



THE MINISTER

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(It is not necessary that the trustees may agree with the writers view.)

The Guidance of Mankind

By Rosemary (Mariam) Al Attar

With the creation of man, divinely commissioned Prophethood for the guidance of mankind began. These guides, chosen by Allah (s.w.t) were infallible or sinless, as a person capable of sinning cannot reasonably preach sinlessness to others. The Muslim Creed is made clear in the following verse from the Holy Qur'an:

“Say: We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between one and another of them, and we submit to Allah.” (2:136)

That is to say, Muslims must believe In Allah (s.w.t) and the Holy Qur'an, and all the heavenly scriptures revealed to the ancient prophets who preceded Prophet Mohammed. Though not all the names of

these prophets are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, the number of them is reported to be 124,000, the final one, after whom there will be no more, being Prophet Mohammed.

By means of the prophets, Allah (s.w.t) conveyed His Message in order to reveal to mankind the divinely regulated code of life (or religion) for mankind on earth. Prophet after prophet was sent to the different units of the human family inhabiting the various parts of the earth, according to the mental evolutionary state of different ages.

Ultimately the divine guidance was consolidated in a universal teacher – Prophet Mohammed - to unite mankind under one single constitutional order with the final form of the divinely regulated and perfected code - the Holy Qur'an. The revealed code of behaviour is a method

of disciplining mankind in his practical life on earth, enabling him by his own efforts, to rise above base instincts and carnal desires and to attain the sublime heights of spiritual bliss of those who successfully conquer the lust for material possessions, and restrain the passions of the flesh.

With the last revelation of the Qur'an, the religion was finally declared to have been perfected, and given the name "Islam" meaning "submission."

"This day have I perfected for you your religion, and completed My Favour on you, and chosen for you Islam to be your religion." (5:3)

The greatest of the favours of Allah (s.w.t) is His Guidance, and sending His Final Prophet Mohammed and perfecting the religion for mankind is the completion of the divine favour. The world should be entirely populated by Muslims if the above is true. The reason

why it is not is because some of mankind, with the limited free will bestowed upon man by Allah (s.w.t), chose not to carry out the orders of the Prophet, which were of course the Command of Allah (s.w.t).

Prophet Mohammed was well aware that this might happen, and did his utmost to ensure that Muslims would remain loyal to him, and they would implement the orders which he had received from Allah (s.w.t).

It is natural that once the religion was pronounced perfected and the divine favour declared complete, there was no need for any other prophet to be sent for the same purpose, but that is not to say that there was no need for further guidance. The Prophet was inspired by Allah (s.w.t) to establish the mission of divine guidance towards the true meaning of the revealed Word of Allah (s.w.t) – the Qur'an – and the correct interpretation of the same in practical life. This

guidance is known as "Imamate", and its only purpose was the preservation of the Word of Allah (s.w.t), and to give correct guidance on the path preached and practised by the Seal of the Prophets, Mohammed. Those Muslims who supported the Holy Prophet, and the Imamate in his family and descendants, and listened to the Prophet's words and did as he had told them, were his Shia, or followers. When the Prophet died, his Shia knew and approved the man whom the Prophet had designated his successor.

From early on in his mission, the Prophet made it abundantly clear that Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, his cousin and the husband of his only daughter, Fatima, was to succeed him.

Even from his birth, Imam Ali was uniquely distinguished as the only person to be born within the Holy Ka'bah itself. He was raised in the Prophet's own home by the Prophet and

his wife, Khadija, and he was the first person to accept Islam. It was evident that he was the obvious person to take over from the Prophet.

Imam Ali was still a young lad in his teens when the Prophet invited his close relatives for a meal. When they had eaten, the Prophet explained his mission to them and invited his relatives to join him in the new religion. He told them that whoever believed in Islam and assisted him in his mission would be his successor.

His guests kept silent and no one moved except one. The young Imam Ali leapt to his feet, and the Prophet asked him to be seated. Again he repeated his invitation, and a third time. Still, only the young Imam showed his readiness to assist the Prophet. So the Prophet accepted his young cousin's submission to the Will of Allah (s.w.t.), and carried out the Command to designate him as his successor.

In an important statement, the Prophet affirmed that Imam Ali was truthful and free of false beliefs and wrong acts in his personal conduct and in his speech and judgements, and implicitly asked Muslims to follow him.

Some three years later, the Prophet decided to migrate to Medina, as he, and his small group of Muslims were subjected to much abuse and persecution by the residents of Mecca. Learning of his intention, the Prophet's enemies intended to assassinate him before he could leave. But Allah (s.w.t) made known to him the unbelievers plot. Then the Prophet asked Imam Ali if he was willing to sleep in the Prophet's own bed in order to fool the pagans into believing it was the Prophet there, giving him the chance to escape from Mecca unnoticed. The young Imam willingly agreed, and in the early hours of the morning the plotters all attempted to rush on him, but he jumped up and realising

who was in the bed, they all ran away.

Concerning this event came the following revelations:

"Whoever among the people sells his life out of a desire to please Allah; Allah's Divine Pleasure is with such servants." (2:207)

Three days later, Imam Ali left for Medina. With the emigration the Islamic calendar began.

During the first year of Hijra, the Prophet's only daughter Fatima, and Imam Ali were married according to instructions from Allah (s.w.t). With the birth of their two sons, Hasan and Hussain, within a short time of each other, the Imamate was firmly established in the Prophet's line. The Holy Prophet considered the two small boys almost his own sons, but with the younger there was a special bond. He would declare "Hussain is from me and I am from Hussain."

Future events would prove what he meant; his mission would be carried out by Imam Hussain. The two children, together with their parents, formed the household of the Prophet (Ahl-ul-Bayt). According to renowned scholars and theologians, both Sunni and Shi'i, the following verses of the Holy Qur'an are just a few of many of those which refer to Imam Ali and/or the descendants of the Household.

And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah stretches out for you, and be not divided. (3:103)

O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are truthful. (9:119)

Verily, this is My Way leading straight; follow it and follow not other paths. (6:153)

Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. (4:59)

Ask of those who possess the Message. (21:7)

...and follows a path other than that becoming to men of Faith. (4:115)

Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace. (1:6)

...those who pay the poor-rate even while they bow down in prayer... (5:55)

(Revealed after Imam Ali donated the ring from his finger to a needy person who came to the mosque seeking help.)

Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, O Members of the Family (Ahl-ul-Bayt) and to make you pure and spotless. (33:33)
(Known as the Purification Verse.)

Many other verses could be quoted; these are just a sample.

Imam Ali played a vital role in the many battles fought against the infant religion. He performed deeds of matchless bravery and swordsmanship. When sent by the Holy Prophet to fight in single combat, he displayed great gallantry, fortitude and courage.

He brilliantly mastered all fields of knowledge, and was always ready to serve the community, the Prophet, and the Cause of Islam. The drafting of treaties, the writing of letters, the compilation of the Holy Qur'an, and the recording of the revelations, were in the main, carried out by him. The Prophet could not praise him highly enough, and among his sayings are the following:

"I am the City of Knowledge,

and Ali is its Gate."

"The best judge among you is Ali."

"You are in the same position with respect to me as Aaron was to Moses."

"Ali is more loved by Allah and His Messenger than anyone else."

"Whoever fights Ali fights me."

"Wisdom is divided into ten parts; nine parts are given to Ali and one part is distributed among the rest of mankind."

"Ali is always with the Truth, and the Qur'an and the Truth are always with him, and until the Day of Resurrection they will never separate from each other."

FOLLOWING A MUJTAHID

In order to act on Islamic code it is necessary to adopt one of the following methods (except in those matters which are considered by all to be indisputable e.g. the obligatory nature of the five daily prayers and fasting during the holy month of Ramadhan etc.)

1. The man concerned should be a Mujtahid himself and should know these principles on the basis of Ijtihad and reason.

2. If he is not a Mujtahid himself he should follow a Mujtahid.

3. If he is neither a Mujtahid nor a follower (Muqallid) he should act after taking such precaution that he should become sure of his having performed his religious duty. For example, if some Mujtahids consider an act to be prohibited and some others do not consider it to be so, he should refrain from performing it. And in case

some Mujtahids consider an act to be obligatory (Wajib) and others consider it to be recommended (Mustahab) he should perform it.

A person who is not a Mujtahid and cannot also take precautionary measures (Ihtiyat) should follow a Mujtahid, otherwise none of his acts would be valid. Following (Taqlid) means acting according to the Judgment (Fatwa) of a Mujtahid.

Qualifications of a Mujtahid

It is necessary that the Mujtahid who is followed should be male, Shia Ithna Ashari, adult, sane, legitimate, alive and Adil. A person is said to be Adil when he performs all those acts which are obligatory for him and refrains from all those things which are prohibited. A person can be recognized to be Adil if enquires are made about him from his acquaintances and

neighbours and they mention his good qualities.

If it is known briefly that the judgments of the Mujtahids differ with regard to the problems with which we are faced in every day life, it is necessary that an A'lam should be followed in such matters. An A'lam is a Mujtahid who possesses better capacity to understand religious matters as compared with his contemporary Mujtahids.

There are three ways of identifying a Mujtahid or an A'lam.

1. A person should personally believe that such and such person is a Mujtahid or an A'lam. For this he should be a learned person himself and should possess the capacity to identify a Mujtahid or an A'lam.

2. Two persons who are learned and Adil and possess the capacity to identify a Mujtahid or an A'lam should certify about a person's being a

Mujtahid or an A'lam, provided that two other learned and Adil persons do not contradict them.

3. Many learned persons who possess the capacity to identify a Mujtahid or an A'lam should certify about a person's being a Mujtahid or an A'lam and one should be satisfied by their statement.

If it is not possible to identify an A'lam due to difference of opinion among the Mujtahids, a person should take precautionary measures and if it is not possible to do so he should follow that Mujtahid whom he himself considers to be an A'lam. In fact even if there is a weak possibility of a person being an A'lam and one knows that as compared with him there is no other A'lam one should follow that Mujtahid.

There are four ways of obtaining the judgment of a Mujtahid:

1. To hear the judgment from

the Mujtahid himself.

statement satisfies the hearer.

2. The judgment of the Mujtahid being quoted by two Adil persons.

4. To read the judgment of a Mujtahid in a book written on various problems (Masa'il), provided the reader is satisfied about the authenticity of the book.

3. To hear the judgment of a Mujtahid from a person whose



Important dates of this month
Subject to the sighting of the moon

1st April 2008 24th Rabi Al Awwal 1429

8th April 2008 1st Rabi Al Thani 1429

**15th April 2008 / 8th Rabi Al Thani 1429
..... Birthday of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.)**

**21st April 2008 / 14th Rabi Al Thani 1429
..... Moon Confronting Scorpio**

**22nd April 2008 / 15th Rabi Al Thani 1429
..... Moon Confronting Scorpio**

**23rd April 2008 / 16th Rabi Al Thani 1429
..... Moon Confronting Scorpio**

The Amazing Qur'an

By Gary Miller

Calling the Qur'an amazing is not something done only by Muslims, who have an appreciation for the book and who are pleased with it; it has been labelled amazing by non-Muslims as well. In fact, even people who hate Islam very much have still called it well. In fact, even people who hate Islam very much have still called it amazing.

One thing which surprises non-Muslims who are examining the book very closely is that the Qur'an does not appear to them to be what they expected. What they assume is that they have an old book which came fourteen centuries ago from the Arabian Desert; and they expect that the book should look something like that - an old book from the desert. And then they find out that it does not resemble what they expected at all.

Additionally, one of the first things that some people assume is that because it is an old book which comes from the desert, it should talk about the desert. Well the Qur'an does talk about the desert - some of its imagery describes the desert; but it also talks about the sea - what it's like to be in a storm on the sea.

Some years ago, the story came to us in Toronto about a man who was in the merchant navy and made his living on the sea. A Muslim gave him a translation of the Qur'an to read. The merchant mariner knew nothing about the history of Islam but was interested in reading the Qur'an. When he finished reading it, he brought it back to the Muslim and asked, "This Muhammad (SAWA) was he a sailor?"

He was impressed at how

accurately the Qur'an describes a storm on a sea. When he was told, "No as a matter of fact, Muhammad (SAWA) lived in the desert," that was enough for him. He embraced Islam on the spot. He was so impressed with the Qur'anic description because he had been in a storm on the sea, and he knew that whoever had written that description had also been in a storm on the sea. The description of "*a wave, over it a wave, over it clouds*" was not what someone imagining a storm on a sea to be like would have written; rather, it was written by someone who knew what a storm on the sea was like. This is one example of how the Qur'an is not tied to a certain place and time. Certainly, the scientific ideas expressed in it also do not seem to originate from the desert fourteen centuries ago.

Many centuries before the onset of Muhammad (SAWA)'s Prophethood, there was a well-known theory of atomism advanced by the

Greek philosopher, Democritus. He and the people who came after him assumed that matter consists of tiny, indestructible, indivisible particles called atoms. The Arabs too, used to deal in the same concept; in fact, the Arabic word *dharrah* commonly referred to the smallest particle known to man.

Now, modern science has discovered that this smallest unit of matter (i.e., the atom, which has all of the same properties as its element) can be split into its component parts. This is a new idea, a development of the last century; yet, interestingly enough, this information had already been documented in the Qur'an which states:

"He [i.e., Allah] is aware of an atom's weight in the heavens and on the earth and even anything smaller than that... "

Undoubtedly, fourteen centuries ago that statement

would have looked unusual, even to an Arab. For him, the *dharrah* was the smallest thing there was. Indeed, this is proof, that the Qur'an is not outdated.

Another example of what one might expect to find in an "old book" that touches upon the subject of health or medicine is outdated remedies or cures. Various historical sources state that the Prophet gave some advice about health and hygiene, yet most of these pieces of advice are not contained in the Qur'an. At first glance, to the non-Muslims this appears to be a negligent omission. They cannot understand why Allah would not "include" such helpful information in the Qur'an. Some Muslims attempt to explain this absence with the following argument: "Although the Prophet's advice was sound and applicable to the time in which he lived, Allah, in His infinite wisdom, knew that there would come later medical and scientific advances which

would make the Prophet's advice appear outdated. When later discoveries occurred, people might say that such information contradicted that which the Prophet had given. Thus, since Allah would never allow any opportunity for the non-Muslims to claim that the Qur'an contradicts itself or the teachings of the Prophet, He only included in the Qur'an information and examples which could stand the test of time."

However, when one examines the true realities of the Qur'an in terms of its existence as a divine revelation, the entire matter is quickly brought into its proper perspective, and the error in such argumentation becomes clear and understandable. It must be understood that the Qur'an is a divine revelation, and as such, all information in it is of divine origin. Allah revealed the Qur'an from Himself. It is the words of Allah, which existed before creation, and thus nothing can be added, subtracted or altered. In

essence, the Qur'an existed and was complete before the creation of Prophet Muhammad (SAWA), so it could not possibly contain any of the Prophet's own words or advice. An inclusion of such information would clearly contradict the purpose for which the Qur'an exists, compromise its authority and render it inauthentic as a divine revelation.

Consequently, there was no "home remedies" in the Qur'an which one could claim to be outdated; nor does it contain any man's view about what is beneficial to health, what food is best to eat or what will cure this or that disease. In fact, the Qur'an only mentions one item dealing with medical treatment, and it is not in dispute by anyone. It states that in honey there is healing. And certainly, I do not think that there is anyone who will argue with that!

If one assumes that the Qur'an is the product of a man's mind, then one would expect it to

reflect some of what was going on in the mind of the man who "composed" it. In fact, certain encyclopaedias and various books claim that the Qur'an was the product of hallucinations that Muhammad (SAWA) underwent. If these claims are true - if it indeed originated from some psychological problems in Muhammad (SAWA)'s mind - then evidence of this would be apparent in the Qur'an. Is there such evidence? In order to determine whether or not there is, one must first identify what things would have been going on in his mind at that time and then search for these thoughts and reflections in the Qur'an.

It is common knowledge that Muhammad (SAWA) had a very difficult life. All of his children died before him except one daughter (Fatema), and he had a wife (Khadija) of several years who was dear and important to him, and who preceded him in death at a very critical period of his life - after 25 years of blissful

married life with him. As a matter of fact, she must have been quite a woman because when the first revelation came to him, he hurried home to confide to her. Certainly, even today one would have a hard time trying to find an Arab who would tell you, "I was so shaken that I hurried home to my wife." They just aren't that way. Yet Muhammad (SAWA) felt comfortable enough with his wife to be able to do that. That's how influential and strong woman she was.

Although these examples are only a few of the subjects that would have been on Muhammad (SAWA)'s mind, they are sufficient in intensity to prove my point. The Qur'an does not mention any of these things - not the death of his children, not the death of his beloved wife, not his fear of the initial revelations, which he so beautifully shared with his wife - nothing; yet, these topics must have hurt him, bothered him, and caused him pain and grief during periods

of his psychological reflections, then these subjects, as well as others, would be prevalent or at least mentioned throughout.

A truly scientific approach to the Qur'an is possible because the Qur'an offers something that is not offered by other religious scriptures, in particular, and other religions, in general. It is what scientists demand. Today there are many people who have ideas and theories about how the universe works. These people are all over the place, but the scientific community does not even bother to listen to them. This is because within the last century the scientific community has demanded a test of falsification. They say, "If you have theory, do not bother us with it unless you bring with that theory a way for us to prove whether you are wrong or not."

Such a test was exactly why the scientific community listened to Einstein towards the beginning of the century.

He came with a new theory and said, "I believe the universe works like this; and here are three ways to prove whether I am wrong!" So the scientific community subjected his theory to the tests, and within six years it passed all three. Of course, this does not prove that he was great, but it proves that he deserved to be listened to because he said, "This is my idea; and if you want to try to prove me wrong, do this or try that." This is exactly what the Qur'an has – falsification tests. Some are old (in that they have already been proven true), and some still exist today. Basically it states, "If this book is not what it claims to be, then all you have to do is this or this or this to prove that it is false." Of course, in 1400 years no one has been able to do "This or this or this," and thus it is still considered true and authentic.

I suggest to you that the next time you get into dispute with someone about Islam and he

claims that he has the truth and that you are in darkness, you leave all other arguments at first and make this suggestion. Ask him, "Is there any falsification test in your religion? Is there anything in your religion that would prove you are wrong if I could prove to you that it exists - anything?" Well, I can promise right now that people will not have anything - no test, no proof, nothing! This is because they do not carry around the idea that they should not only present what they believe but should also offer others a chance to prove they're wrong.

However, Islam does that. A perfect example of how Islam provides man with a chance to verify its authenticity and "prove it wrong" occurs in the 4th chapter. And quite honestly, I was surprised when I first discovered this challenge. It states:

"Do they not consider the Qur'an? Had it been from any

other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy."

This is a clear challenge to the non-Muslim. Basically, it invites him to find a mistake. As a matter of fact, the seriousness and difficulty of the challenge aside, the actual presentation of such a challenge in the first place is not even in human nature and is inconsistent with man's personality. One doesn't take an exam in school after finishing the exam; write a note to the instructor at the end saying, "This exam is perfect. There are no mistakes in it. Find one if you can!" One just doesn't do that. The teacher would not sleep until he found a mistake! And yet

this is the way the Qur'an approaches people. Another interesting attitude that exists in the Qur'an repeatedly deals with its advice to the reader. The Qur'an informs that reader about different facts and then gives the advice: "If you want to know more about this or that, or if you doubt what is said, then you should ask those who have knowledge." This too is a surprising attitude. It is not usual to have a book that comes from someone without training in geography, botany, biology, etc., who discusses these subjects and then advises the reader to ask men of knowledge if he doubts anything.

(To Be Continued)

25 Rules Of Being Close To Allah

1. Start off each day with 'adhkaar al-istiyqaadh' (waking up Supplications) thanking Allah for waking up in good shape.

2. Put Allah first in your life.

3. Broaden your horizons - learn 5 new verses from the Quran every day, travel to pray in the mosque to brighten your day, take up a booklet containing supplications and read them.

4. Pray Salaat al-dhuhaa (after sunrise).

5. If someone says some mean things to you, just shrug it off and dismiss it in a friendly, laidback manner, and pray that Allah shall forgive them.

6. When you get angry, remember Allah, and how short life is to waste time in being angry.

7. Remember that you can

never have too many friends, but you can have few quality friends that help you fulfill the purpose of your creation (i.e. to live for Allah).

8. When you're happy, try to share your happiness with others. Thank Allah for that, and pray for its continuation.

9. When something bad or embarrassing happens to you, just think that it could always be worse, remember the reward of patience, and thank Allah that it's not worse than it is.

10. Do something extra good once in a while, like feeding a poor person, or caressing an orphan's head.

11. Never stop believing that you can win Allah's love and thus work for it. Then you can win the love of Allah's slaves.

12. Spend some time thinking of Allah's amazing creation.

13. Always love those who love Allah unconditionally. This way you will ensure that you live for Him, love for Him, and hate for Him (those who are enemies of Him).

14. Find the righteous ways to express yourself, and if you think that what you are about to say shall cause no benefit, maintain silence.

15. Every now and then, give yourself a break. Play sports, give time to your family, friends, but always remember Allah and watch that He is watching you.

16. Pray for blessing to come to those being lost, and pray to Allah to guide them to the right path.

17. Hug your parents, kiss their hands and heads and always obey but stop at Allah's orders.

18. Smile to everybody, for your smile makes a big difference to people's moods and you are rewarded.

19. Forgive people, forget and smile.

20. Tears are not for women only... tears are for all human beings with feelings remaining in them. Don't restrain your tears when remembering Allah.

21. When people criticize your actions and effort, revise your actions and see if they please Allah or not. If they do; then ignore the people and remember how the Prophet (SAAW) and the righteous were criticized, made fun of and even physically harmed, so have patience.

22. Read the Quran daily and try to have a schedule for completing it as much as you could. As you open the Quran daily, read with observing not just passing your eyes through the words.

23. Don't let popularity go to your head, for it never lasts and you may lose from it more than gain.

24. Never look down on anybody, for, to Allah, they may be better than you, depending on how much piety they have.

25. Read this to brothers and sisters with the intention of having a united society living for Allah and pray for the ummah.

Activities

- English Monthly Magazine “The Minister”.
- Urdu Monthly Magazine “Al-Moballigh”.
- Audio Magazine “The Voice”.
- Religious Madressa. (Mon, Tue and Wed).
- Islamic Library (a collection of manuscripts and printed books in Arabic, Persian, English and Urdu languages).
- Weekly Religious Gathering:

Thursday 8:00 pm – Dua-e-Kumayl and Majlis

Friday 8:00 pm – Dinner, Lectures (English & Urdu), followed by questions and answers.

Saturday 7:30 am – Breakfast followed by lecture on Different topics.

Sunday 11:00 am – (First Sunday of every month) Medical Lecture by a Doctor.

We need Momeneen’s views and help.

Prayer Times

By Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamenei

Q: What is the proof on which Shi'ites rely concerning the times of the daily obligatory prayers? As you know, Sunnis consider the beginning of the time for isha as proof that maghrib prayers are qaza during that time, and the same applies to zuhr and asr prayers. Accordingly, they believe that when the time of isha prayers begins and the imam stands up to pray, the mamum [the person who prays behind the imam] may not perform maghrib prayers with him with the intention of performing both prayers together.

A: The proof can be found in both the Quran and the noble Sunnah, as well as in traditions which specifically indicate the permissibility of performing such prayers together. The Sunnis also have some traditions which prove that it is permissible to perform

Q: Bearing in mind that the time for asr prayers ends at sunset and the time for zuhr prayers ends a little before sunset, namely when there is still just enough time to perform asr prayers, I would like to ask what is meant by maghrib? Is it the setting of the sun or when the azan [call to prayer] of maghrib is said?

A: Maghrib does not mean the disappearance of the sun; rather, it signifies the time of the azan of maghrib, namely, when the redness of the eastern sky vanishes, which constitutes the end of the time for asr prayers, attached to the beginning of the time for maghrib prayers.

Q: How many minutes is the time gap between sunset and the time for the azan of maghrib?

A: It varies according to season.

Q: I usually work late, returning home later than 11 p.m., and it is impossible for me to perform maghrib and isha prayers at work. Is it permissible to perform maghrib and isha prayers after 11 p.m.?

A: Yes, as long as they are not postponed until after midnight. However you should make every effort not to offer your prayers later than 11 p.m., but to do them at the beginning of the time.

Q: How much of the prayers is it that if performed during its ada (due) time, the ada intention (niyyah) will be realized correctly? And what is the rule in the case of doubt as to whether that portion has been performed within the time or not?

A: Performing a single rak'ah of the prayers at the end of its time is sufficient for considering it as ada, and if you doubt whether the time is enough for performing at least

a rak'ah or not, your duty will be to perform the prayers with the niyyah of carrying out your obligation [ma fi al-zimmah] and not to make either of ada or qaza intentions.

Q: What is your opinion on the issue of al-fajr al-sadiq [the true dawn] and al-fajr al-kazib [the false dawn], and what is the duty with regard to this issue of those who pray?

A: The shar'i criterion with respect to the time of prayer and fasting is al-fajr al-sadiq, and ascertaining when that is remains the duty of the mukallaf.

Q: Is it obligatory to perform zuhr prayers after the azan of zuhr and asr prayers as soon as the time for asr has begun? Is one allowed to do the same with respect to maghrib and isha prayers?

A: Once the time for zuhr has arrived, the mukallaf has the option to perform zuhr and asr

together or pray them separately. The same applies to maghrib and isha.

Q: If, on bright moonlit nights, the time for subh prayers arrives, should one wait for fifteen minutes or so before praying in order to be sure that daybreak has actually occurred?

A: It makes no difference whether the night is moonlit or not as far as daybreak and the time for subh prayers are concerned, although it is always good to observe precaution in this regard.

Q: Is the difference in shar'i times between various provinces the same for all the prayers? For example, zuhr prayers, begin at a certain time in one province and 25 minutes later in another. Will this time difference be the same for all of the prayers?

A: No, the prayer time differences often vary.

Q: Given that Sunnis perform maghrib prayers before the shar'i sunset, are we allowed to pray behind them during Hajj and at other times?

A: It is not certain that their prayers are performed before the beginning of the time. There is no problem in praying behind them and such prayers are acceptable. One should wait until the time for prayers has begun, unless, of course, the issue of taqiyyah [dissimulation] is involved.

Q: In Norway and Denmark the sun rises at 7 a.m. and is still shining in the afternoon which is the same as midnight in other countries. What are Muslims in these two countries to do with regard to praying and fasting?

A: As far as the timing of daily prayers is concerned, one is obliged to act in accordance with sunrise and sunset times in one's country of residence. And if fasting is harmful

because of the length of the day, it ceases to be obligatory as ada and instead becomes obligatory as qaza.

Q: Bearing in mind that it takes roughly 7 minutes for sunlight to reach the earth what is the ruling for determining the end of the time for subh prayers: sunrise, or the moment the sunlight reaches the earth?

A: The criterion is the rising of the sun and its visibility on the horizon, for the person performing the prayer.

Q: Are we allowed to rely on the prayer times which are published in the newspapers and announced on radio and television, and published a day in advance, and should we take the broadcast of the azan via radio or television as the beginning of the time for

prayer?

A: The criterion is that the mukallaf should have no doubt concerning the beginning of the time for prayer.

Q: Does the time for prayer begin as soon as the azan starts to be recited or is one obliged to wait until the azan is finished before one prays?

A: If one is sure that the azan began after the prayer time had arrived, one does not need to wait until it has been recited completely.

Q: If someone performs asr before zuhr, or isha before maghrib, will his prayers be valid?

A: Only if he does so unintentionally; prayers said intentionally out of sequence are invalid.

Islam and Racism

The "Unity" is the basis of Islamic theology: and therefore "Unity" is the ground of its philosophy of society. All humanity is one; a great unit. Its individuals are members of one society incorporate, which is so comprehensive that it includes all differences within its oneness. The many find within the one, that brotherhood, affection, friendliness and human blood-relationship which is of the essence. Hence distinctions do not become differences — not colour, nor culture, nor class, nor custom, nor conversational idiom.

Mutual respect as fellow humans in pursuit of the common good is the rule throughout the worldwide society of Islam, without superiority or inferiority, since all mankind were created in one human soul to start with, from whom man and woman, black and white, poor and rich, all evolve, sharing one common humanity. Truly,

"God made of one flesh all the nations upon earth if, haply they may feel after Him and find Him."

So it is written (Qur'an: Sura IV, Nisa'a - "The Women" 1st Verse): "Revere God Who created you all from one person", leaving no room for nationalistic divisions. Differences in skin and tongue are merely tokens of the Creator's power. They call on men to study the Holy Will and Might of Him Who from one elemental root created so many variations of colour, countenance and conversation: as it is written (Qur'an: Sura XXX - "Rome" verse 21): "Signs of His Power are His creation of heaven and of earth, and the varieties of tongues and skins; in all of which are sermons for the wise."

It is further written (Qur'an: Sura II, Baqara - "The Cow" verse 213): "Mankind was one single nation. Then we sent

messengers to them to give them glad tidings and warnings; and with them we sent the Book in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed . . . and God by His grace guided believers to the common truth on points about which they differed; for God guides whom He will onto a path that is straight."

This verse reveals that in the beginning mankind was one single nation without differences or splits or conflicts but enjoying unity, cooperation and harmony. The martyred Imam Ali left us the priceless legacy of the Nahj-ul Balagha, amongst which is his historic address to Malik al-Ashtar in which he expresses this truth as follows: "Make thy heart a throne of mercy towards thy people. Show them perfect love and care. Never treat them as a ravaging beast that tears and rends their properties and their persons. For they are in one of two groups. Either they are thy brothers in the Faith — or they

are thy fellow human beings of one flesh with thy own."

This broad view embraces all races, all cultures, all tongues. Unity and union amongst individuals will subsist under the aegis of unity of thought and spirit, oneness of conviction and aim; nor can any unity obtain save under that orderliness. Should a society fall into division of thought and conviction, its bonds of affection will be loosened: and, when adversity arises, material needs will increase differences, conflicts and tensions. That is why the strongest tie of unity amongst nations is the religious bond.

It is in this bond of union that Islam has brought people and peoples together, freeing them from the trammels of division and difference, and calling them to establish the bases of accord and agreement in a society of brotherhood which is the natural state of man. Islam treats mankind as one great family of brothers and sisters. In the human family

the relationship of father and child is a stronger bond than that of brotherhood. But the qualities of respect and of difference of age deprive the father-child relationship of full equality. That is why it is brotherhood which Islam exalts as the expression of that perfect and heartfelt affection which should reign within the human family. It should reign on the surface and in the depths. Brotherhood is therefore the Qur'an's call. The sublimest levels of love and the most sincere of friendships are those which arise between Muslims.

They are called brothers because of their brotherhood, because of the existence of the fact of this most tender and beautiful of manifestations of equality; it is not the command to be brothers which called the fact into existence. The command was uttered, but the natural upwelling of the spirit engendered by that surrender

(tasleem) to God (which Islam is) issues in brotherhood. This brotherhood is deeper and higher than mere natural brotherliness, for it is the unity of a shared aim, the unity of shared convictions, the unity of joint beliefs, the unity of hearts.

It is written (Qur'an: Sura XLIX, Hujurat - "The Inner Apartments" verse 10): "Believers are a single brotherhood. Make peace amongst your brothers and fear God that ye may receive mercy."

The Prophet decreed: "The members of the assembly of the believers are by love and affection one body, and any limb of that which is pained causes all the other limbs to suffer in sympathy. If any individual Muslim falls into a painful situation all the other members of the community must run to his help and share in his sorrow."

HIS RIGHT TO IMAMATE

The texts on which the question of the Imamate of the ummah are ideologically and politically based are as follows:

1. The Verse of Wilayah (guardian); *"Your guardian (wall) is Allah, His Messenger and those who believe and who keep up the prayer and pay zakat (poor-rate) while they are bowing (in prayer). And who takes as guardians Allah and His Messenger and those who believe, surely the party of Allah, they are the victorious". (5:55-56)*

Interpreters of the Qur'an say that this verse was revealed in clear reference to Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), and stress that the Islamic ummah should adhere to him as an Imam, and as the ideological and political authority after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). It is established beyond doubt that this verse was sent down in Ali's favor and that the reason

for its revelation was that a beggar entered the Mosque of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) asking the Muslims to help him. Imam Ali (a.s.), while bowing in prayer, extended to him his finger with a ring on it. The beggar took the ring and went away. Thus, he gave alms (zakat) while bowing in prayer, upon which the verse was revealed.

2. Al-Ghadir Speech: This was the speech which the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) delivered after performing the rites of his 'Farewell Pilgrimage', that is, his last hajj.

Al-Barra bin Azab says, "We came along with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in the year of his last pilgrimage. When we reached a part of the road, he ordered congregational prayers to be held. Then he held Ali's hand and said in loud voice, *"Am I not more vested to rule the believers than themselves?"*

'O yes', they answered. "He again said, 'Am I not more vested to rule every believer than himself?' 'O yes', they said again. Then raising the hand of Ali (a.s.), he said, ***Then this is the Wali (guide) over whoever I am a wali. O God, befriend whoever befriends him; O God, be hostile to whoever is hostile to him***."

Ahmad bin Hanbal says, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.)

said, ***"Whoever I am master (mowla) of, Ali is his master. O God, befriend whoever befriends him, be hostile to whoever opposes him."***

3. Umm al-Mu'minin, Umm Salamah, (The Messenger's wife) says, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said, ***'Allah had chosen for every prophet a vicegerent. Ali is my vicegerent among my family, folk and people after me'***."

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