effective styles and approaches for all levels of the human mind. The Qur'an influences readers and audiences to reflect and ponder.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَآخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (١٩٠) الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ
جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا
خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (١٩١)

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the day and night **there are signs for people of reason.** (190) (They are) those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, **and reflect on the**

creation of the heavens and the earth (and pray), “Our Lord! You have not created (all of) this without purpose. Glory be to You! Protect us from the torment of the Fire. (191)” (Al ‘Imran: 190–191)

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And We have sent down to you (O Prophet) the Reminder, so that you may explain to people what has been revealed for them, **and perhaps they will reflect.**” (Al-Nahl: 44)

This book primarily highlights Qur’anic enjoinder upon Muslims to reflect and ponder its divine messages with strong devotion and comprehensiveness. Hence, the main title for this book, *Perhaps You Would Reflect...*, is a translation of a Qur’anic verse itself, “*la’allakum tatafakkarun*”.

At times, we may ask: What is our role as Muslims in relations to the Qur’an that has been revealed to us? How have we been connecting and contemplating the relevance of the Qur’an in our daily lives? Being in a Muslim-minority country, what is our responsibility in connecting the Qur’an with society? And a personal question I developed upon the completion of this book, which I would love to share with fellow readers: What would life be if it is devoid of the Qur’an? There are never-ending questions when it comes to the reflection of the Qur’an.

With that, these questions are deliberately left unanswered in this epilogue with the purpose of encouraging readers to seek answers from continuous reflection and to stimulate greater connections with the Holy Qur’an which Allah Ta’ala ascribed to

as a book full of explanation, guidance, mercy, and good news as mentioned in:

وَزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تَبْيِينًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَى
لِّلْمُسْلِمِينَ

“We have revealed to you the Book (Qur’an) as an explanation of all things, a guide, a mercy, and good news for those who (fully) submit.” (Al-Nahl: 89)

This book represents the English version of Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff Hassan’s original Malay book titled *Pesanan Ilahi... Cerminkanlah*.

I would like to include this epilogue my utmost gratitude and appreciation to Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff Hassan for the consent granted to translate his works and articles to English that would contribute further to the intellectual development of Muslim community. May Allah Ta’ala protect him and benefits us with his knowledge in the best of both worlds. Ameen.

A divine piece which I would like to conclude with is verse 21 of Surah Al-Tur,

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَمَا
أَلْتَنَاهُمْ مِّنْ عَمَلِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِينٌ

“And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in faith—We will join with them their descendants, and We will not deprive them of anything of their deeds. Every person, for what he earned, is retained.” (Al-Tur: 21)

This verse informs of Allah's Ta'ala blessings and promise for His believers, that He will gather them with their descendants who follow them in faith in His paradise. This illustrates the role and the responsibility of a believer in educating their descendants towards faith so that they will meet again in His paradise. The verse also assures that every person will reap what they sowed and none will be deprived of rightful rewards of his deeds.

This meaning can further elucidate the important role that must be played by a Muslim—to educate the society towards Islamic faith and values, with the guidance of the Qur'an, discerned through constant reflections, which is the book's aim.

I pray that this book will be beneficial to the readers, and that it will contribute to influencing the society collectively towards our main collective goal—to be gathered in Allah's Ta'ala paradise.

Indeed, and surely, Allah Ta'ala will not deprive any of His servant's good deeds.

IZ AL-MUNZIR BIN MUHAMMAD HANIFF