

The Perfect Believer

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(Revised)

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: The Meaning of Iman	6	Iman in the Prophets and Messengers of Allah	38
Is Iman the same like Faith?	7	Iman in the Last Day	39
Differences between Islam, Iman, and Ihsan	14	Iman in Al-Qadar (Fate - Divine Destiny)	47
The Rank of Islam	14	Misconceptions about <i>Qadar</i>	56
The Rank of Iman	15	Chapter Five : Perfection of Iman	62
The Rank of Ihsan	16	The six pillars of Iman	62
Chapter Two : Meaning of the <i>Hadeeth</i>	18	Total Submission without Doubts	63
Branches of Iman	18	Full Acceptance without any Hesitation	64
Iman Increases and Decreases	19	Seeking Knowledge	66
The Tree of Iman	21	Purification of the Heart	68
Chapter Three: The Importance of Haya'	27	Striving in Good Deeds	74
Haya' is important for the survival of Iman	27	Keeping the Company of Guided People	77
Haya' is not Shyness	27	Fruits of Iman	80
Is Haya' natural or acquired?	28	Chapter Six: Nullifications of Iman	92
Why was Haya' Specified in the <i>Hadeeth</i> ?	28	Acts of <i>Kufr</i> and <i>Shirk</i>	92
Haya' and our Life	30	Hypocrisy	96
Highest Rank of Haya'	30	Rejecting the Judgment of Allah and His Messenger	96
Haya' and Self-control	31	Rejection of Some Parts of Islam	97
Haya' in Speech	31	Rejecting Sunnah	98
Haya' and Dignity	31	Failure to Confess Iman	100
Haya' in our Relationship with People	32	Iman at the Wrong Time	101
Chapter Four : The Basics of Iman	33	Iman out of compulsion	102
The six pillars of Iman	33	Indulgence in Bid'ah	103
Iman in Allah	33	Indulgence in misdeeds	104
Iman in the Angels of Allah	34	Neglecting Obligations	104
Iman in the Books of Allah	36	Sins invite afflictions and misfortunes	105
		Negligence of Good Deeds	106
		References	109
		Books of the Author	111
	2		3

About the Author

The author of this book, Zeinab Hassan Ashry, is a computer engineer, who spent 12 years in Islamic studies in Dar Al-Qura'n in Kuwait. She is a well-known figure in the field of da'wah (preaching Islam) in Kuwait for English speaking ladies, Muslims and non-Muslims; she spent decades of her life in this field. She has been dedicating most of her time for spreading awareness about Islam. She teaches courses, gives lectures, writes books, articles, and is actively involved in Dawah activities among non-Muslims in Kuwait.

The author provides for the readers authentic Islamic information based on the Noble Quran, sound traditions of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), authentic Islamic books and references as well as the opinions of great respected Muslim scholars

Preface

I am deeply grateful to Almighty Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, for guiding me to start this series of *Hadeeth* studies. A selection of Prophet's traditions from Saheeh Al-Bukhari, the most authentic book after The Noble Qur'aan, are explained in some details emphasizing their effect in our life.

This series of *Hadeeth* studies is a humble attempt toward better understanding of Sunnah, its important role in our life and revival of Islamic heritage at large.

I thank Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, for offering me the chance to teach these selected traditions and share this knowledge with many of my sisters in IPC (Islam Presentation Committee, Kuwait). I pray to Allah, from all my heart to accept this work and make it sincerely for His sake.

“Say : Truly, my prayers, my services of sacrifice, my life, and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. There is no partners with him. This am I commanded, and I am the first of Muslims (of those who submit to His will)”

Chapter One

The Meaning of Iman

قال أبو هريرة رضي الله عنه: سمعت رسول الله ﷺ يقول: الإيمان بضع وستون شعبة والحياء شعبة من الإيمان (رواه البخاري)

Abu-Hurayrah may Allah be pleased with him narrated that the Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, said: “Eman (faith) consists of some sixty branches. And Haya’ is a branch of Eman.”

More Traditions

Here more traditions related to the above *Hadeeth*. The Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, said :

- “Haya’ is a part of Iman” Al-Bukhari
- “Haya’ produces nothing but goodness” Al-Bukhari
- “From among the words people obtained from the first prophethood are: If you feel no Haya’ then do as you wish” Al-Bukhari
- “Iman consists of some seventy branches. The highest of them is saying “There is no god but Allah”, and the lowest of them is removing harm from the road. And Haya’ is a branch of Iman.” Muslim, Abu Dawud and Nasa’i
- “None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.” Al-Bukhari
- “By Him in Whose Hands my life is, none of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father and his children.” Al-Bukhari
- “None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children and all mankind.” Al-Bukhari
- “Whoever possesses the following three qualities will have the sweetness (delight) of faith: The one to whom Allah and

His Apostle becomes dearer than anything else. Who loves a person and he loves him only for Allah’s sake. Who hates to revert to Atheism (disbelief) as he hates to be thrown into the fire.” Al-Bukhari

- The Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa-sallam, said, “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should not hurt his neighbor and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should serve his guest generously and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should talk what is good or keep quiet.” Al-Bukhari

- “Love for the Ansar is a sign of faith and hatred for the Ansar is a sign of hypocrisy.” Al-Bukhari

- “No adulterer commits adultery while he is having Iman, no drinker drinks wine while he is having Iman, and no thief commits theft while he is having Iman” Al-Bukhari and Muslim

- “The Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand another Muslim is safe. The Mu’min is one whom people trust with their lives and property. The Muhajir (emigrant) is the one who abandons evil. The Mujahid is the one who strives against his self in the obedience of Allah.” Ahmad, Al-Tirmidhi, and others

What is Iman?

Iman is poorly translated as faith. A better translation could be: “faith based on reasoning and conviction”

While faith, in the Christian traditions, depends on no proofs, Iman in Islamic traditions must involve reasoning and understanding, with full mental acceptance based upon well established evidences. It must also be complemented with good deeds and noble virtues in order to bring about its fruit.

Iman is freely chosen; it is acquired and maintained through reasoning and conviction. This is why there is no compulsion in

religion. Islam is well known of its rationality; because of this there was no contradiction between Iman and science as it was the case in Christian Europe.

Iman is based on reasoning and logic, as well as observations and evidences found in the universe. Logic and reasoning prove that nothing could exist in this world by its own, there have to be a Creator: The Originator, or The Maker; the Qur'aan says:

“Were they created out of nothing ? Or were themselves the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Nay, but they are sure of nothing.” [52 – 35:36]

A great part of Qur'aan encourages man to look for the signs of Allah, in himself and the universe, order to be convinced that He is truly One God, and strengthens his Iman in Him.

1) “Verily in the creation of heavens and earth and alteration of day and night there are signs for those who have sense.” [3 – 190]

2) “Let man consider and look at his food. How We pour down water in showers. Then We split the earth in clefts. And We produce in it grain. And grapes and fresh vegetation. And olives and palm trees. And gardens, dense with lofty trees. And fruits and all kinds of grass. An enjoyment for you and your cattle” [80 – 24]

3) “Let man consider from what he was created” [86 – 5]

Indeed, the miracles and signs of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, are abundant around us in every place and at any time. At present, the modern science is revealing to us more and more of the signs of Allah; modern science convinces people that Prophet Muhammad, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, is truthful in his call, and Qur'aan could never be his words;

Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, promised in Qur'aan that He will show mankind, at all times, evidences and proofs enough to make it manifest to them that the Message of Islam is the Truth; so that they will have no excuses not to believe in it:

“We verily shall show them our signs in the horizons and within themselves till it becomes manifest to them that it is the truth” [41– 53]

a- Iman in Arabic

Iman is to believe by heart in something. As it is mentioned in Surat Yousef 12 -17: **“And you shall not (believe) us even if we are truthful”**

b- Iman in Islamic terminology:

There are three major opinions:

First Opinion:

Iman is defined by the majority of scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah¹ as a belief in the heart, a statement by the tongue, and actions by the limbs. This concept is based upon the tradition that says: **“Iman is that firm belief in your heart, which is confirmed by your deeds”**

Accordingly:

- i- One must be fully convinced that Islam is the truth without doubts. And must affirm by the heart the Shahadah that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger, the unseen, and the six pillars of Iman: believing in Allah, His messengers, books, angels, Day of Judgment, and fate (good and evil).
- ii- One must confess by the tongue that which he believes in,
- iii- and keeps away from disobedience and strive in acts of obedience.

Accordingly, Iman increases by acts of obedience and decreases by acts of disobedience. Iman might be diminished by committing heinous sins.

Iman and Major Sins

1- Followers of the Sunnah strictly without deviation.

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wasallam, negates Iman from those who commit major sins; He said: “No adulterer commits adultery while he is having Iman, no drinker drinks wine while he is having Iman, and no thief commits theft while he is having Iman” (Moslem)

Ibn Rajab mentioned² that Abu Hurariah, may Allah be pleased with him, said that when one committed a heinous sin, Iman would go away from him and form like a cloud above him; if he repents it will return back to him.

As for people who committed heinous sins and died before repentance, according to opinion of Ahlus-Sunnah, they might be forgiven by Allah, or benefit from the Prophet's intercession; but if they were to be punished in the Fire, they would be brought out of it and not to stay there forever like the unbelievers.

However, the sects of Al-Khawarej³ negate Iman from those who committed major sins and regard them as unbelievers; they believe major sins would cause the person to be punished in the Fire forever like the unbelievers.

Second Opinion:

A small minority of Muslim scholars, like Imam Abu Hanifah, consider the linguistic meaning of Iman. They define Iman as to only believe by heart; but they require confession of the tongue for the validity of Iman.

Although they agree with the first opinion about the importance of good deeds for the survival of Iman they regard Iman and good deeds as two separate issues.

In their opinion, good deeds are not part of Iman; they are part of Islam or the outward actions of the person; so they see that Iman neither increases nor decreases.

It is worth to mention that the difference between this opinion and the first has no practical effect on the realization of the Islam and

2- In his explanation of Hadeeth (13) of the: Forty Hadeeth of An-Nawawi

3- Al-Khawarej are those who turned against Ali, may Allah be pleased with him.

Iman of the individual.

Third Opinion:

Al-Murje'iah groups see that Iman is just to believe by one's heart; One must be convinced that Islam is the truth, and that is all. According to this opinion Iman neither includes confession by the tongue nor good deeds. And also it neither increases nor decreases. No matter how many sins man commits it does not affect his Iman; he remains a Believer.

This opinion minimizes the importance of good deeds since one is regarded as a Believer whether he obeys or disobeys Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la. They believe that whether one fulfils his religious obligation or does not, his Iman is still the same as the Iman of angel Gabriel and Prophets of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la.

Ahlu-Sunnah scholars disagree with this opinion because there are ample evidences that good deeds are essential part of one's Islam and Iman; without them Islam and Iman will be ineffective and fruitless.

The tradition, we are studying, does not support this opinion because it states that Iman consists of many branches i.e., it is not only believing in the heart.

Also Qur'aan constantly addresses the Believers saying: **“O You who believe and do good deeds...”**.

Also Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, says:

“And give glad tidings to those who believe and do good works, that for them are gardens beneath which flow streams.” Qur'aan, (2: 25)

And the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said:

“Iman is that firm belief in your heart, which is confirmed by your deeds”

He also made it clear that Iman of the mouth is not enough, as he, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said:

“O community of people who believed by their tongue, while belief has not entered their hearts: Do not backbite Muslims, and do not search for their faults, for if anyone searches for their faults, Allah will search for his fault, and if Allah searches for the fault of anyone, He disgraces him in his house.” (Abu Dawud)

Pillars of Iman

Qur’aan and Sunnah mentioned the fundamental pillars of Iman. Every Muslim is required to believe in these pillars; one can not be a believer if he rejects any of the pillars mentioned below:

- 1-Allah,
- 2- His Angels,
- 3- His Holy Scriptures,
- 4- His Prophets,
- 5- the Day of Judgement,
- 6- His Divine Decree (*Qadar*), and to believe that which hits you, could not have missed you, and which missed you, could not have hit you.

There are many evidences from Quran and Sunnah that indicate the basic pillars of Iman mentioned above:

1) Verses of Qur’aan

- i- “Those who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them. And who believe in that which has been revealed to you and that which was revealed before you and they are sure of the hereafter.)” [2: 3-4]
- ii- “It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate; and the

performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of fighting (during the battles). Such are the people of the truth and they are and they are pious.” [2: 177]

iii- “The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers; they all believe in Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, and His angels and His books and His apostles; We make no difference between any of His apostles; and they say: We hear and obey, O our Lord! Forgiveness us, and to You is the eventual course.” [2: 285]

2) The Hadeeth of Gabriel:

On the authority of Omar, radiyallahu ‘anhu, who said: “While we were one day sitting with the Messenger of Allah, sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, there appeared before us a man dressed in extremely white clothes and with very black hair. No traces of journeying were visible on him, and none of us knew him.

He sat down close by the Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, rested his knee against his thighs, and said, O Muhammad! Inform me about Islam.” Said the Messenger of Allah, sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, “Islam is that you should testify that there is no deity save Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, that you should perform *salah* (ritual prayer), pay the *zakah*, fast during Ramadan, and perform Hajj (pilgrimage) to the House (the Ka’bah at Makkah), if you can find a way to it (or find the means for making the journey to it).” Said he (the man), “You have spoken truly.”

We were astonished at his thus questioning him and telling him that he was right, but he went on to say, “Inform me about Iman (faith).”

He (the Messenger of Allah) answered, “It is that you believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and in the Last Day, and in fate (*qadar*), both in its good and in its evil aspects.” He said, “You have spoken truly.”

Then he (the man) said, “Inform me about Ihsan.” He (the Messenger

of Allah) answered, “It is that you should serve Allah as though you could see Him, for though you cannot see Him yet He sees you.”

He said, “Inform me about the Hour.” He (the Messenger of Allah) said, “About that the one questioned knows no more than the questioner.” So he said, “Well, inform me about the signs thereof (i.e. of its coming).” Said he, “They are that the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress, that you will see the barefooted ones, the naked, the destitute, the herdsmen of the sheep (competing with each other) in raising lofty buildings.” Thereupon the man went off.

I waited a while, and then he (the Messenger of Allah) said, “O Omar, do you know who that questioner was?” I replied, “Allah and His Messenger know better.” He said, “That was Gabriel He who came to you to teach you your religion.”” Narrated by Muslim, Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah

Differences between Islam, Iman, and Ihsan

The previous *Hadeeth* shows that the religion of Islam has three distinct ranks: Islam, Iman, and Ihsan. The highest rank is Ihsan; next to it comes Iman; and the lowest rank is Islam. Iman requires the existence of Islam. Attaining Ihsan is achieved through the perfection of both Iman and Islam.

1- The Rank of Islam⁴

Accordingly, Islam in general is defined as the actions of the limbs. The Prophet stated that one is regarded as a Muslim if he testifies that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger, offers the prayers, pays his obligatory charity, observes fast during the month of Ramadan, and performs Pilgrimage to Mecca if he can afford it.

The prescribed acts of worship are not just some words to say, acts to do, or obeying certain orders and regulations; but they should rather be reflected in Muslim’s dealing with people in real life in order to realize the spirit Islam which is peace and safety. The Muslim should strive hard to perfect his outward deeds. One can not be

4 . Refer to «The True muslim» by the author.

a true Muslim unless he, in addition to fulfilling the five pillars of Islam, his deeds and sayings are free from all sorts of defects and imperfections according to the *Hadeeth*:

“The true Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands Muslims are safe.”

The above *Hadeeth* means that Islam must be reflected in Muslim’s dealings with people in real life. The true Islam is not realized by only meeting the basic requirements (five pillars), but also by abstaining from causing any kind of physical, verbal, or emotional harm to people.

Moreover, other traditions stressed that in addition to the above, the Muslim should perfect his Islam by being beneficent to people as much as he can. The Muslim should do as much as he can of extra acts of worship and good deeds such as: helping people, generosity with neighbors, honoring parents and elderly, all activities to preach Islam (Da’wah), seeking knowledge, offering food and drinks to the needy, all forms of Jihad, removing the suffering of the distressed, all forms of charitable actions, visiting the sick, answering the invitation, ... etc.

2- The Rank of Iman

On the other hand Iman includes all the deeds of the inward or the inner beliefs and good qualities of the soul. One could not be regarded as a Believer unless he fully accepts Islam from the heart and the light of Allah’s guidance has enlightened his life. Furthermore, the deeds of his outward must confirm what is in his heart.

Is Every Muslim a Believer?

It is worth to mention that one could be a Muslim but not a Believer. Some desert Arabs professed Islam in order to get charity during a famine and they used to count their embracing Islam as favor upon Prophet Mohammad, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam. The Qur’aan was revealed indicating that they have only submitted but Iman has not entered their hearts yet and advising them to keep obeying Allah and His messenger in order to be qualified believers:

“The desert Arabs say: “We believe.” Say: “You have no Iman; but you may only say: ‘We have submitted to Allah.’ For not yet has Iman entered your hearts. But if you obey Allah and His Messenger He will not belittle any of your deeds: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful.” [49 - 14]

Can we Judge if some one is a Believer?

Since deeds of Islam are apparent to us; we can judge whether or not the person is a Muslim, but we can not judge whether or not he is a Believer.

It is Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, alone who knows what is in the heart and from Him nothing is hidden of our inner deeds. Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, alone can judge our intentions, sincerity, and motives.

3- The Rank of Ihsan

Ihsan is the highest rank of the religion of Islam. As it is mentioned in the *Hadeeth*, it is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then you must know that He sees you; and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion then you must consider that He is looking at you.

Ihsan is the Product of Perfect Islam and Iman

Realization of Ihsan should be the goal for every Muslim. It means striving to get as close to Allah as possible by avoiding the forbidden and the disliked acts, the fulfillment of the obligations and preferable good deeds in the best possible manners.

One can reach this high rank of nearness to Allah through perfecting his Islam and Iman, or his inward and outward.

(1) Islam is perfected through avoiding misdeeds of the outward such as acts of disobedience, and flawed sayings and actions, and immoral practices. One should avoid causing any kind of physical,

psychological, or emotional harm to people, and do his best to be beneficent and helpful to them.

(2) On the other hand, Iman is perfected through purifying the inward from inner evils. The heart is cleansed from wrong beliefs, ill feelings, immoral thoughts and ideas, sinful wishes, selfishness, arrogance, .. etc. Furthermore, the believer should show love, mercy, and sympathy toward people; feel affection for them; and be caring and helpful to them.

Ihsan is the purity of one’s inward and outward; Ihsan is reached when one’s inward becomes fully consistent with his outward. Submission of the limbs is confirmed by submission of the heart. Perfect deeds are supplemented with pure sincere intentions; and sincere intentions are translated into good conduct.

Chapter Two

Meaning Of The Hadeeth

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, states in this tradition that Iman branches into many good deeds exactly like a tree that branches into many branches. And the Haya' is one of the great branches of the tree of Iman.

As a branchless tree is fruitless and useless, also Iman which is accompanied with no good deeds is fruitless and useless. As the branches of the tree are very essential for the well being and the survival of the tree, also strong morals and good characters are very essential for the well being of the individual and the survival and growth of his Iman.

How many Branches of Iman are there?

This *Hadeeth* says that Iman consists of more than sixty branches; another *Hadeeth* says that Iman consists of more than seventy branches. How can you remove the apparent inconsistency between the two traditions?

The scholars of Arabic language say that the literal meaning of the number sixty or seventy is not meant in the two traditions. In Arabic language, the numbers sixty and seventy are often used as an indication for numerousness but not the exact value of the number.

The *Hadeeth* does not mean to count the branches of Iman, it just states that Iman consists of so many branches.

Does this *Hadeeth* support the opinion that Iman is just believing in the heart ?

The Iman which is meant by the *Hadeeth* is the complete or perfect Iman, which is to believe by heart, confess by tongue, and complement your Iman with good deeds.

From the *Hadeeth* it is understood that Iman could not be just the belief in one's heart because it states that Iman branches into more than sixty branches and belief in one's heart is an inner deed that could not branch; one can just believe or disbelieve.

Unfortunately, the meaning of Iman is misunderstood nowadays. Many Muslims think that Iman, by which salvation is attained, is just the belief in the heart as it is commonly said: "Iman is in the heart". Thus they see that the relationship between Iman and good deeds is insignificant. However, this *Hadeeth* refutes this understanding and emphasizes that belief by heart alone is not useful unless actions confirm what is in heart.

Iman Increases and Decreases

i) Evidences from Qur'aan

Many verses of Qur'aan indicate the increase and decrease of Iman and guidance. People who respond positively to Allah's message are rewarded by more Iman and guidance; on the other hand, people who respond negatively are punished by being forsaken by Allah and hence deprived from His guidance. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, says:

"But to those who accepted the Guidance, He increased them in Guidance?" [47:17]

Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, also says:

"They were youths who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in Guidance" [Qur'aan, 18:13]

Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, mentioned that the recitation of His verses makes the Iman of righteous increase:

"Those only are believers whose hearts become full of fear when Allah is mentioned, and when His signs are recited to them they increase them in faith, and in their Lord do they trust." [Qur'aan, 8:2]

ii) Evidences from Sunnah

Also, the Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, made it clear that good deeds and noble qualities are the branches of Iman. Furthermore, he stated that the highest of the good deeds is saying “There is no god but Allah”; and the lowest of them is removing harm from the road; and Haya’ is a great branch of Iman. It is understood from this that the more good deeds the stronger the Iman will be. The more one obeys Allah, the more he grows in righteousness.

On the other hand, disobedience of Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, makes Iman decrease less and less until it could be diminished when heinous sins are committed. The Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, said:

“No adulterer commits adultery while he is having Iman, no drinker drinks wine while he is having Iman, and no thief commits theft while he is having Iman” Muslim

iii) Evidences from the Companions

There are many traditions narrated on the authority of the Companions and their Successors that support the increase and decrease of Iman.

- 1) Imam Ahmad narrated that Umar Ibn al-Khattab used to say to his companions: “Let us increase our Iman [they hold Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, in remembrance].”
- 2) Imam Ahmad also narrated that Abdullah Ibn Akim said: “I heard Ibn Masud saying in his prayer: ‘Oh, Allah, increase our Iman, our conviction, and our knowledge.’”
- 3) Similarly, Sufyan al-Thawri narrated that al-Aswad Ibn Hilal, said: “Mu’adh Ibn Jabal used to tell a man: ‘Let us sit down to hold Allah in remembrance in order to increase our Iman.’”
- 4) It was affirmed that Ammar Ibn Yasir said: “Three characteristics lead anyone who possesses them to have true Iman: to be just to oneself, to spend in spite of poverty, and to offer greetings to everybody [to those you know and to those you do not know].”

5) Al-Bukhari narrated that Jundub Ibn Abd Allah, Ibn Umar, and others said: “We learned Iman, then we learned the Quran, and in turn increased our Iman.

6) Furthermore, the Companions and Successors of the Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, their followers, and all religious Muslims agreed that Iman decreases till it becomes the weight of an atom.

7) Khaythamah Ibn Abd al-Rahman said that Iman grows fat in times of fertility, and wastes away in times of drought. Its times of fertility are provided by good works, while its times of drought are brought on by sins and acts of disobedience.

8) One of the scholars was asked: “Is it possible for belief to increase and decrease?” “Yes,” he replied, “it can grow until it towers like a mountain, or shrink until it is no larger than a particle of dust.”

Thus, Iman flourishes with obedience and love of Allah, and striving to gain His pleasure, while disobedience of Allah corrupts it and could nullify it completely. In other words, we can say: “Iman increases with good deeds; and decreases with ill deeds.” Iman is not static it keeps changing as we face many tests and trials of the life of this world. The increase of Iman is progressive. Each step makes the next ones easier, and raises the person higher and higher in his religion by the grace and mercy of Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, .

Iman will also decrease because of ignorance and resulting wrong actions because Allah only accepts what is just, lawful and what is done sincerely for His sake.

The Tree of Iman

The Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, mentioned in this *Hadeeth* a parable of Iman saying: “Haya’ is a branch of Iman”. Although this parable consists of few words, very deep spiritual meanings and essential religious issues were emphasized in it.

This parable was further explained by Malik Ibn Dinar, may Allah be pleased with him, who said that Iman in one’s heart emerges as

weak and as fragile as a tiny plant. If one cares for it, watering it with useful knowledge and good works, removing the weeds that grow around it and anything else that might weaken or prevent its growth, then soon it will thrive and blossom. First it will grow roots, then branches, then fruits, until at last it grows as high as the mountains in size, casting shade that extends out to endlessly. If, however, one shows no concern for it and neglects it, A sheep may come and pull it out by its roots, or a little boy may take it off, or the weeds may grow up around it, weakening or perhaps destroying it or depriving it of its moisture. And Iman is as this plant.

The parable of Iman in its growth, prosperity, and fruit is like a tree which Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, plants in the heart of the Believer.

1. The roots of the tree resemble other six pillars of Iman: believing in Allah, His messengers, books, angels, Day of Judgment, and Divine destiny, the good and evil, and the world of the Unseen. Refer to Chapter -4- for more discussions about the basics of Iman, and Chapter -5- for more perfection of one's Iman.
2. The trunk of the tree resembles the Shahadah, the basic belief of Islam and the testimony of Iman. That's it to declare sincerely from all of your heart that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and intend to totally surrender to Allah alone; and follow His guidance from the Quran and the Sunnah. As the sincere Shahadah makes our Iman strong and unshakable, the firm and immovable trunk makes the tree healthier and stronger.
3. Branches of the tree are the righteous deeds, noble morals, and good characters the Believer develop in himself.
4. The fruits of the tree resemble the life of happiness and contentment in this world and attaining salvation and everlasting happiness in the Hereafter. As it is said in the Quran: **“Those who strive in Our way, verily We will guide them to the right paths.”** The Iman is like the sun, it illuminates the inner sights of the heart and the soul, and improves our life and makes it fruitful. This idea is stressed by the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, as he said:

“Indeed, in the body is a piece of flesh, such that if it is good, all the rest of the body will be good, whereas if it be corrupted, all the rest of the body will be corrupted. Indeed, that piece is the heart.” [Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad and others]

Survival of the Tree of Iman

- 1) We know that the trunk of the tree carries water and nutrition, which are absorbed by the roots, to the branches. The leaves contain Photo-synthesizers. They take solar light and carbon dioxide and produce carbohydrates which are the food supply that nourishes the whole tree and makes it grow deeper, stronger, and higher.
- 2) Similar to the tree, the Iman and morals supply one another with maintenance and survival. True Iman produces strong and long lasting morals which in turn will nourish and strengthen Iman, and thus the roots of the tree of Iman grow deeper in one's heart and its branches reach high in the Heavens.
- 3) As the supply of carbohydrates manufactured by the leaves of the tree is the secret of life⁵, also the fruit of Iman is as essential for the prosperity of mankind. Without Iman a good and noble life would be impossible.
- 4) It is only through Iman that perfect and noble qualities are developed and nurtured till they bring their good fruits for all mankind both in this life and in the Hereafter.

A Similar Parable from Qur'aan

The following verses of Qur'aan mentioned a similar parable:

“Do not you see how Allah sets forth a parable? a goodly Word like a goodly tree whose root is firmly fixed and its branches reach to the heavens”

“It brings forth its fruit at all times by the leave of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men in order that they may receive admonition.”

5- It is the main supply of food for animals and mankind and without it life would be impossible on Earth.

“And the parable of an evil Word is that of an evil tree. It is torn up by the root from the surface of the earth: it has no stability.” [14 - 24 : 26]

Goodly Word

“Goodly word” is usually interpreted as the Word of Iman which is “Testifying that there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is His Messenger”.

Goodly Tree and True Iman

The goodly tree remains stable and unshaken in storms because its roots are firmly fixed in the earth. It is a beneficent tree to people: its beauty gives pleasure to all who see it; its branches reach high, and it catches all the sunshine from heaven, and gives shade to countless birds in its branches and men and animals beneath it; it supplies them with its abundant fruit which it yields at all times.

Similarly, the true Iman, which is deeply rooted in the depth of the heart of the believer, will never be shaken by the calamities and misfortunes of life.

The tree of Iman is as beautiful as the truth. It is illuminated by the divine light from heaven. It is a universal tree. Its fruit reach every where under all season or one set of circumstances; its blessings is not confined to only to the life of this world but extend to the Next World.

An Evil Word

“An evil Word” is usually interpreted as the Word of disbelief or false creed which resembles an evil tree. The evil tree contrasts the goodly tree in all the details; it is a weak and unnatural tree; its roots are shallow because the earth does not even allow them to grow deep; its growth is suppressed, that is why it can not stand firm in storms; it is a shade less, a fruitless, and useless tree; a tree of no benefits to any being.

The tree of false creed has no deep roots in hearts of people; their system of life is founded on doubts and falsehood; it will be shaken

by the first hit of a calamity or a misfortune of life. It is a useless tree that yields nothing but spreading confusion among people and misdirecting their efforts in the life of this world so that they will find every thing against their expectation in the Next World.

Iman and Morals

From the above discussion it is clear that Iman and morals are twins which could not be separated. If morals are lost Iman too will be lost. Iman without morals loses its motivating power and liveliness and becomes ineffective.

The fruit of Iman include leading a life of contentment in this world, attaining salvation in the Hereafter, and admittance to Paradise as Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, promised the true believers in the Noble Qur’aan.

However, the fruit of Iman could not be achieved unless Iman is complemented with good molar and thus becomes a motive power for hastening to do good deeds and abstaining from ill deeds.

What Makes Tree of Iman Die

It is the responsibility of every Believer to care for this tree of Iman so that it flourishes and brings its fruits day and night without stopping. However, the absence of constant care of the tree by not doing good deeds, and the negligence of our obligations toward Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, , make the tree of Iman weak, dry and shriveled; and there is a danger that it may die out altogether. Refer to Chapter -6- for more information about contradictions of Iman.

1) Disbelieving in Allah and Associating Partners with Him (Kufr and Shirk)

Acts of kufr and shirk are deadly poisons to the tree of Iman, they completely destroy the whole of it, the roots, the trunk and branches. One needs to replant new tree in order to restore his Iman.

2) Bid'ah

Bid'ah is a deviation from the straight path. Bid'ah corrupts our good deeds and makes the branches of the tree yellowish and fragile. Without prompt treatment and correction of our deeds, the tree of Iman will become frail, dry and will eventually die.

3) Acts of Disobedience

Acts of disobedience are like killer weeds; they weaken the roots of the tree and may cause irreversible damage to it. Unless one stops the disobedience and starts taking care of his tree, his Iman might be totally diminished.

4) Negligence of Good deeds

Acts of obedience are important for the survival of Iman. Without them the tree becomes branchless, fruitless, and loses its beauty and shade and becomes of no benefits to people. Branchless tree will very soon dry up and die.

5) Ignorance

Ignorance is a fatal disease that can nullify Iman and destroys its tree. It is extremely important for the Believer to reinforce his Iman by sound Islamic knowledge. It helps him avoid getting involved in dangerous wrong religious practices that could devastate the tree of Iman. To protect our Iman, one constantly needs to seek knowledge from reliable sources in order to make his Iman flourish.

Chapter Three

The Importance of Haya'

Haya' is important for the survival of Iman

1) Haya' in Arabic is the psychological state that leads one to avoid disgraceful deeds and actions. There is no single translation for Haya' in English. Haya' covers a large number of meanings which should all be considered together, amongst them are: self-respect, modesty, bashfulness, shyness, and timidity.

2) According to Islamic terminology Haya' is the good quality that makes the person have the sense of honor and dignity and be happy and comfortable with good deeds, and so unhappy and uncomfortable with bad deeds that he does not approach them.

Haya' is a shield that keeps us away from all shameful and disgraceful deeds. Haya' is indeed such a motive power that keeps man away from low attributes and mean acts, and motivates him to achieve high attributes and clean morals. A person who has no Haya' and sees nothing wrong in his ill manners and immodest conduct has indeed lost his Iman. The Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said:

“Haya' and Iman are twins. He who gives up one of them has to lose the other too” Al-Hakem

Haya' is not Shyness

It is worth to notify that Haya' is different from shyness. Shyness could be in both good or evil but Haya' is always in good. Shyness, in some cases, might be a sign of weakness or lack of confidence or experience but Haya' is a sign of self-discipline and confidence. Shyness, unlike Haya', may prevent the person from doing something right, for example: giving an advice, expressing one's opinion, saying the truth, or helping people in distressful situations.

Is Haya' natural or acquired ?

Although a part of Haya' is natural, Haya' is basically learnt or acquired just like other good qualities. Haya' is acquired through training ourselves in good deeds till they become our nature and we become accustomed and comfortable with them, and keeping ourselves away from ill deeds till we develop a natural taste of dislike for them and never want to approach them.

Why was Haya' Specified in the Hadeeth?

The *Hadeeth* specifies Haya' from amongst all other good qualities and morals of Islam because Haya' motivates us toward all goodness in life and keeps us away from all shameful and disgraceful deeds.

Once the prophet heard a person blaming his brother for showing so much Haya' toward people as if he was saying to him "It will harm you". The Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said to him: "Leave him, for Haya' produces nothing but goodness." Al-Bukhari and Muslim

In another version, he, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said to him: "Leave him, Haya' is a part of Iman" Al-Bukhari and Muslim

Haya' is a Protection

The character of Haya' generates a feeling of dislike toward all sorts of misconduct and immoral behavior. Haya' acts like a barrier between us and evil. Haya' protects Iman; if Haya' is lost Iman will be lost too.

The Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said : "Haya' and Iman are twins. He who gives up one of them has to lose the other too" Al-Hakem

Another tradition states that showing no Haya' could be a danger sign.

The Prophet , sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said : "From among the words people obtained from the first prophethood are: If you feel no Haya' then do as you wish"
Al-Bukhari

This tradition could be interpreted in two ways :

i) The *Hadeeth* is addressing those righteous people (who are naturally comfortable with good deeds) as if it is saying to them: Whenever you want to do something, and you feel no slight embarrassment or shyness in doing it openly and your heart is comfortable with it, go ahead and do it for it must be the right thing. Because it is only evil that people are shy to disclose. The Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said:

"Evil is that which wavers in your heart and you hate that people know about it" Muslim

ii) The *Hadeeth* acts as a warning or a threat for those who do not feel shy when committing shameful deeds. As if it is saying to them : "Do whatever you want. Indeed you are harming no body but yourselves. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, is watching over you and may punish you for your ill deeds".

Loss of Haya' Leads to Loss of Islam

It must be pointed out that once the person loses his Haya' he starts gradually to lose all other good qualities one after the other, and sink deeper and deeper in sins and misconduct till he eventually comes out of Islam. This gradual process is described in the following *Hadeeth* in a very precise way :

The Prophet , sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said : "When Allah wants to perish somebody (because of his sins) He will take away Haya' from him. And then you will see him but hateful to people. When you see him hateful to people, Allah will take away honesty from him. And then you will see him but unfaithful and dishonest. When you see him unfaithful and dishonest Allah will take away mercy from him. And then you will see him but cursed and rejected. When you see him but cursed and rejected, then Islam will be taken away from him" Ibn Majah

Haya' and our Life

Haya' is a noble element in life because it motivates the Muslim toward all goodness in life. A Muslim must observe Haya' first toward Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, as he ought to observe.

Highest Rank of Haya' is Haya' toward Allah

The Haya' in its highest rank is Haya' toward Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la. Allah condemned those people who are shy from people like them but not shy from Allah. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, created us and His blessings upon us are countless. In return to His great favors upon us, it is our duty to observe Haya' toward Him, Subhanahu Wata'la, .

It is narrated in a Hadeeth that the Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said to his companions observe Haya' toward Allah as it should be observed." They said: "O messenger of Allah! we observe Haya' toward Allah, and praise is due to Allah." He said : "It is not so, observing Haya' toward Allah as it should be observed means to guard the head and all it contains (watch all your senses) and the stomach and all its contents (to enter nothing unlawful into it) and remembering death and decomposition (after death)" Al-Tirmidhi "

The companions of the Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, thought that they were observing Haya' toward Allah because they were feeling shy to do something displeasing Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la. The prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, made it clear that the true Haya' toward Allah is not just that simple understanding. But it is rather a sort of deep Haya' that controls one's whole life in such a way that makes the person always:

- watch himself and using his mental faculties and senses in pleasing Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, ,
- allow no unlawful food or drinks to enter his stomach,
- realize the reality of the life of this world,
- and remind himself of the fact that he is nothing but a passenger in this world and very soon he shall leave.

Haya' and Self-control

Haya' is the corner-stone of Muslim character. A Muslim must always observe Haya' toward himself. In other words one should feel shy of himself to do secretly that which he does not like to disclose to people. Haya' invites for self-control and decency in all affairs of life secretly and openly.

Haya' in Speech

The first sign of practicing Haya' is to watch your tongue. When you have to speak you should say nothing but good. People of Haya' and good manners do not allow useless and nonsense words to come out of their mouths under all circumstances. They feel shy to be involved in vain conversations and waste their time in irrelevant matters. To them silence is better than vain conversation and discussion in nonsense and false matters.

The Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said: "Iman will not straighten up unless your heart straightens up, and your heart will not straighten up unless your tongue straightens up" Al-Tirmidhi

The Prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, said: "Indecency will not be mingled with any thing but it will imperfect it. And when Haya' will not be mingled with any thing but it will perfect it" Al-Tirmidhi

Haya' and Dignity

Haya' motivates man to keep his reputation clean, pure, and above doubts. Haya' inspires man to safeguard his modesty, dignity and honor and avoid any kind of action that might injure his reputation and self-respect.

Once the prophet, sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam, was walking with his wife at night, two men were passing by. He said : "This is my wife Safeyyah". They said : Glory be to you O Allah! We have no doubts about you O messenger of Allah. He said: "Indeed, the devil reaches from man that which blood reaches".

Chapter Four

The Basics of Iman

Haya' keeps us away from all shameful and disgraceful deeds no matter how insignificant they are. Haya' makes us avoid faults of the tongue, speak the truth, not to break our promises, respect the ties of kinship, refrain from all sorts of misconduct.

Haya' in our Relationship with People

Haya' never allows a Muslim to deal in harsh and cruel manners with people. A Muslim who is observing Haya' would never allow any sort of exploitation of others for achieving personal benefits. He would deal with people on the basis of respect, equality, and justice.

With Haya' there is no room for tolerance for any treatment which is degrading to any human being or any kind of discrimination between people on ground of race, color, nationality, or citizenship.

The six pillars of Iman

It is must for every Believer to have strong faith in the six pillars of Iman: believing in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and in the Divine destiny, both good and evil are from Allah.

1- Iman in Allah

We must believe in Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, as He described Himself. Imam Malik put four conditions for correct beliefs in Allah, His names, and attributes, as He, the most exalted, described Himself:

- 1- Believing in all whatever Allah described Himself of such as having eyes, hands, ... etc is obligatory.
- 2- Accepting these descriptions without resembling Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, to any of His creatures;
- 3- Also, without negating these descriptions;
- 4- Inquiring about them is an innovation.

Iman in Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, is based on the Shahadah: "*There is no god but Allah*" which constitutes the pure Tawheed. It also indicates the acknowledgment to live according to Allah's way as it was revealed to the last Messenger Muhammad.

"Know, therefore, that there is no god Who deserves to be worshiped except Allah; and ask forgiveness for your sins." [Qur'aan, 47:19]

Iman in Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, includes the following:

- Allah is the True One God, the Creator, King, and Lord of Universe and denying the existence of any partners with Him.
- We must worship Allah alone without setting any partners with Him.

- There is no one similar to the likeness of Allah in His essence, attributes, actions, and sayings.
- He is Self Existent and Self Subsistent; He is the Living the Eternal; He gives sustenance to all creation; All depend on Him.
- He is all Perfect; He is pure from all faults; He is free from all needs (eating, drinking or sleeping, ..) and completely independent on His creatures.
- He does not have any parents, wife or children.
- He is all Knowing; nothing is hidden from Him.
- He is all Powerful, He has full authority and sovereignty of the Universe.
- He is the Provider, the Care Giver.
- He gives life and causes death.
- We must obey Him; do whatever He enjoins and abstain from whatever He forbids.
- We must do our best to remember Him, under all circumstances.
- We must Love whatever He loves and hate whatever He hates, be it objects, persons, actions, sayings, etc.
- We must recognize His blessings upon us and properly thank Him for these blessings.
- We must turn to Him alone for the satisfaction of our need.

Iman also includes striving to get as close to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, as possible by doing not only the obligations but also the preferable good deeds, by forbidding the forbidden and avoiding the disliked acts.

2- Iman in the Angels of Allah

Angels are a part of the Unseen world. Iman in angels is one of the six pillars of Iman, without which Iman is nullified. Every Believer must believe in them according to the information reported by Qur'aan and authentic Sunnah. Denying any of this information invalidates our Iman. Here is summary about angel of Allah:

- They are noble, honorable, dutiful, and obedient creatures of Allah.
- They are always involved in acts of worshiping, remembrance, and glorification of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, without getting bored or tired.
- They do not commit any sins nor do they disobey Allah; they do what Allah has ordered.
- They were created from light; they are invisible to us.
- They were created before mankind.
- They neither eat, nor drink, nor marry, nor have children; they are not described as males or females.
- They have ability to shape themselves in good looking physical forms.
- They have wings and are known of their beauty. They are different in size, power, and status.
- The greatest of all the angels is Gabriel, peace be upon him.
- Angels have different duties, tasks, and roles to fulfill in this universe.
- Angel Gabriel is entrusted with the duty of conveying the revelation from Allah to His Messengers.
- Angel Michael is in charge of provisions (food, rain, clouds, the seas, the rivers and the winds). Other Angels work under him.
- Angel Israfil is responsible for blowing in the Trumpet.
- Others are Carriers of the Throne of Allah.
- Angel of Death and his helpers are responsible for taking people's souls:
- Others are responsible for testing people in the grave.
- Some of them are the keepers of Paradise.
- Some of them are guardians of the Fire (angels of torture).
- Other angels are responsible for protecting every individual throughout his life.
- Other angels are responsible for recording the deeds of man.
- One of the angels is responsible for breathing the spirit into the fetus in the womb.
- Some of the angels travel throughout the world, seeking out

- gatherings of remembrance of Allah to bless.
- Some of them pray for forgiveness and more guidance of the Believers, and for guidance for all people on earth.
- Some support the Believers in this life and the Hereafter.
- Others will welcome the people of Paradise.

3- Iman in the Books of Allah

Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, has revealed Books and scriptures to various Prophets and Messengers for the guidance of their nations. All the books carried the same basic message for mankind.

- Adam, Shies, Iris, Ibrahim, peace be upon them, received Scriptures or Suhuf from Allah.
- The Books of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, sent on His prophets peace be upon them all are as follows:
 - 1- The Torah was revealed to Prophet Moses (Musa).
 - 2- The Zabur or Psalms was revealed to Prophet David (Dawood).
 - 3- The Injil or Gospels was given to Prophet Jesus (Isa).
 - 4- Qur'aan was revealed to Prophet Muhammad.

Other prophets also have received guidance from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, ; the Old Testament named many of these prophets.

Qur'aan and other Books

The Book of Qur'aan was the last and final message from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, to Mankind. Qur'aan abrogated all other Books and scriptures before it. The Qur'aan was revealed in piecemeal over a period of 23 years; all the other Books were revealed at once. All the Books and scriptures have been subjected to changes except the Qur'aan. The original copies of the New and Old Testaments books have long since disappeared.

Qur'aan is still pure in its original form; Qur'aan is a Book protected and guarded by Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, from any changes or alterations. The Qur'aan has been reported to us in a way of narration called Tawwater; i.e., through a large number of people excluding a false report.

The Qur'aan is memorized by heart by millions of people from the beginning of Islam right to the present day. Qur'aan is the Miracle of Islam; Qur'aan differs in nature from any other books or texts written by human beings; it breaks the usual norms, and services as a proof for the truthfulness of Prophet Mohammad. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, promised to illustrate to mankind, at all times, the evidences that Qur'aan is a Divine Revelation from Him.

The Qur'aan is holding a challenge to all mankind to produce a book similar to it. This challenge is repeated in different places in Quran. Although this challenge is made more than fourteen centuries ago it has never been met. If it had been met at any time the opponents of Islam would have certainly make a full use of it. This is a strong evidence that Qur'aan is not a human production but without doubt it is a Revelation from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, .

Furthermore, the fact that Prophet Mohammad, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, himself was an illiterate man and yet brought this glorious, perfect, and unmatched book of Qur'aan is evidence, beyond any doubt, that the author of Qur'aan could not be Prophet Mohammad, and Qur'aan is nothing but a Revelation from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, .

Muslims Obligations toward the Qur'aan includes:

- Every Muslim should always read, recite, and study the Qur'aan, and practice it according to his/her capacity.
- Studying its interpretation and teachings, and teaching them to people.
- Inviting others to believe in the Qur'aan.
- Defending Qur'aan and guarding it from any sort of misinterpretations or distortions of its meanings, words, or translations.
- Refuting false claims and arguments made against the Qur'aan.
- Honoring the Qur'aan and handling the Mushaf in proper respectful manners.

3- Iman in the Prophets and Messengers of Allah

Allah, out of His mercy to mankind, sent Prophets and Messengers for the guidance of all nations on earth. Prophets of Allah had been raised in all parts of the world. The Qur'aan stressed that a Guide and Warner was sent to every nation:

“...and there is not a nation but a warner has passed among them.” [35-24]

And it also says:

“... and for every people, there was a guide.” [13-7]

The Believer must have Iman in all Prophets as follows:

- 1- There have been thousands of prophets through out history since the first prophet, Adam, up to the last and final messenger, Muhammad peace be upon them all.
- 2- We must believe in the Messengers and Prophets of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, without making distinctions amongst them with respect to their prophethood, characters, mission, and message. However, the Prophets received different gifts and miracles; and some of them were raised higher in status than others.
- 3- They were perfect human beings whom Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, chose to convey His message to mankind. Qur'aan named 25 of them
- 4- Propethood is a mere gift from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, ; it is not up to the desire of the person; the prophet is appointed and chosen by Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . No one can become a Prophet by his own human efforts.
- 5- All the messengers of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, brought essentially the same message which is worshipping the true One God, Allah, alone.
- 6- All the Prophets were sent to their people only, but Prophet Muhammad was sent to all mankind and Jinn as well.
- 7- They always spoke the truth; they were all protected from

committing sins, minor or major, knowingly or unknowingly. They were all trustworthy and honest; they conveyed the message completely and exactly as they received it, without hiding, adding or leaving out any part of it.

8- They were examples for mankind to guide them to the straight path, to the path of happiness both in this life and the Next.

9- They performed miracles with the permission of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, to convince their people that they were truthful in their call.

10- The Messenger is a Prophet who received a new Law or a Book from Allah to convey to his people. However, the Prophet receives revelation from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, but he follows the law or a Book of a Prophet before him.

11- Every Messenger was a Prophet but not every Prophet was a Messenger.

12- No more Prophets will come after Muhammad, the final Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him. Qur'aan stated that Muhammad is seal of all the prophets which means that he is the last of all the Messengers.

13- Prophet Muhammad is the master of children of Adam without boasting; he is Imam of the Prophets and Messengers of Allah; he will be highly honored on the Last Day and raised to a very high status; he will be given the right for the intercession for all mankind as well as the sinners of his nation.

Iman in the Last Day

All of the prophets sent by Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, warned their people that there would be life after death and they will be brought for judgment for their beliefs and actions in their earthly lives; then they will be either punished or rewarded according to their deeds.

Iman in the Last Day or Judgment Day is one of the pillars of Iman. One could not a Believer until he/she believes in it. The deniers of the Last Day are unbelievers. Every Believer must believe in the

details of the events of the Last Day as it is reported in the Qur'aan and authentic Sunnah. Denying any of these authentic reports can invalidate our Iman. Qur'aan stressed that this worldly life is a preparation and a test for the coming eternal life after death. And warned people to take the matter seriously and prepare themselves for the everlasting life after death. Below, you find a summary of the main authentic issues related to life after death; every Muslim is required to believe in them:

i- Events of the Hereafter

1- Death

Death is our first step toward the Next-world.

2- The life in the Grave or in the world of *Al-Barzakh*

The diseased will be squeezed in his grave when he is put in it; then he will be questioned then punished, or rewarded according to his response. The grave is either a garden of Paradise, or a pit of Hell.

Good people are enjoying the blessing of Allah, praying to Allah to make the Hour come soon for they know what comes next is better for them. Bad people are under the punishment of Allah, praying that the Hour may not come for they know what comes next is worse for them.

2- First Blowing the Trumpet

Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, alone knows the time of the Hour. The Hour will come all of a sudden, on a Friday.

The first blowing in the Trumpet by the Angel Israfil announces the end of this world. It is the first event of the Last Day which will be a very long heavy day, full of horror and tremendous events. The universe will collapse. The heavens will split and fall; the earth will be shaken up vigorously; the sun, moon, and stars will crash; mountains will become like carded raw wool. All beings will be destroyed. All living beings will faint except as Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, wills; they will die even angels and the carriers of the throne. Then a special kind of rain is sent down to earth from which the bodies will be raised back to life in their graves.

3- The Second Blowing in the Trumpet and Resurrection

A violent earth quack causes the graves to split and people will be resurrected and come out of them rushing and terrified as if they are drunk. On that day, all humans and Jinn will experience dread and profound horror. The fear will be so severe that the nursing mother, who normally scarifies herself to save her child, forgets him, and every pregnant woman will miscarry.

Every person will be treated at resurrection according to his own deeds/intentions. Every one shall be given his record of deeds to be an evidence either for them or against him. Terrified People shall look like scattered moths; they come forth from the graves in haste, as if they racing to their gathering place.

4- The Gathering Day

People will be gathered for judgment and grouped according to their deeds. This is the heaviest and longest event in the Hereafter. This life will seem very short just as an hour. No body will dare to say a word but the truth due to the terror. The righteous will be honored and Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, will ease this day for them. The unbelievers and the wicked will suffer anxiety and utter humiliation; sorrow, and shame for their arrogance and insolence in their previous life. Prophet Mohammad, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, will be given permission to intercede for all mankind to begin the judgment

5- The Reckoning Day

Every one will come to meet Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, , alone, humble, surrendering, obedient, powerless, and helpless. Records of deeds will be brought. The Scale will measure the good and bad deeds in the weight of an atom. According to the result of the scale the fate of every person will be determined. All people will be questioned about five matters:

1. How did he spend his life span?
2. In what did he spend his youth?
3. From where did he earn his wealth?
4. How did he spend his wealth?
5. How much did he act according to the knowledge he cquired.

Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, will show mercy on that day toward his servants more than any other time and much more than their expectation.

6- Crossing the Bridge over the Hill Fire.

Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, will save the believers and supply them with a light and make them cross the bridge fast according to their good deeds. The wrong doers will fall down in the Fire.

7- Intercession

Allah, out of His Mercy, will accept the intercession of Prophets, angels, and the righteous on behalf of whom He wants. Accordingly, many people will be saved and not be admitted to the Fire, and many of them will be brought out from the Fire. Also the rank of many righteous people will be raised in the Paradise due to the intercession.

8- Eternal life either in the Hill Fire or Paradise

i- The Muslim will be rewarded on that day and will be admitted to Paradise forever, as Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, has said:

“And those who believe and do good deeds, they are dwellers of Paradise, they dwell therein forever.”

(Quran, 2:82)

ii- The faithless evildoers will reside eternally in hellfire, without their torment being lessened for a single instant.

Those who engaged in disbelief and called Our signs lies are the people of hellfire; they shall dwell in it eternally”

[2:39].

They will be the fuel of the Fire as Qur'aan describes them in other verses.

ii- Signs of the Hour

There are numerous verses of Qur'aan and reports from Sunnah that tell about the signs of the approaching of the Hour. Signs of the Hour are minor and major.

i) The minor signs

Minor sign are ordinary events, in their nature, that become more frequent and more intense. They occur at long periods before the Hour. Some of these signs took place in the past; some of them will not happen again, while others may recur. Other signs have not occurred yet. The minor signs include:

1. The first sign was the mission Prophet Muhammad, may Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, bless him and grant him peace.
2. The splitting of the Moon which took place in Mecca.
3. An epidemic that will cause the death of thousands of Muslims.
4. A major fighting between two groups of Muslims each of which its call is right.
5. The Muslim conquest of Arabia, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, Rome, and the Dajjal.
- 6- The eruption of a great fire in the Hijaz that would be seen by the people of Busra in Syria.
8. The appearance of about thirty impostors each of them claiming he is a prophet; the last of them will be the antichrist or Dajjal.
- 7- The fight between two great Muslim's parties both are fighting for a just cause, resulting a great number of casualties.
- 9- The fighting between Muslims and people with small eyes, red faces, snub-noses, and wearing sandals made of hair. (It could point to the Tartar invasion of the Islamic land)
- 10- The destitute, naked, barefoot shepherds will boast of high buildings.
- 11- Illicit sexual relations as well as drinking wine and other intoxicants will become common and extensively practiced.
- 12- Outbreak of worldwide unjustified wars, blood shed, and killing for no cause (*Haraj*).
- 13- Great increase in widespread tribulations and turmoil in the world.
- 14- Increase in wars, divisions, and blood shed amongst Muslims.
- 15- Spread of general corruption and morals degradation among Muslims.

- 16- The appearance of a turmoil (Fitnah) which will enter every Arab house.
- 17- People will disobey and dishonor their parents.
- 18- Ignorance about Religion will prevail.
- 19- Muslims will imitate the previous corrupted unbelieving nations.
- 20- Muslim women will display their adornment imitating unbelieving women
- 21- Moral degradation of Muslims and loss of trustworthiness and Honesty.
- 22- The affairs of the Muslims will be entrusted to undeserving persons.
- 23- No people will be qualified to lead the prayers.
- 24- The return of the desert of Arabia into rivers and gardens
- 25- Wealth will become so abundant that no people will eligible to take Zakat.
- 26- People will wish to die due to general corruption, unhappiness, and despair.
- 27- Economical Blocked of Iraq and Sryia
- 28- Jihad will continue till the Last Day
- 29- The defeat of the Jews
- 30- The number of women will extensively increase; for every man there will be 50 women.
- 31- The Euphrates will uncover a treasure of gold and people will fight over it; and ninety-nine out of one hundred would be killed.
- 32- Earthquakes will become more intense and frequent.
- 33- The Muslim will conquer Rome and another city, half of it in the sea, and the other half is on land.
- 34- A huge war between the Romans (Europeans) and Muslims will take in a place near Madinah or Syria.
- It will end up by the victory of Muslims.
35. An army will be swallowed by the earth in Arabia.

- 36-The appearance of Al-Mahdi (the Guided one) as a just ruler who spread justice in the world after it was filled with injustice and oppression

ii) Major Signs

These are extraordinary events. They occur very near to the establishment of the Hour. They occur in sequence; that is, once the first sign of them appears the rest will take place one after the other. They will not recur in the future. These signs will be ended by the first blowing in the trumpet that will announce the beginning of the Last Day. The ten major signs include.

- 1- The smock Huge cloud of smoke will over takes people. It will be a painful torment for unbelievers and a like little stuffy nose for believers
 - 2- The Al-Dajjal or Antichrist will appear. He will be followed by 70,000 Jews from Isfahan in Iran. He will be an immeasurable turmoil to all mankind. Major war between the Muslims led by the Imam Al-Mahdi and Jews plus other non-Muslims led by the Antichrist. Al-Mahdi will not be able to defeat Al-Dajjal.
 - 3- Jesus Christ will descend in Damascus, and pray behind the Al-Mahdi. Jesus will kill the Antichrist at the gate of Ludd in Palestine.
 - 4- The appearance of Ya'juj and Ma'juj (Gog and Magog), and the tribulations linked with them.
- After that , Jesus will fight the people of the book, break the cross, and kill the swine, and accept nothing from them but Islam. A Islam and peace will prevail and world will enjoy abundance of wealth and provisions.
- 5- The rising of the sun from the West.
 - 6- The emergence of the Beast who will speak to the people, telling them they have not believed with certainty in the Divine Signs.
 - 7- A major landslide in the east.
 - 8- A major landslide in the West.

9- A major landslide in Arabia.

10- At the end a great fire would erupt from the Aden in Yemen; it will rive people to their last gathering place.

Misalliance Signs

1. Disturbance of the universal order and the appearance of extraordinary events.
2. Quick passing of time.
3. Enlargement of the crescent.
4. The speech of non-living objects.
5. Too much rainfalls but with no crops.
6. The return of humanity to idolatry and ignorance.
7. The return of people of Arabia to ignorance and disbelief. Women of the tribe of Daws will again circulate (tawaf) around the idol Dhul-Khulsah.
8. A gentle wind which will take the souls of the believers.
9. The lifting of the Qur'an to heaven and the decline of Islam.
10. The destruction of the Ka'bah at the hands of an Abyssinian leader.
11. Humanity will sink in disbelief, immorality, and corruption, deeper and deeper to the lowest level. The most evil of people will remain on earth. Upon them the Hour will be established. No one of them says "*Allah, Allah*" or "*There is no god except Allah.*" They have no knowledge of good and evil; No one supplicates to Allah. Nobody knows what is fasting, or prayer, or charity. They have sexual intercourse like animals in the streets. By this time, the Hour will be very close at hand.
12. While they are busy in their affairs and indecencies, they will be stricken all of a sudden by the horrible event of the eruption of a huge fire from Aden in Yemen, which will follow them wherever they go and forcefully drive them to their gathering place.

13. Then they would be overwhelmed by the horrors of the first blowing in the trumpet which strike them with no warnings and as quick as a winking of an eye. They will experience intense horror and dismay; whatever they feel is extremely awful and so severe that the nursing mother forgets him, and pregnant woman will miscarry. Then they will swoon and immediately die.

6- Iman in Qadar (Fate - Divine Destiny)

Meaning of *Qadar*

Before the creation of the universe, Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, passed the decrees of all the creatures and events that will take place in the earth and heavens including the deeds of mankind according to His Divine Plan, Perfect Wisdom and Comprehensive Knowledge.

In Allah's Divine Plan there is an estimate and measurement for everything good and bad. Allah knew every thing about His creatures even before they come into existence. Nothing, good or bad, is beyond Allah's Knowledge. This Knowledge and the Estimates of Allah are called the *Qadar* or *Taqdeer*.

The Preserved Record of Decrees

A prophetic tradition stated that the first thing Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, created was the pen; then Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, commanded it to write and it wrote down all what would take place in the universe according to Allah's Perfect Plans (*Taqdeer* or *Qadar*).

All the decrees were recorded in (اللوح المحفوظ) a Preserved Record or a Guarded Tablet; which is a clear safeguarded book that nothing of its contents is susceptible to any changes or loses. And every piece of information in it will come to existence exactly as it was written. Nothing happens in the universe but is recorded in this Preserved Record. There is no leaf falls down, nor a grain in the darkness of the depths of earth, nor anything fresh or dry but is recorded in the a Preserved Record as Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, stressed this point in many places in Qur>aan, as an example,

“Surely We write down what they have sent before (their deeds) and their footprints, and We have surely recorded

everything in a clear Book” (36-12)

The evidences from Qur’aan and Sunnah are plenty; they include:

“It is He who created everything, then ordained its Destiny (or its Measure). [Qur’aan, 25: 2]

“We created everything according to a Measure or Destiny.” [54:9]

“No calamity occurs on the earth or among yourselves but is inscribed in the Book before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah.” [Qur’aan, 57: 22]

“And Allah created you and whatsoever you do.” [37:96]

In a tradition narrated by Al-Bukhari, Prophet Mohammad, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said,

“..... Allah orders an angel to blow the spirit unto the fetus in his mother womb and write four words: his provision, age, deed, and his final destiny, whether he will be of the wretched or the blessed (in the Hereafter)...”

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, further commented, “And by Allah, one of you may do deeds of the people of the Fire till there is only an arm distance between him and the Fire, but then that writing (which Allah has ordered the angel to write) will precede and he will start to do the deeds of the people of Paradise and enters it (as it was written the angel); and a man may do the deeds of the people of Paradise till there is only an arm distance between him and the Paradise, and then that writing precedes and he does the deeds of the people of the Fire and enters it (as it was written by the angel).”

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, stated that it is beyond man’s ability to change whatever is written for him,

“Be aware that if the whole of mankind gathered together in order to do something to help you, they would only be able to do something for you, which Allah had already

written for you. Likewise, if the whole of mankind gathered together to harm you, they would only be able to do something to harm you which Allah had already written to happen to you”

Believing in *Qadar* is a Pillar of Iman

Iman will not be valid unless one believes in *Qadar* both good and bad in the sense that:

- 1- Every thing is preplanned and nothing happens accidentally.
- 2- Allah knows all things before they happen.
- 3- Nothing happens but by Allah’s Will, Permission, and Power.

1- Every thing is Preplanned and nothing Happens Accidentally

i- *Qadar* means that the creation of this universe is not accidental but something preplanned and pre-conceived according to the Perfect Wisdom and Knowledge of the Creator, the Greatest Designer of the universe. Allah’s Divine Plans are absolutely Perfect.

ii- There is nothing that happens accidentally. Every thing, whether good or evil, is well-set and well-planned.

2- Allah Knows all things before They Happen

i- Allah’s Knowledge is one of His Divine Attributes; it is Eternal, Exact, and Permanent. Allah’s knowledge is complete and surrounding every thing; there is nothing that can escape it. His knowledge is not restricted by any barriers of place or time whatsoever. Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, alone knows the future and past as well as all things every where.

ii- Allah’s Knowledge is Precise and Accurate; Allah, Subhanahu wata’tala, knows every thing about His creatures and all the details of what they will do in their future life, even before they come into existence in this world. Whatever is recorded in the preserved record of decrees will occur exactly as it is written.

When every creature comes into existence in this world, his course of life will be exactly in accordance of Allah's knowledge.

iii- Concerning man, Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, knows in advance what every person will do in his life in this world even before he is born. His/Her course of life will be exactly in accordance of Allah's knowledge. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, knows if he will choose good or evil, and what the final outcome of his deeds would be.

iv- The previous *Hadith* confirmed that what we are going to do in our life will match precisely what has already been written in the preserved record of decrees. The life course of the person will affirm that the information revealed to the angel was exact and precise because it comes from Allah, the Possessor of the True Knowledge that is not bounded by time or space. Whatever the angel wrote will come true as it was recorded; no person will die a moment earlier or a moment later than what was written for him; no one will die before his/her provisions are totally fulfilled.

v- And the final outcome of every person's life will also affirm the information the angel received from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . If the angel recorded for a man that he would be of the people of the Fire, this will in the end come true even if this man was doing the deeds of the righteous; he will surely seal his life by a wrongdoing that will lead him to the Fire in consistency with the information Allah, Subhanahu wata'tala, revealed to the angel before the birth of this man.

On the other hand, if the angel recorded for a man that he would be of the people of the Garden, this will in the end come true even if this man was doing the deeds of the wicked; in the end he will surely repent and seal his life by good deeds that will lead him to the Garden.

3- Nothing happens but by Allah's will, Permission, and Power

There is nothing in this universe, whether good or bad, can take place without Allah's Permission. When Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, decrees a thing it happens exactly as He wanted and only by His Will and Power.

Man Can not Create his Deeds

What is predestined is unseen and unknown or *Ghaib* to us. We can only know it after it comes to existence.

Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, provided man with the willingness and power to do things, as well as the ability to choose between different options. We can only do something if we are willing and able to do it.

It is true that man has freewill. But our will and choice are not absolute; they are bounded by Allah's Will and Power. All of our acts are created by Allah; we do not create our deeds or actions; without Allah's Will and Power we can do nothing. Allah the Most Exalted says:

“And they will not heed unless Allah will (it). He is worthy to be feared and worthy to forgive.” 76:30 .” [76:30]

“For him among you, who wills to go straight. And you shall not will except as Allah wills, the Lord of the worlds.”

[81- 28:29]

However, we are responsible for the choices we make. We are created with inclinations towards good and evils. We can use our will and power in either good or bad ways. In fact, we spend our life struggling between both of them.

Whatever blessings we enjoy in this life are due to the Grace of Allah alone. But no misfortune can happen to us except by the will of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, .

Denying Qadar

Denying *Qadar* nullifies one's Iman because it violates the concept of *Tawheed*. It also implies the rejections of many verses in the Quran and traditions from Sunnah.

i- Denying *Qadar* implies that man creates his deeds meaning that when an act takes place, it would be new to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la. And this is against the perfection of Allah, for nothing happens in Allah's Kingdom but by His knowledge and permission.

ii- It also means that one can act outside the will of Allah, and the limits He imposed on His creatures; This is a grave contradiction to Allah's full sovereignty and absolute Control over the universe.

Abdullah Ibn Omar (Radi Allahu 'anhu) was told that a new sect had emerged from Iraq. They were called *Al-Qadariyah* and they denied *al-Qadar*. Then Abdullah Ibn Omar mentioned the *Hadeeth*, in which angel Gabriel came to teach this Ummah its religion, to stress that belief in *Qadar* is one of the pillars of Iman, and to refute the misconception of this sect.

Furthermore, in other narration, Abdullah Ibn Omar (Radi Allahu 'anhu) mentioned that denying *Qadar* leads to the rejections of one's good deeds; he swore by Allah saying: "If one of them (deniers of *Qadar*) gave for a charity an amount of gold equals to the mountain of Uhud, Allah would not accept it from him unless he affirms his Iman in the *Qadar*."

The two sahaba: Abdullaah Ibn Omar and Abdullah Ibn Abi Awfa (Radi Allahu 'anhu) gave the *Fatwa* that the deniers of *Qadar* should be treated as unbelievers and that Muslims are not supposed to greet them nor offer funeral prayer for them when they die.

The impact of Iman in Qadar upon our Life

Iman in *Qadar* does not signify helplessness, hopelessness, and despair. Believing in it in the correct way has a very positive deep impact upon the life of the Believer. It is a source of solace and comfort; and a powerful means of attaining piousness, humility, modesty, and self-surrendering to the Will of Allah.

It teaches man to put his heart and soul in the Hands of His Master. Therefore, it activates our inner light, strengthens our souls and keeps us connected to the source of Power and Wisdom in the universe. In other words, it makes it easier to discipline ourselves and pursue the right path till we meet with Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, .

Contentment

The Believer in *Qadar* is content that every thing in his life is will planned. Nothing happens by chance. Every thing happens has a meaning and services a purpose; and there is a wisdom behind it. So he accepts himself as he is and adjusts to life easily and comfortable.

Positive Attitudes

He develops good balanced attitudes in life. He tries his best to fulfill his duties believing firmly that the outcome is in the hands of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . He puts his trust fully in Allah believing every thing will turn to be good for him.

i- If he gets good results he thanks and praises Allah for it believing that he can not succeed without Allah's help and Power.

ii- And if he is afflicted with a misfortune he is patient. He knows that was his *Qadar*; no one can divert it from him but Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . He shows patience and fortitude; at the same time he tries to correct himself and learn lessons from the adversity; he turns to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, alone and seek His help to remove his difficulty.

iii- Therefore there is no place for despair in the life of the Believer in *Qadar*. He is aware that no misfortune can happen except by the will of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . And there is surely wisdom behind it; and certainly some thing good will come out of it.

iv- Also the Believer in *Qadar* never boasts over the favors and blessing he is enjoying in this life; and he never misuses them; because he is sure they are due to Allah's will alone. Therefore he is humble; always thanking Allah's for them and is beneficent to people. As Qur'aan says:

“No misfortune can happen on earth or in yourselves but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence: That is truly easy for Allah. In order that That you grieve not for the sake of that which has escaped you, nor yet exult because of that which has been given. Allah loves not all prideful boasters.” ^[57 - 23:24]

Man between Predestination and Freewill

Qur’aan stressed in many places that man is neither the maker of his fate nor he is totally bound to the law of predestination. Man’s affairs lie between predestination and freewill.

Man’s Freewill

Similar to all creatures, Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, has created man and determined his course of action in this world. It is Allah’s pre-plan to honor man, and empower him with mind, pure inner nature, freewill, and the ability to distinguish between evil and good.

Allah bestowed upon man, out of His wisdom and mercy, a limited freewill and ability to make choices; accordingly man is free to do or not to do certain things; and therefore man will be held responsible for the actions based on his choices; consequently, he will be punished or rewarded. This concept is one of the main issues of the Holy Qur’aan; it is stressed in many verses; here are some examples:

“Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change it themselves” ^[53 - 11]

Whoever goes aright, it is only for his own soul that he goes aright; and whoever goes astray, to its harm only does he go astray No laden soul can bear another’s load, We never punish until we have sent a messenger. ^[17 - 15]

“Man shall have nothing but that what he strives for.” ^[53 - 39]

“Whoever has done an atom’s weight of good shall meet with its reward and whoever has done an atom’s weight of evil shall meet with its consequences.” ^[114 - 7:8]

“Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul: and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants.” ^[41-46]

Whatever a misfortune strikes you, it is on account of what your hands have earned, and (yet) He pardons most (of your faults). ^[42-30]

“Those who believe and confuse not their beliefs with wrongdoing, theirs is safety; and they are rightly guided.” ^[6-82]

Man and Predestination

On the other hand, if man looks into himself, he finds that there are many aspects in his life beyond his control. They were predestined for him; they have been decided for him already and he has no power to change them. Examples include: his place of birth, parents, country, race, color, physical shape and structure, as well as intelligence and mental power; man is also born with many dispositions, inclinations and qualities embedded in his body, inner soul, and heart.

Man, therefore, like all creatures, is under the Great and Mighty Power of Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, . Qur’aan informs us that there is nothing, big or small, alive or dead, a man or Jinn, that can fall outside the Allah’s Sovereignty and Will. Man, like other creatures, is under the Great and Mighty Power of Allah.

“To God belongs the sovereignty of Heavens and the Earth. He created what He pleases, giving to whom He pleases females, and to whom He pleases males, or conjoining them males and females, and He makes whom He pleases barren, verily He is the Knowing, the Powerful.” ^[42 - 49:50]

“He whom Allah, guides is rightly guided; but he whom Allah leaves to stray, for him you will find no protector to lead him to the Right Way.” ^[18 - 17]

Conclusion

Man is totally under the Control and Power of Allah; however, it is Allah's plan for him to be entrusted with a limited freewill; whatever man does out of his freewill he will have full responsibility for it.

However, man's will is bounded by Allah's Will; man does not create his own deeds. Whenever he decides to do a certain thing (good or evil) Allah creates in him the willingness and ability to do it, otherwise he could never be able to do it; Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, says in the Qur'aan that created us and whatever we do. But man would be responsible for whatever choices he makes.

Misconceptions about *Qadar*

Many Muslims have misconceptions about *Qadar* and use it as an excuse to justify their wrongdoings, laziness, and failures. Here are some of these common misconceptions:

1- Man is Compelled to do whatever was Written

Some Muslims make an excuse that the course of their lives has already been written; and they are compelled to do whatever has been written for them. The fact that Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, has a foreknowledge of all man's actions, and man's life will come into existence exactly as it was written, does not imply that man is completely deprived of the freedom of action.

Allah's foreknowledge should not be interpreted in the sense of total predestination of man's life. The perfect matching between man's actions and what is written proves that the Knowledge of Allah is Ultimate and Perfect. Whatever man does, is not caused by what is written by Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la. Because Allah created man in this life to test which way he will choose; Allah granted man freewill, and made him responsible for the choices he will make, as it was explained before. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, says:

“He is indeed successful who purified his soul and causes it to grow. And he is indeed a failure who corrupts his soul causes it to go down.” [91 - 9:10]

2- Guidance and Misguidance are from Allah

Some people claim that guidance and misguidance are imposed by Allah on people; Qur'aan states that Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, sends whom He wants astray and guides whom He wants to the straight path; and they use verses from Qur'aan similar to the following verse as evidence:

“Had Allah willed He could have made you (all) one nation, but He sends whom He wills astray and guides whom He wills, and you will indeed be asked of what you used to do.” [16-93]

Relating guidance and misguidance to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, in the verse should be interpreted in the light of other verses of the Qur'aan. The verse (16-93) does not mean man is compelled to choose guidance or to go astray. The verse should be understood in the light of other verses in Qur'aan which tell that guidance and misguidance of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, come as a result of man's choices; he who chooses guidance, Allah increases him in guidance; and he who chooses to go astray, Allah will leave him without guidance.

“... and (Allah) guides to Himself those who turn unto Him” [13- 27]

“And those who strive in Our cause, We will certainly guide them to our Paths” [29 - 69]

“But to those who accept Guidance, He increases them in guidance” [47- 17]

“and He (Allah) misleads only the wrongdoers” [2 - 26]

“Allah strengthens those who believe by a firm saying in the life of the world and in the Hereafter, and Allah sends wrong-doers astray. And Allah does what He will.” [14- 27]

The verse (16-93) means that Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, is surely able to guide all people and make them one nation in guidance; but it was His Wisdom and Planning to give them free choice and test them by good and evil.

As a result of this, people were split into two groups: one accepted guidance, and the other gave their back to it and went astray. Those who accepted guidance, Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, loved them, cared for them, and granted them more guidance. And those who refused His way, Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, left them to themselves and they went astray. Accordingly guidance is a gift from Allah for those who choose its way; and misguidance is the result of man's rejection of the truth, and wrong choices and actions.

The idea that man is compelled to choose guidance or misguidance contradicts Allah's Perfect Justice. And it also makes the law of reward and punishment meaningless. In fact, it nullifies the whole concept of man's accountability for his deeds. How come we accept that Allah, the Perfectly Just, would compel some body to sin and then punish him for it. If we are compelled to do whatever has been written for us, why did Allah, the Perfectly Wise, send Prophets and Books for guidance of mankind.

We cannot blame *Qadar* for committing sins or failing to fulfill our obligations as we are supposed to do. We must realize that it is our *Qadar* to be responsible for whatever we do. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, rebuked the unbelievers for making excuses of *Qadar* and told us these were mere lies:

“And they say: If the Beneficent Allah had so willed, we should not have worshipped them. They have no knowledge whatsoever of that. They do but lie.” [43 – 20]

“They who are idolaters will say: Had Allah willed, we had not ascribed (unto Him) partners neither had our fathers, nor had we forbidden any thing. Thus did those before them reject until they tasted Our punishment.” [6 – 148]

3- *Qadar* is used as an excuse for accepting Adverse Conditions

Many Muslims use *Qadar* as a pretext to justify their failure to fight oppression, poverty, diseases, illiteracy, and other problems and adverse conditions of their life. It is commonly said that it is our *Qadar*; what can we do about it.

Allah, the Most Exalted put for people the general system of causes and results. The *Qadar* of Allah follows this system. If we fail to improve our conditions it is because we do not follow the system and the laws of the universe which Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, have put for us; we are then responsible for our failures; we must not blame *Qadar* for it. For example, sickness is a *Qadar*, but seeking a cure is also a part of *Qadar*. We were told by the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, that there is a cure for every disease and we were commanded to seek the cure if we become ill. Thus we can change the *Qadar* of sickness by the *Qadar* of seeking a cure and medical treatment.

Qadar is not an excuse to surrender to our laziness and weakness. Understanding *Qadar* positively is indeed a very helpful tool for positive changes; because we know we can change *Qadar* by another *Qadar*. *Qadar* should make the Muslim ambitious and motivated to do what is best for himself and his community. As Muslims, we must try hard to do our best to solve our problems, correct our adverse conditions, and improve the quality of our lives. We can change the *Qadar* of poverty by the *Qadar* of working hard and earning money; we can change the *Qadar* of ignorance by the *Qadar* of learning and seeking knowledge and so on.

If a misfortune strikes us, for example we lost our wealth or job, we don't just say that it is our *Qadar* and do nothing about it. We can change this *Qadar* by another *Qadar* through improving our qualifications and looking for another job which could better for us.

It is reported that the Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khattab (Radi Allahu `anhu) and some of the Sahabah were traveling to a city when they heard that an epidemic of plague is running there. Omar ordered them not to enter the city and continue to Madinah. One of them asked: “Do you flee from the *Qadar* of Allah?” Omar said: “We are fleeing from one *Qadar* of Allah to another *Qadar* of Allah.” Then one Sahabah reminded them that the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said, “If you come to know that an epidemic is running in a town, don't enter that town.”

Thus, whenever a problem develops, or we come to face a challenge or an adversity which we are capable of removing, overcoming, solving or at least minimizing its bad consequences then it is obligatory on us to do so.

Qadar in these circumstances must not be used as a pretext for not doing anything to change the undesirable situations.

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, directed us to be positive when he said, “Be keen for whatever is beneficial for you.” And he also said in another *Hadith*: “Seek the help of Allah, and don’t be reckless.”

4- *Qadar* is used to Justify One’s Mistakes

The *Qadar* of man is to be responsible for whatever he does both in this life and the Hereafter. Man can not escape the consequences of his actions.

However, the concept of *Qadar* is commonly abused to justify our mistakes. Some people use *Qadar* to cover up their faults. Assume someone did not care to take necessary precautionary measures and caused harm to himself or other people, he would be legally responsible for his negligence both in this world before the law and also in the Next life. This person should not use *Qadar* as a cover up for his negligence.

Also a student who did not study well can not justify his failure at the end of the year by the *Qadar*. Another example, a careless driver who caused the death or injury of somebody cannot simply say that it was *Qadar*. He is legally responsible and must be punished for it.

Qadar in these cases took place because it is by the permission of Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, ; but man is responsible for his faults and failure to take responsibility.

It is reported that Omar (Radi Allahu ‘anhu) asked a thief: “What made you commit this crime.” The thief said: “It is the *Qadar*.” Then Omar (Radi Allahu ‘anhu) ruled two punishments against him; one for the theft and the other one for using *Qadar* as an excuse.

However, if man did his best to fulfill his obligations but due to an unavoidable circumstance, he could not achieve what he wanted then we can say it was his *Qadar*. In this case it is the will of Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, not to make it happen and one should accept Allah’s *Qadar* with patience. Another example, a student who studied hard but before his examination he fell sick, and as a result he got low grade, then he can say it was his *Qadar* to get the low grade.

Chapter Five

Perfection of Iman

As we pointed before Iman increases and decreases. The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, told us that Iman consists of many branches; the more branches in the tree of Iman, the stronger and the more fruitful Iman will be. The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, pointed in other traditions that Iman could diminish to the weight of an atom.

The Believer has to care for his Iman and nurture it so that it flourishes and brings about its fruit. The true Believer is not he who only believes firmly in the six pillars of Islam; but it is he who always working to strengthen his Iman through total submission to Allah, fulfillment of his obligations, and purification of the soul until Iman becomes well established in his heart. This level of Iman could only be reached through:

- i- strong belief in the six pillars of Iman;
- ii- total submission of the inward and outward to Allah with no doubts;
- iii- full acceptance of Allah's rulings and guidance without any hesitation;
- iv- seeking knowledge;
- v- purification of the heart from inner evils;
- vi- striving in good deeds and acquiring noble qualities;
- vii- and Keeping the company of guided people.

i- The six pillars of Iman

He should strengthen his belief in the six pillars of Iman believing in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and in the Divine destiny both good and evil through the following:

One should do his best to fulfill his obligatory duties toward Allah and people as perfectly as he can. These obligatory acts of worship are the pillars of Islam: believing in Allah and His Messenger, performing

obligatory prayers, paying obligatory charity (Zakat), fasting the month of Ramadan, and performing pilgrimage to Macca.

In addition to the pillars of Islam, there other obligatory duties that must be observed too such as: observing Hijab (for women), kindness with parents, obeying the Muslim leaders, dealing with people in respectful manners and with fairness, etc.

These obligatory acts constantly provide Iman with nourishment, survival, and effectiveness so that Iman will lighten our life.

ii- Total Submission without Doubts

Iman is the submission of the inward. The Believer is always aware of His Lord, Allah the Glorified and Exalted, surrendering to Him and turning to Him alone in prayers, and supplications, deeply from the heart, hoping for His reward, and fearing His punishment. He puts his trust in Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, ; he is always aware that Allah alone is the Capable, the Beneficent, the Sustainer, the all knowing, and the Supporter.

One should educate himself about forms Shirk (polytheism) to keep away from them or other acts leading to Shirk. One should make an effort to remove doubts associated with any element of the religion to avoid falling into serious errors.

We are constantly warned by the Qur'aan not to be heedless because Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, is always present with us and witnessing over us and there is no way for us to escape from Allah's Knowledge. The Qur'aan says:

“Have you not considered that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is on the earth? There is no private conversation of three but that He is the fourth of them, nor are there five but that He is the sixth of them - and no less than that and no more except that He is with them [in knowledge] wherever they are. Then He will inform them of what they did, on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is, of all things, Knowing” ^[58-7]

So be always mindful that Allah, the Most High, is with you and watching over you, He knows every thing about you; He, the Exalted, is hearing you, seeing you, and well aware of all of your affairs, the closed and the disclosed, even your innermost secrets of the heart. When man reaches this spiritual level he becomes fully aware that his Creator is hearing and seeing him all the time; then his Iman will be greatly enhanced.

As a result, he will make every effort to avoid ill deeds and strive in good deeds sincerely for Allah's sake. His Iman will remain strong and will not be affected by calamities, tribulation, or people's bad responses or unappreciation because he is sure that Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, is with him and will never forsake him.

iii- Full Acceptance without any Hesitation

Iman is certainly not merely a matter of some outward duties to fulfill; we must prove our Iman by total compliance to Islamic laws even if one cannot see the wisdom behind them. One's Iman is not perfected until he fully accepts Islam. He should not find any resistance or reluctance in his heart against the rulings and judgments of Allah and His Messenger. Allah the Most Exalted says:

“Nay, by your Lord! They do not believe until they appoint you (Muhammad) as judge in those disputes which arise amongst them, and then do not find any resistance in themselves against your decisions, and accept [them] with full submission.” [4-65]

The verse teaches us that one can not be a true Believer unless he runs his life according to the Qur'aan and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad; he refers to them to settle his affairs and disputes; he finds in his heart no resistance against their ruling; on the contrary his heart is content and comfortable with their judgment; and accepts it without any reservations, believing that there is no better judgment than it:

“Do they then seek after a judgment of the Days of Ignorance? Who is better in judgment than Allah for people of firm Iman?” [5- 50]

Allah the Most Exalted said about the hypocrites:

“And, when they are summoned to Allah and His Messenger, to judge between them, behold some of them decline (to come). But if the right is on their side they come to him with all submission. Is there in their hearts a disease, or are they doubtful, or do they fear that Allah and His Messenger will deal unjustly with them? Nay, those are the wrongdoers.” [24-48:50]

Only people who have diseases in their heart such as: unbelief, hypocrisy, or doubts would refuse to refer to the judgment of Allah and His Messenger. They know Islam rules by justice. If their case was incontestable, and justice was on their side, they readily submit to Islamic judgment because they are sure it will be in their side. But if they have done wrong, they know the fair judgment of Islam would not agree with their desires so they decline to accept it and prefer other systems or laws to it.

The above verse implies that it is an act of disbelief to refuse Islamic rulings and refer to un-Islamic sources for judgment and consider them better than Islam. As Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, states in the Qur'aan that those who fail to comply to His judgment are indeed disbelievers, unjust, and transgressors.

“Who judges not by that which Allah has revealed: such are disbelievers.”

“Who judges not by that which Allah revealed, such are the unjust.”

“Who judges not by that which Allah has revealed: such are transgressors.” [5- 44, 45, 47]

Many Muslims at present fail to abide by the judgments of Allah and His Messenger. Some Muslims turn against them; others find great resistance in their hearts to accept them. An example is the Muslim woman who prays regularly but opposing Hijab (the Islamic dress). She believes Hijab is unfair to women and does not suit the modern time. This woman is surely committing an act of disbelief for she is rebelling against Allah's ruling. However, the woman who is not

abiding by Hijab but believes it is obligatory on her and admits her mistake for not wearing it, is committing an act of disobedience.

iv- Seeking Knowledge

Every individual Muslim is required to learn that which enables him to carry out his/her religious obligations. Prophet Mohammad, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, mentioned that seeking knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim and part of his Iman,

“Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim.”

Muslim must learn at least the articles of Iman and the laws and teachings of Islam. He/She should learn how to perform his/her duties perfectly: Prayers, Fasting, Zakat, and Hajj. Also every one needs more knowledge according to circumstances. For example woman needs to know more about the matters related to her. Businessman needs to learn about the lawful and unlawful about economical transactions. A man/woman who is planning to get married, it is a religious duty on him/her to learn the rights and responsibilities of the husband and wife in the family.

As we see without sound knowledge our Iman can not survive and may cease to exist altogether. Knowledge enlightens our path to Allah, and it makes a difference in the life of the Believer. How can those who have knowledge of their religion be equal in Iman to those who do not. Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, said,

“Say, ‘Are those who know equal to those who know not?’” ^[39 - 9]

“It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah.” ^[35-28]

The Muslim is prompted by the Qur’aan to refer to people of knowledge for information, support, guidance and enlightenment. Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, said,

“Ask people of knowledge if you do not know” ^[35-28]

Prophet Mohammad, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, stressed the significance of seeking knowledge and encouraged Muslims to do so. He regarded seeking knowledge as some sort of

Jihad in the way of Allah, the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam,said,

“Whoever goes out (of his home) seeking knowledge, he will be in the way of God until he returns.” Al- Tirmidhi.

In another tradition the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said,

“He who seeks a road to knowledge, Allah eases a road to Paradise for him; and the angels lower their wings to him who seeks knowledge in satisfaction with what he is doing. All of those in the Heavens and those on Earth, even fishes in the water, seek forgiveness for the knowledgeable. In Allah’s eyes, a knowledgeable person is as superior to an ordinary worshipper as the moon is superior, in radiance, to other stars. The people of knowledge are the heirs of the Prophets. The Prophets did not bequeath a dirham or a dinar. They only left knowledge; and there is a great fortune for those who grasp it.” Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Al- Tirmidhi.

Seeking knowledge is the path to Paradise. Knowledge improves our Iman in many ways; it eliminates the major factors that contribute to the decrease or loss of our Iman. It helps us build our Iman on correct beliefs and clear understanding; knowledge gives us guidance and empowers us to cure our diseases, improve our conduct, and keep ourselves in the straight path. Knowledge is essential for purifying the heart, acquiring noble qualities such as patience, kindness, humbleness, generosity, and gratitude so that we would be deserving Allah’s blessings guidance and protection.

It is remarkable that the true Believers must be well educated and knowledgeable not only in Islamic Knowledge but also in all branches of beneficial knowledge, in order to strengthen his Iman and also fulfill the needs of the Muslim Nation. The Qur’aan invites people to study the creation of Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, and contemplate His signs in the universe to strengthen their Iman. The Qur’aan invites man to study Allah’s creation of the universe, man, animals, plants, the earth, alteration of day and night, the sun, the moon, stars, galaxies, and so on, so that he could recognize his Lord and worship him sincerely.

“Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day; There are signs (of Allah’s Majesty) for those who have sense and understanding”

[3-190]

“And on earth there are signs for those who have strong faith and also in yourselves, do not you perceive?” [51-20:21]

Modern science plays a part in increasing our Iman; it proves that Muhammad must be a Prophet and the Qur’aan must be the Word of Allah because it is a Book free from any contradictions to well established scientific facts; and it contains scientific facts which are only known at modern times.

Furthermore, scientific discoveries at our age show plenty of evidences of the existence of Allah, His Oneness, Majesty, His Great Power, His Ultimate Knowledge and Wisdom, and His Perfect attributes in this marvelous universe; but only thoughtful people who are searching for the truth sincerely are able to recognize these evidences and benefit from them. Unfortunately many people are headless and they turn away from Allah’s signs.

Qur’aan also invites people to study history. Many verses in the Qur’aan direct mankind to think about the rise and fall of previous nations; and advise them to learn lessons and avoid their mistakes. Through other branches of science the Believer can surely learn how to improve himself, and strengthen his Iman.

v- Purification of the Heart

Diseases of the heart are countless and widespread. In fact, most of the misery of mankind is the product of sick hearts. Every criminal, miser, abuser, scoffer, embezzler, and hateful person does what he does because of a diseased heart. Most of the persisting problems of mankind are caused by materialism, greed, the desires to aggress and exploit, the longing to appropriate resources of others, the excessive love of wealth, and excessive attachment to the life of this world and other diseases of the hearts.

The Prophet taught us that every action, good or bad, is rooted in

the heart; he said: “Deeds are based upon intentions. And every man shall only have what he intended.” All deeds are valued according to the intentions behind them, and intentions are located in the heart, so every action is rooted in the heart

No one can be a good believer unless he strives hard to purify his heart from all inner evils and diseases such as: major or minor shirk (polytheism)⁶, hypocrisy, wrong beliefs, arrogance, envy, jealousy, hatred, resentment, miserliness, treachery, rancor, meanness, showing off, materialism, lust, greed, oppression, cruelty, revenge, anger, selfishness, wicked intentions, and other spiritual imperfections and character flaws.

The healthy and pure heart is the source of all goodness in this life and it leads to Paradise.

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, once said to His Companions, “Would you like to see a man of the people of the Paradise?” A man then entered the Mosque and the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said, “That man is one of the people of Paradise.” So a Companion of the Prophet decided to learn what it was about this man that qualified him for the Paradise. He decided to spend some time with this man to observe him closely. He noticed that he did not perform extraordinary deeds. And he appeared to be a moderate worshipper. The Companion finally told the man what the Prophet had said about him and asked if he did anything special. And the man replied, “The only thing that I can think of, other than what you saw, is that I make sure every night that I never sleep with any rancor in my heart towards any other Muslim.” The Companion said: “It is because of this you deserved the Paradise.”

Seek Allah’s help

The Believer should turn to Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, seeking His help in curing the diseases of his heart. The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, directed us to turn to Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la,

6. To associate partners with Allah

seeking refuge in Him from the evils of ourselves and ask Him to help us purify our hearts from ill motivations and desires; Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, is our Creator; He is well aware of the most hidden secrets of ourselves as Qur'aan says:

“By a soul and by He (God) Who perfected it. And inspired it with what is wrong and what is right” [91-7,8]

Here are some guidelines that help the Believer purify his heart and strengthen his Iman:

- 1- Sincere intentions for Allah
- 2- Take control of your Life
- 3- Living the Qur'aan
- 4- Self Reckoning and Sincere Repentance

1- Sincere Intentions for Allah

The first step of purifying the heart is to guard our actions and make it all for Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, ; and without this we are destined to be losers.

Every deed of ours begins with a thought that will develop into an intention, and then one puts it into an action. Satan is well-aware of this nature of man. He tries to corrupt our deeds by corrupting the intentions behind them. To trick man Satan begins by the thoughts; for every thought that crosses man's mind he puts some of his tricks to divert him from sincerity.

The first concern of every Muslim and Believer is to learn how to purify his thoughts and intentions from Satan's whispers and negative thoughts.

Who succeeds in purifying his thoughts, would be able to protect himself of Satan's tricks. But he who fails, his mind will be infested with evil ideas and falsehood; and eventually he would allow himself to be controlled by Satan.

Getting rid of Satan's whispers is the hardest task for the Believer, because it is a constant struggle against the evil of his own self. It is reported that the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, once said after returning from a battle :”We returned from the minor struggle to

the major struggle, struggle against ourselves”. The eminent Muslim scholar, Sufian Al-Thawry, used to say: “I found nothing harder than purifying my intentions because they keep changing.”

2- Take Control of your Life

One's Iman will not survive until he takes control of his life. Exercising self-discipline gives the heart life and sustenance, and hence makes the tree of Iman grow deeper and stronger. Those who lose control over their lives became mastered by their desires; may be to the point that their desires destroy them physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

The purity of the heart stems from guarding the eyes, the tongue, the ears, the hands, the feet and all other organs of the body from all sorts of wrongdoing. You control them and do not let them control you.

The Believer should restrain his eyes from looking at anything that is blameworthy, lustful, or disapproved. Lustful glance is poisonous to the heart. The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said: “The lustful glance is one of the poison arrows of Satan.” Also the ears should be guarded from hearing unlawful, lustful, and harmful talks; One should not waist his time in listening to songs and music. We should rather listen to Quran, words of truth, as well as other useful things.

The tongue is a tool that could destroy our Iman or make it grow. Iman can not survive unless the tongue is kept free from lying, backbiting, obscenity, abusive speech, hypocritical talks, lustful talks, excessive talking, idle talks, purposeless conversations, and other misdeeds. One the other hand one can make the tongue a helpful tool to attain true success, if he keeps his tongue busy with truthful talks, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong, seeking forgiveness for one's sins, good reassuring words, giving advices, reciting the Qur'aan, praying, glorifying Allah, asking for Allah's blessings on the prophet, ... etc.

3- Live the Qur'aan

One must firmly believe that the Qur'aan is the Word of Allah and it is not like the speech of men. Qur'aan was sent down for guidance of all mankind. The Qur'aan is a mercy, a healing of the diseases of the souls, and a guidance to success for the Believers.

“And We reveal of the Qur'aan that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the unjust.” [17-82]

“O men! there has come to you indeed an admonition from your Lord and a healing for what is in the breasts and a guidance and a mercy for the believers. Say: In the grace of Allah and in His mercy-- in that they should rejoice; it is better than that which they gather.” [10-57:58]

“Say: It is to those who believe a guidance and a healing; and (as for) those who do not believe, there is a heaviness in their ears and it is obscure to them; these shall be called to from a far-off place.” [41-44]

The recitation of the Book of Allah, the Most Exalted with contemplation and understanding purifies the heart and nurtures Iman more than any thing else. It is also not a Book to be used as an omen to bring good luck. The Qur'aan should be read and recited; studied and practiced according to one's ability. We should study its meanings, reasons of revelation, laws, stories, and parables. We should give heed to its warnings and admonitions.

Although the recitation of the Qur'aan is a righteous deed and blissful for the Believer, Qur'aan is a Book to be lived in first place. The Muslim can gain maximum profits from it only when he applies it in his life. The recitation of the Qur'aan without practicing would be an evidence against the person before Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, on the Last Day.

Applying Qur'aan guides man to think rightly and act correctly; and this produces proper conduct and guidance for more goodness. Because of this, understanding Qur'aan and abiding by its teachings purifies man's heart, empowers him to discipline himself and gain

more control over his life. Qur'aan is an unmatched Book that enables man to make real good changes in his life and the world.

The Qur'aan is a sacred Book which be treated in a proper respectful manners. It is the duty of every Believer to do his best to protect it from any kind of distortion or misinterpretation, and refute any false claims made against it.

4- Self Reckoning and Sincere Repentance

Self-reckoning is one of the characteristics of the true Believers; one of the good practices of exemplary

Muslims is to evaluate one's daily actions and thank Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, for whatever good he did; and seek Allah's forgiveness for his bad deeds. One should always correct his mistakes and shortcomings and turn to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, in sincere repentance.

Sins and wrongs doings decrease Iman. Self-reckoning and repentance help us restore Iman through removal of the bad effects of sins, and purification of the heart as it was explained by the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam,. Imam Ahmad and others narrated that the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said:

“When a servant of Allah commits a sin, a black spot is imprinted on his heart. If he makes Isitighfar and Tawbah (seeks Allah's forgiveness and repents) then the black spot is removed and his heart is purified. But if he does not stop and keeps sinning, the black spot increases till it covers the whole heart. This is the rust of the heart spoken by Allah the Almighty in the Qur'aan: “Nay! rather, what they have earned (sins) has become like rust upon their hearts.” [83: 14]

Repentance is not just empty words to be said by the tongue. The true repentance arises deeply from the heart and brings good changes in the life of the person. One has to refrain completely from disobeying Allah; regret what he has done in the past; intend, with deep sincerity, not to return to the wrong practices in the future; and

if one has transgressed the rights of others he must give them their rights back or compensate them; if this is not possible he should ask them to forgive him; if this is not possible he should give charity in their behave or pray to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, to forgive them and show mercy with them and this hoped to would be regarded as a compensation for his ill deeds toward them, as the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said: "True repentance wipes out all the sins done before it."

vi- Striving in Good Deeds

The Muslim should prove his Iman through making immense efforts, backed by sincere intentions, to grow in obedience, worship, and devotion to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . He should take firm steps on the straight path to make his Iman more powerful, day by day.

The first step to increase one's Iman, is to fulfill obligatory duties; then to strive in non-obligatory acts of obedience that were regularly performed by the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, such as remembrance of Allah regularly, offering night prayers, optional fast, giving charities. In addition to improving our Iman, these acts compensate our sins and misdeeds.

The next step is to constantly work to acquire noble qualities such as: love of Allah and His messenger more than any thing in the world, and feeling His presence, love of Allah's and His messenger more than any thing in the world, fearing Allah's punishment, having hope in Allah's mercy and forgiveness, sincerity, humbleness, modesty, steadfastness, patience, courage, generosity, humility, modesty, and good morals and characters. Allah the Exalted says:

“The believers are only those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and then have had no doubt and have strived with their wealth and themselves in the Way of Allah. They are the ones who are true to their word.”

[Qur'aan, 49:15]

Grow in Righteousness

The Believer should be a responsible person; take charge of his life; and should not let his life passes day after day in vain. Start now, do not delay it; death is very near to every one of us; it does not distinguish between the young and the old, the sick and the healthy; and no body knows when death will strike us; it may be very soon. The eminent scholar Al-Hassan Al-Basri said: "O son of Adam, your life is nothing but countable days; if a day has passed part of you has passed that will not come again".

The good Believer must train himself in good deeds to the point that good deeds become his nature. If you are sure that something is right, you must stick to it, even though it may be so difficult. Do not be discouraged. However, be realistic; start with some thing small; everything begins small and grows, good things and bad things, good habits and bad habits; the beginning is always difficult, but you must be patient and continue making efforts to preserve your Iman and strengthen it. The list of good deeds is endless. Do not underestimate your abilities; make every minute in your life an achievement that will enlighten your life both in this world and in the Hereafter.

1. Begin by improving the quality of obligatory acts of worship.
2. Get rid of your bad habits and practices such as missing prayers, praying quickly, backbiting, wasting time in idle talks.
3. Offer extra acts of worship: voluntary prayers, giving charities for those in need, voluntary fasting, performing Omrah (minor Hajj).
4. Attain Islamic knowledge, memorize, recite, and study Qur'aan preferable in a group if this is not possible you can do your self. Fix a time to supplicate to Allah and praise Him.
5. Be always beneficent to people as much as you can and deal with them with respect and kindness.
6. Do your best to be always honest, just, sincere and kind.

More Blessings

Allah rewards for a good deed with ten times or up to seven hundred times its value, or even more. The more one grows in worship, devotion, good deeds, and obedience to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, the more gifts, support, and guidance he will receive from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la. The following are some evidences:

“But those who accept Guidance, He increases them in guidance” [47- 17]

“And whatever good you send before you for yourselves, you will certainly find it with Allah, better and greater in reward” [73- 20]

Al-Bukhari narrated that the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said, “My Lord says, ‘If My slave comes nearer to me for a span, I go nearer to him for a cubit; and if he comes nearer to Me for a cubit, I go nearer to him for the span of outstretched arms; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him running.’”

Al-Bukhari also narrated that the messenger of Allah said: Allah the Almighty has said: “... My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it.”

Al-Bukhari also narrated that the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said, “Allah says: ‘I am just as My slave thinks I am, (i.e. I am able to do for him what he thinks I can do for him) and I am with him if He remembers Me. If he remembers Me in himself, I too, remember him in

Myself; and if he remembers Me in a group of people, I remember him in a group that is better than they; and if he comes one span nearer to Me, I go one cubit nearer to him; and if he comes one cubit nearer to Me, I go a distance of two outstretched arms nearer to him; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him running.’”

These traditions show us the infinite compassion, generosity, kindness from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, for His slaves, which is evident from the reward that He gives to His slaves even on their minor good deeds. They imply that when one makes effort to bring himself near to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, Allah will certainly go nearer to him; when one turns to Allah, Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, will certainly turn to him with more closeness and gifts. The one who responds positively to Allah's commands will without doubt receive faster response from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la. He who strives hard to please Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, through sincere devotion and good deeds Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, will love him and he will be absolutely be guided and protected by Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la; his hands, feet, eyes, and ears are guided and guarded from committing sins. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, will answer his prayers and grant him refuge whenever he asks for. He is granted the pleasure of the residents of the Heaven and the people of the earth.”

vii- Keep the Company of Guided People

The company of righteous people is essential for preserving our Iman. As a rule, Iman always increases with company of good people, and decreases with company of bad people. The Qur'aan directs the believers to seek the company of the rightly guided people.

“Restrain yourself along with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring His Face. And let not your eyes pass from them, desiring the beauty of this world's life” (Qur'aan 18:28)

It also warns the believers not to mix with the wrongdoers for fear of being influenced by their some of their thoughts:

“And incline not to those who do wrong, or the fire will seize you.”^[11:113]

“Therefore, shun those who turn away from Our remembrance and desire nothing but the life of this world.”^[53:30]

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said in a *Hadeeth* narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim that:

“The good and bad companion is like the one who carries musk and the one who blows the bellow. The one who carries musk may give you some, or you may buy some from him, or you may smell a fragrance from him; but the one who blows the bellow might burn your clothing, or you may feel a bad smell from him.”

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, mentioned a parable of the good and bad companion. He compared the good companion to the musk seller. The musk seller is beneficent to you under all circumstances; you may buy some musk from him, or he gives you a gift of his musk; or at least you enjoy the nice fragrance of his musk. Also the good companion is always helpful to you; he may respond to your needs, or give you a good advice, or a useful hint; or at least you enjoy his pleasant company.

On the other hand, the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, compared the bad companion to the Blacksmith when he blows the bellows to heat the metal. His company is always unpleasant; your clothes may be burnt by his sparks; or the smock hurts you; and under all cases his unpleasant smell annoys you. And the same applies to the bad companion; his company is always harmful to you. He may give you a misleading advice; or influence you in a negative way; or at least your reputation is injured by his company.

Friends for Allah

It is well known that friends influence our habits, behaviours, morals, and conduct. That is why one should choose the company of the righteous and virtuous Muslims; and establish his relationships with them on Iman and love of Allah, not for worldly benefits.

Their company results in the attainment of decent manners, beneficial knowledge, righteous conduct, and correction if one slips into disobedience; keeping company with the wicked prevents all of that and hence leading to deviation from the Straight Path.

The benefits of mixing with the righteous are countless; they even extend to the Last Day. Allah, the All-Wise also says:

“Friends on that Day will be enemies one to another, except al-Muttaqoon (those dutiful to Allah).”^[43:67]

The eminent Tafseer scholar, Ibn Katheer, related a story on the above verse that any friendship for other than Allah is turned into enmity, except what was in it for Allah the Mighty and Majestic:

Two people were friends for Allah’s sake; one of them died and was given good news that he will be granted Paradise, then he remembered his friend and he asked Allah Paradise for him, saying: “O Allah, my friend used to help me obey You and to obey Your Messenger and used to enjoin me to do good and forbid me from doing evil. And he told me that I will meet You. O Allah, let him not stray after me, until he meets You; and You show him what you have shown me; until You are satisfied with him as You are satisfied with me.” Then he was told: “Had you known what is (written) for you friend, would you have laughed a lot and cried a little.”

Then when his friend died and their souls were gathered, and both were asked to express their views about each other, every one of them said to the other : “You were indeed the best brother, the best companion and the best friend.” And when on of the two disbelieving friends dies, and he is given news of Hellfire, he remembered his friend he asked Allah Hellfire for him, saying: “O Allah, my friend used to help me disobey, You and to disobey Your Messenger, and

used to enjoin me to do bad and forbid me from doing good. And he told me that I will not meet You. O Allah, do not guide him after me, until you show him what you have shown me and until you are dissatisfied with him as You are dissatisfied with me.” Then when the other disbelieving friend died, and their souls were gathered, and both were asked to express their views about each other, every one of them said to the other: “You were the worst brother, the worst companion and the worst friend.”

A good friend is a source of blessings for the Believer; he cares about you, helps and advices you, corrects you when you do mistakes, reminds you when you forget; he is always there when you need him; you feel comfortable and happy with him. Imam Ali, may Allah honour his face, said: “Mix with noble people, then you become one of them; and keep away from the misguided people to protect yourself from their evils.”

Bad companions do not care about you as a person. They care only about your money and the benefits they get from you. They never respond to your needs; they often abuse and neglect you when they do not get what they want from you; they then make you feel horrible and uncomfortable. The bad friends are usually the main obstacle toward any improvement of your Iman; they do not like to see you better than them; they will attack you and do whatever possible to distract you from the path of Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, .

Further, the Muslim should seek guidance in the biographies of the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam,, his companions, exemplary guided Muslim scholars, Imams, and leaders. We should respect them, follow their footsteps, learn from their wisdom, guidance, and be grateful for their great efforts in the sake of Islam.

Fruits of Iman

From previous discussions it is concluded that Iman is not only some beliefs residing in the heart. Iman can not be perfected and completed, and hence produce its fruits until it is put into actions; and becomes the axis around which the life of Muslim revolves.

Signs of True Iman

The true Iman is like a blessed tree that yields its fruits at all times and for all people. The fruits of true Iman are countless; they comprise all aspects of the life of the Believer. Many traditions of Prophet Muhammad stressed that the real Iman is reflected in one’s character, behavior, and His relationship with Allah, His Messenger, and people. The following are some traditions narrated by Al-Bukhari:

“Whoever possesses the following three qualities will have the sweetness (delight) of Iman: The one to whom Allah and His Apostle becomes dearer than anything else. Who loves a person and he loves him only for Allah’s sake. Who hates to revert to Atheism (disbelief) as he hates to be thrown into the fire.”

“By Him in Whose Hands my life is, none of you will have Iman till he loves me more than his father and his children.” Another version added “ and all mankind “

“Iman of one of you will not be completed until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”

“Whoever has (true) Iman in Allah and the Last Day, should not hurt his neighbor and whoever has (true) Iman in Allah and the Last Day, should serve his guest generously and whoever has (true) Iman in Allah and the Last Day, should talk what is good or keep quiet.”

“By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe!” When asked who he was referring to, the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, replied: “That person whose neighbor does not feel safe from his evil.”

Fruits of Iman

The above traditions tell us when one perfects his Iman he will be blessed by many gifts from Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, and love will prevail in his life; he

- loves Allah, His Messenger more than any thing in the world;
- loves people;
- loves Allah's guidance;
- and loves righteous deeds, noble qualities, and good conduct.

True Iman has a great impact on the Believer life. It is a dynamic force that motivates the Muslim toward all goodness, with the final goal to attain Allah's pleasure.

Blessings and Gifts of Allah

Here is a tradition narrated by Al-Bukhari which tells us about the reward of the Believer who strives to please Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, and bring himself closer to Him;

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said, "Allah the Almighty has said: "Whosoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it."

The fruit of reaching this high rank of Iman is that the Believer becomes Allah's Wali; this means that Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, will love him, and become his supporter and protector. All of his affairs will be taken care of by Allah. He will be rewarded by full guidance in all aspects of his life; his ears are guided; his eyes are guided; his hands are guided; and his feet are guided. His prayers will be immediately answered. And Allah will grant him whatever he asks for. And if he seeks refuge in Allah, Allah will surely give him refuge.

Love of Allah and His Messenger

Love of Allah and his Messenger is one of the signs of perfect Iman. The perfect Believer will not taste the sweetness of Iman until Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, and his Messenger become dearer to him more than anything else. He puts the pleasure of Allah and his Messenger at the top of his priorities and as his ultimate goal. He loves them more than his father, his children, and all mankind. He loves Allah's guidance and hates to revert to disbelief as he hates to be thrown into the fire.

Love of Allah

Love of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, is manifested in the Believer life. He firmly believes in Allah alone and denies any partners with Him. He acknowledges Allah's Oneness sincerely and deeply believes that there is no god worth to be worshipped but Him; he turns to Allah alone in worship. He is eager to learn more about Allah's Perfection; His beautiful Names and high Attributes: His Power, Greatness, Majesty, Strength, Compassion, and Mercy. He ponders over the signs of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, in the universe and the greatness of His creation of the heavens and the earth and whatever in them.

He is loyal and devoted to Allah and His Messenger; he fulfills his obligations toward Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, in the best way possible and strives hard in good deeds to get as close to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, as possible. His love and hatred are for Allah; he loves to obey Allah; and hates to disobey Him; he loves whatever Allah loves; he honors whatever Allah honors; and hates or dislikes whatever Allah hates or dislike. He puts his trust in Allah alone and is constantly involved in His remembrance by heart and tongue at times of ease and difficulty. In addition, the Believer is always recognizing the countless gifts and blessings of Allah upon Him, and constantly thanks Allah with his heart, tongue and limbs for them.

The strong devotion and knowledge of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, result in more love and obedience for Him; and hence more closeness to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . And then Allah's obedience becomes

the Believer's pleasure. The real Believer puts Iman at the center of his life; so that he dedicates every thing in his life is for the sake of Allah and he never breaks away from His guidance; he remains honest, steadfast, and maintains loyalty to Allah and adherence to His way under all circumstances and up to the last moment in his life. He yields to nobody but Allah; fears nobody but Allah; turns to nobody for support but Allah; puts his trust in nobody but Allah. Pleasing Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, becomes his ultimate goal.

Love of Allah's Messenger

Sincer and deep love of Allah's Messenger is one of the signs true Iman. It is indicated by previous traditions that no one can have true Iman unless he loves Allah's Messenger more than his father, his children, and all mankind. It also reported in an authentic tradition that Omar Ibn al Khattab, radhiallahu `anhu, expressed his love to Allah's Messenger, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, saying, "O Messenger of Allah, you are more beloved to me than anything except my own self." Then Allah's Messenger told him, "No, by the One in Whose Hand is my soul, not until I am more beloved to you than your own soul." Omar then told him, "By Allah, now you are more beloved to me than my own soul." Allah's Messenger, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, then told him that now his Iman had been completed.

Love of the Messenger of Allah means to follow him in whatever he conveyed from his Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, ; and not to seek guidance from any other source. The true Believer accepts the Messenger of Allah as his only model and true leader; this implies obeying him and following his way. He fulfills whatever he enjoined and remains away from whatever he prohibited.

The true Believer honors the Prophet Sunnah, and refers to it for judgment and guidance. He revives the Sunnah by learning, understanding, practicing, and teaching it to others. He sticks to the Sunnah firmly; and makes sure not to deviate from it. He defends the Sunnah and strives against those who oppose it according to his ability.

The strong believer loves those who love the Prophet, and hates those who hate him; he loves those who follow his way and strive to revive his Sunnah; and turns away from those who oppose his way. He also loves and honor both the Prophet's family and companions; he always expresses his love and respect for the Prophet by sending peace and prayers for him whenever his name is mentioned saying: "*sallallahu `alayhi wasallam*"

Love of people

One of the great fruits of Iman is the strong tie of brotherhood and love among Believers. As Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, says:

"Indeed the believers are but a single Brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers. And fear Allah so that you may receive Mercy"

Referring to the previous traditions, in the same chapter, we see that the true Believer builds his relationships with people on mutual love, brotherhood, co-operation, straight dealing, respect, and gratefulness. His relations are established on love for Allah's sake not for worldly benefits. He loves for people what he loves for himself. He treats them as he likes them to treat him. He abstains from all harming acts to people.

The genuine Believer loves people and deals with them with fairness, patience, and kindness so that they are safe and secure with him. He does not break ties with them; does not to turn away from them; he is humble toward them; does not mock at them; does not severe relationships with them; he has no ill feelings, envy, hatred, or jealousy toward people; he shows sympathy toward them and does his best to remove their difficulty. He covers their defects and defends them.

He observes people's rights; fulfills his obligations towards them as leaders, parents, spouses, children, relatives, neighbors, guests, or common folk of the Muslims. He cares for all Muslims and is helpful to them in whatever is good or beneficial. He advises them with wisdom and polite manners. He is generous with guests, and

abstains from causing any kind of harm to his neighbors. He does not disassociate with them. He shows mercy for the young and respect to the elders. He sacrifices his time, effort, money, and whatever he can afford for public service of the Muslim community.

Balanced Character

In the light of the previous traditions we see that the real Believer is characterized by the following:

- 1- He loves Allah's guidance and hates to revert to disbelief as he hates to be thrown into the fire.
- 2- He is eager to grow in righteousness and do as many good deeds as he can.
- 3- The real Believer is sincere, active, creative and productive.
- 4- He is free of inner evils, self-worship, all forms of slavery and submission to people, objects, ideas, wealth, desires, position, authority, pleasures, or lusts.
- 5- He restrains his tongue and says only what is good or keeps quiet.
- 6- His life is balanced; he lives in inner peace, satisfaction, and harmony between this world and the Hereafter, between his physical and spiritual needs. His life is full of happiness and contentment. His heart is fearful and humble, his soul is tranquil and he is at ease with himself and people.
- 7- He is a peaceful person. He respects the rights of people and beneficent, charitable, and supportive to them. He avoids causing any kind of harm, damage, or injury to them either by words or actions.

In brief, the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, described the real Believer as the one who:

- **fears Allah in both private and public matters;**
- **sticks to justice, whether in anger or calmness;**
- **spends in moderation, in both poverty and richness;**
- **connects with those who break away from him;**

- **gives those who deprive him;**
- **and forgives those who wrong him;**
- **his silence is a meditation;**
- **his words are remembrance of Allah;**
- **and his vision is an insightful keen observation.**

One's Iman Will Be Tested

Because Iman resides in the heart, Allah alone knows its reality; its reality is unknown to people; even the person himself may think his Iman is strong while his beliefs are shaken and lacking basic elements. One has to prove what he professes; it is not sufficient to say that one is a believer without confirming it in his practical life.

It is the wisdom of Allah to test people's Iman by both good and evil, so that it may be known who is sincere and who is lying. This law of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, applies to all nations and all people. Allah, the Most Exalted, said:

«Do people think that they will be left alone because they say: «We believe,>> and will not be tested. And We indeed tested those who were before them so that Allah will indeed know those who are true, and He will know those who are liars. Or think those who do evil deeds that they can outstrip Us! Evil is that which they judge!» ^[29- 2:4]

“Do you think that you will enter Paradise without Allah knowing those of you who strove (in Allah's cause) and knowing those who are the patient!” ^[3:142]

“Or think you that you will enter Paradise without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you. They were afflicted with severe poverty, and ailments, and were so shaken that even the Messenger and those who believed along with him said, “When (will come) the help of Allah” Yes! Certainly, the help of Allah is near!” ^[2- 214]

The phrase: “.. so that Allah will indeed know those who are true, and He will know those who are liars.” in verses (29- 2:4) shows that the purpose of the test is that Allah, the Most Exalted, would know who are true in Iman and who are liars

Certainly, Allah the Almighty knows best what is in the hearts of people and what they keep secretly within themselves, even though their outward may totally be unlike what they conceal in their hearts. And certainly, Allah the Almighty does not need to test people in order to know their realities; He is all Knowing, All Seeing and All Hearing; He knows the inward of people as He knows their outward. Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, says:

“Is not Allah Best Aware of what is in the breasts of the creatures?”

What is the purpose of the test? The verses tell us that the purpose of the test is: **“... so that Allah will indeed know those who are true, and He will know those who are liars.”**

Questions are raised here. Does not Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, know the truth about the Iman of people? Why does Allah, the Most Exalted, have to test people?

Ahlu-Sunnah scholars agree that Allah’s Knowledge is not limited by time or place. He, the Most Glorified and Exalted, knows what happened in the past, what has been happening, what is happening, and what will happen in the future. The Prophet’s cousin, Ibn `Abbas, and others said the phrase [إِلَّا نَعْلَمُ] - *only that We know*] in the verse means [*only that We see or We make the truth about them a reality seen to people*]; because seeing is associated with the realities that exist in our world but Knowledge is broader than seeing. Allah’s Knowledge is encompassing all the creatures. He is all knowing and does not need to test people. He, the Exalted, knows the results of any circumstances before that they take place.

Tests are in Different Forms

The test is not the same for everyone. Some of us are tested with poverty while others are tested with wealth; some may be tested by health while others are tested by sickness. The test comes according to the strength of Iman. Ibn Katheer, the great interpreter of Qur’aan, wrote in the interpretation of the verses (29- 2:4) that: “Allah will inevitably test His believing servants according to their level of Iman, as it recorded in the authentic tradition:

“The people most severely tested are the Prophets, then the righteous, then the next best and the next best. A man will be tested in accordance with the degree of his religious commitment; the stronger his religious commitment, the stronger his test.”

Prophets of Allah Faced the Harshest Tests

All the Prophets of Allah went through the most difficult tests; Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) suffered test after test until he left the life of this world. Prophet Nuh (peace be upon him) cried for help for 300 years. Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) was thrown into a fire; and was commanded to sacrifice his son. Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him) lost his dearest son and cried until he became blind. Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him) Moses challenged pharaoh and was tested by his people in many ways. Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) faced the suborn resistance of his Jewish enemies; they conspired to crucify him but Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, saved him at the last moment. Prophet Muhammad, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, went through many hard tests, one test after the other, for over twenty years. His people disbelieved in him and resisted his call; they fought against him and his followers for many years; they persecuted Muslims and forced them to leave their land. But he kept patient until he was given victory and Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, promise to make his religion prevail was fulfilled.

The Wisdom of Testing

Trials and tests do not involve only pain and suffering; benefits and invaluable lessons are from driven from them. It is obvious that there is a great wisdom behind the testing; Allah the Almighty taught us this wisdom in many verses of the Qur'aan, examples include:

“And indeed Allah knows those who believe, and verily He knows the hypocrites.” (29-11)

“And surely, We shall try you till We test those who strive hard and the patient, and We shall test your facts.”(47-31)

“Allah will not leave the believers in the state in which you are now, until He distinguishes the wicked from the good...” (3-179)

1) Testing exposes the hidden realities of people. The attitudes and reactions of people during the test reveal their true nature. This helps us distinguish the Believers from the hypocrites, the weak Iman from the strong one, the sincere from the insincere, the patient from the impatient, the wicked from the good, and those who strove in Allah's cause from those who failed; also it distinguishes those who obey Allah in hardship and ease, from those who only obey Him in things that suit their desires.

2) The test causes the true Believer to grow in Iman. Trials always bring Believers nearer to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . Iman helps us face the most difficult hardships, disasters, and painful trials with more patience. We do not fall into despair or hopelessness, as Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, says:

“Oh you who believe, Seek help with patience perseverance, and prayer, for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.”
(2:153)

The Believer is sure that if he remains firm and persevere at hard times he would surely receive more guidance and reward from Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . When he is afflicted with some thing bad he realizes it could be a result of his own sins; so he turns to Allah in repentance seeking his forgiveness and help. Testing of good things

or bad things is always good for the Believer. The Believer is aware that misfortunes of life are tests for him that require Sabr or patience, and good things that happens to him are also a tests that require Shukr or thanks giving to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, explained,

“Wonderful is the affair of the Believer (Mu'mmin)! Indeed all his affairs are good for him. If something good befalls him he thanks Allah and it becomes better for him. And if something undesirable befalls him he is patient and it becomes better for him. And this is only for the Believer”

3) On the other hand, the test is a warning for the insincere and hypocrites to change themselves, otherwise they will face the consequences of their misconduct. The evildoers fail the test because they do not acknowledge the reality of things. When they suffer, they think they are mistreated by Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, . When they experience good, they think they deserve it. They think that they are smart; they can hide their wrongdoings and escape the penalty of their evil conduct; then comes the trials and tests to prove their realities and expose their lies; so that they may learn a lesson and change themselves other wise a greater and more severe punishment is waiting for them. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, said:

“Do those who do evil deeds think that they can outstrip Us! Evil is that which they judge!”

Chapter Six

Nullifications of Iman

There are many things that contradict Iman and nullify it. Every Believer has to monitor his Iman and safeguard it from whatever can invalidate it. Here are some of the acts and beliefs that annul Iman or make it weak, superficial, and ineffective, and therefore it will not bring its fruit neither in this life nor in the Next.

Warning

I would like to stress that apart from the manifest *Kufr* and major *Shirk*, all the acts mentioned below do not make a person Kafir, an apostate or a Murtad. Although they reduce Iman seriously, they do not nullify it completely. It is a fact that Iman exists in varying degrees among different people. It also may increase or diminish.

It is worth to mention that it is indeed very serious matter to declare that somebody as an apostate or a Murtad (has departed from Islam and entered into disbelief). It is not the right of individuals to rule that a specific person as a Murtad. This could only be done through Islamic Judicial Procedures.

1- Acts of *Kufr* and *Shirk*

Iman is contradicted by all acts of *Kufr* and *Shirk* whether they are open or hidden, in belief or worship. *Kufr* and *Shirk* are the most deadly and dangerous of all sins because they dishonor and denigration Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, and therefore negate Iman completely.

Kufr in Arabic means to cover something; it refers to people who covers the favors of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, and oppose Him. *Kufr* is disbelief in Allah, ungratefulness to Him, rejection of His religion, and denial of meeting with Him after death. Those are guilty of *kufr* have removed themselves from Allah's mercy. And their deeds will not avail them. And they will be the dwellers of the Fire for ever. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, says:

“They are those who deny the signs of their Lord and the meeting with Him (in the Hereafter). So their works are in vain, and on the Day of Resurrection. We shall not give them any weight.” [18:105]

Also He says:

“Surely those who disbelieve and turn away from Allah's way and oppose the Apostle after that guidance has become clear to them cannot harm Allah in any way, and He will make null their deeds.” [47-32]

“Surely those who disbelieve and turn away from Allah's way, then they die while they are unbelievers, Allah will by no means forgive them.” [47-34]

“The parable of those who disbelieve in their Lord: their actions are like ashes on which the wind blows hard on a stormy day; they shall not have power over any thing out of what they have earned; this is the great error.

[14-18]

On the other hand, *Shirk* in Arabic refers to ascribing the attributes, power or authority of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, to others besides Him and/or worshipping others besides Him. *Shirk* contradicts the essential teachings of Islam, which includes the worship and recognition of One God, Allah who shares His Dominion with no one and of Whom there is none like His Likeness. *Shirk* takes many forms; it is minor and major.

Major *Shirk*

Shirk is to worship other gods besides Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, ; or ascribe sons or daughters to Him; or believe in some objects, idol, human being as His associates. Also accepting the sovereignty and judgment of others besides Allah or substituting Allah's laws with man-made laws is some form of *Shirk*.

Major *Shirk* is deadly. It destroys Iman and nullifies all good deeds. Major *Shirk* is the gravest form of sins and injustice. Allah, the Exalted, says:

“Were they to commit Shirk, then the good deeds, which they accomplished would have been nullified.” [6:88]

“It has been revealed to you and to those before you, if you commit Shirk your good deeds shall be nullified and you shall certainly be of the losers.” [39:65]

Major *Shirk* is the only unpardonable sin. Whoever died committing Major *Shirk* he will not be forgiven; he will enter the Fire and he will abide therein forever. Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, says:

“ Verily, Allah forgives not that partners be set up with Him in worship, but He forgives other than that to whom He pleases; and whoever sets up partners with Allah [in worship], he has indeed invented an enormous wrong”
[4:48]

2- Minor Shirk and Corrupted Intentions

Corrupted intentions make our Iman and acts of worship doom to failure and loss. Minor *Shirk* means that the intentions behind the acts of worship are not purely for Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, . It is important to be aware that when there is no sincerity for Allah, Iman becomes worthless and good deeds are of no account in the sight of Allah. They are only superficially good because they are done for this transit world; so they will be disregarded in the Next World. Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, says in the Quran:

“Whoever desires the life of this world and its ornaments, We will repay them their deeds herein, and therein they shall not be wronged. Those are they for whom there is nothing but fire in the Hereafter, and all that they do here is worthless shall go for nothing, and vain are all their acts.” Qur’aan, (11-15/6)

Imam Ahmad reported that the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said:

“Of the things which I fear for my Ummah, the thing which I fear most is minor *Shirk*. Then he was asked about minor *Shirk*, and he said: “It is *al-Riyaa* or showing off.”

Therefore, people who confess Iman by the tongue, but the intentions behind their good deeds are not sincerely for Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, ; their good deeds are done for showing off, to gain praise or fame, for worldly benefits, or to please any one else rather than Allah, then they will get their good deeds rejected by Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, ; and there will be no reward for them in the Next World.

Insincerity turn a righteous act into an evil deed that deserves a punishment. Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, says:

“So woe for those who pray; those who are neglectful of their prayers, those who want but to be seen (of men), and refuse to supply even small needs” [106- 4:7]

In another verse :

“Waste not your charity by reminders and injuries, like him who spends his wealth to be seen by men and believes not in Allah” [2 -264]

Minor *Shirk* includes acts like vowing for others than Allah, swearing by others than Allah, seeking the mediation of the dead righteous Muslims, glorifying graves of the righteous,... etc. Also using shells or consulting oracles, consultation with Soothsayers, believing in ill omens are all forms of minor *Shirk*.

Minor *Shirk* could be deeply hidden in the heart. The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, is reported to have said, “The hidden *Shirk* in my nation is more inconspicuous than the creeping of a black ant on a black rock in the pitch-blackness of the night”

Minor *Shirk* is a major sin that requires sincere repentance in order to be forgiven by Allah. Whoever died committing minor *Shirk* will enter the Fire for a period of time proportion to his sin, then by Allah’s mercy he will be brought out of the Fire.

That is why, the Muslim should constantly struggle to purify his heart of *Shirk* and reform his intentions to make them sincerely for Allah alone. This is surely the hardest challenge every Believer has to deal with.

3- Hypocrisy

Those who confessed Iman only by the tongue but there are no beliefs in their hearts; they may follow their confession with good deeds. Those people are surely disbelievers and hypocrites (Munafiqeen). They pretend to be Believers while concealing Kufr and evil in their hearts. However, their Kufr, lack of Iman, and disrespect of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, and His Messenger are manifested in their characters and conduct.

Many verses of Qur'aan and Prophetic traditions condemn hypocrisy, uncover the hypocrites, and cautioned Muslims against them. Allah the Exalted, said about the hypocrites:

“They (think) that they deceive Allah and the believers, but they deceive only themselves, but they do not know. In their hearts is a disease, and Allah has increased their disease to them, and for them is a grievous punishment because they lied.” [2 - 10]

“Verily, the hypocrites are the rebellious.” [9-67]

“Verily, the hypocrites shall be in the lowest level of Fire.” [4 - 145]

“The hypocrites (think) that they deceive Allah when in fact it is Allah who is deceiving them.” [4 - 142]

4- Rejecting the Judgment of Allah and His Messenger

There are people who are born as Muslims but adopted worldly ideologies. Therefore, they neither accept the judgment of Allah, nor His Messenger, nor comply with Islam. Although those people have Muslim names, and live in Muslim countries, they doubt the validity of Islam; they have no firm belief in it. They turn away from Allah's Judgment and think of it as backward and unfitting to the modern time.

They confine Islam in acts of worship alone. They separate religion from the state and claiming that there is no politics in Islam which is against the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The right of legalizing the *Halal* and *Haram* belongs to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, and no one is permitted to share this right with Him. Muslims transactions, punishments, settlement of disputes, and running the rest of their affairs must be according to Allah's guidance. Allah, the Exalted, says:

“And if you dispute over anything, refer it to Allah and His Messenger if you really believe in Allah and the Last Day, that is best terms of consequences.” [4:59]

Applying the law of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, is a matter of Iman, and an act of worship. Showing dislike for the Message of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, and seeking for other laws besides His destroys deeds. Allah, the Exalted, says:

“That is because they hate that which Allah has sent down so He has made their deeds fruitless.” [47-9]

Iman does not conform with seeking judgment in other than what Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, revealed. Those who do so are unbelievers, wrongdoers, and rebellious as Allah, the Exalted, says:

“And he who does not rule by what Allah sent down, it is they who are the disbelievers.” [5:45]

“And who does not rule by what Allah sent down, it is they who are the wrongdoers.” [5:45]

“And he who does not rule by what Allah sent down, it is they who are the rebellious.” [5:47]

5- Rejection of Some Parts of Islam

If Iman is confessed by the tongue, and followed by good deeds, but heart is not fully accepting the Islam; there are still some beliefs in the heart that contradict Islam; or the person is rejecting of some parts of Islam which are affirmed by Quran and/or authentic Sunnah; such a person is not a believer because Iman cannot be partitioned; one cannot be a partial believer. One can not accept some parts of Qur'aan and reject some other parts. Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, rebuked the Jews saying:

“Do you, then, believe in part of the Book and disbelieve in part?” [2:85]

Denying any of the pillars of Islam such as Prayers, Fast, Hajj, or Zakat, ablution (Wudu), etc. wipe out Iman. Refusing some parts of the Qur’aan or authentic confirmed *Sunnah* may bring the person out of Islam if it is done with determination, knowledge, and no doubt. Also the denial of anything which is widely known as part of Islam is nullifier of Iman. Examples include:

- Rejection of Hijab, the Muslim woman dress.
- Claiming the wine and toxicant substances are not forbidden.
- Dealing with interest or *Riba*.
- Dissatisfaction with Islam as a religion.

6- Rejecting Sunnah

As for those who believe in Allah but do not accept the *Sunnah*, the guidance of Mohammed, *sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam*, and they therefore they never fulfill their obligations as Muslims; their Iman is nothing because it is lacking an essential element, the belief in the last Messenger of Allah. Both the *Qur’aan* and *Ahadeeth* stated that opposing his command and refusing his *sunnah* is a misguidance and innovation; Muslims are warned of the grave consequences of rejecting the *Sunnah*:

i- Allah says, “Let those who oppose his command beware of a trial that might strike them or a painful punishment that might befall them,” [4- 63]

ii- “Whoever splits from the Messenger after the guidance is clear to him and follows other than the path of the believers, We shall entrust him to what he has turned to.” [4-114]

iii- Abu Hurayra said that once the Messenger of Allah, *sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam*, said, “Some men will be driven away from my Basin as a stray camel is driven off. I will call to them, ‘Come here! Come here!’ It will be said, ‘They made changes after you.’ Then I will say, ‘Get away! Get away!’” (Muslim, Malik, Abu Dawud and an-Nasa’i)

vi- Anas related that the Prophet, *sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam*, said, “Anyone who dislikes my sunnah is not of me.” (Muslim and Al-Bukhari)

7- Denial any of the Pillars of Iman

One can not be a Believer if he rejects any of the pillars of Iman, mentioned before or any of their requirements.

Examples are, if one

- has doubt about Perfection and Sublimity of Allah the Most Exalted;
- dislikes some of the commands of Allah the Most Exalted;
- likes some of whatever Allah, the Most Exalted, prohibits;
- denies the existence of angels and their role in the universe;
- has doubts about concept of prophet-hood and the role of Prophets and Messengers of Allah in guiding mankind;
- rejecting a part of what the Messenger (peace be upon him) was sent with;
- mocks at the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad;
- believe in some of Prophets and Messengers of Allah and disbelieve in some of them;
- unconvinced of some parts of Quran;
- joking about Allah, the Messenger, the Qur’aan, Sunnah, or something relevant to any agreed upon Islamic ruling such as Hijab;
- has uncertainty about Divine scriptures;
- denies the questioning and punishment of the grave;
- denies the resurrection on the Last Day;
- denies meeting with Allah on the Last Day;
- denies the Gathering, Reckoning, the Hawdh, intercession, Sirat, Paradise, or Fire;

- raise objections against the *Qadar*;
- denies the world of Jinn;
- or denies any of details of the world of the Unseen mentioned in Qur'aan or authentic traditions.

The denial of the fundamentals of Iman reduces it nothing. One has to renew his Iman by sincere repentance and abandonment of such nullifiers of Iman. If one dies on such state and before repentance, all his deeds shall be nullified, and Hell will be his abode in the Hereafter.

8- Failure to Confess Iman

If someone who believes in Islam in their heart, but has not confessed it by tongue, he will be treated as a disbeliever in this world as long as he shows no sign of acceptance of Islam. We are supposed to judge people by their outward actions. However, that person would be considered as a believer before Allah in the Next World, assuming he had strong reasons for hiding his beliefs, and he died on his Iman. It is hoped that his belief will save him on the Day of Judgment.

However, if such a person was asked to declare the Shahdah, the Testimony of Iman, but declined without real threats to his life then he is a disbeliever not only in this world but also in the Next World before Allah.

This is because he acknowledges the truth in his heart, but rejects it with his tongue and that is an act of disbelief. Allah the Most Exalted says:

“They denied them (OUR SIGNS) even though their hearts believed in them, out of spite and arrogance.” [27-14]

A typical case of this is Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle; he was sure in his heart that Islam was the truth, yet he insisted, up to the last moment in his life, not to confess it by tongue.

9- Iman at the Wrong Time

Iman that comes too late, at time of death or punishment will not profit its people. The Noble Qur'aan mentioned the example of Pharaoh when was drowning, he confessed his Iman in the Lord of Moses but it was not accepted from him. Many of the disbelieving nations did the same like Pharaoh. Allah, the Most Exalted says:

“But when they saw Our punishment, they said: We believe in Allah alone and we deny what we used to associate with Him. But their belief was not going to profit them when they had seen Our punishment” [40-84:85]

Also when the Hour or its signs come, Iman will be of no value unless the person believed before and earned good deeds. Allah the Most Exalted says:

“On the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall come, its Iman shall not profit a soul which did not believe before, or earn good through its Iman. Say: Wait; we too are waiting.” [6-158]

Sinking in Disbelief

The unbeliever turns his back to the truth, refusing to face it, running away from it whether from fearfulness or lack of interest. Allah will provide him with many opportunities in this life to rescue himself and return to the truth.

But the unbeliever insists on his attitudes and makes no effort to allow the light of the truth enter his heart. Therefore, he deliberately turns his face farther away from the truth, insult it, and reject it.

Then Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, will leave him alone to the evils and desires of himself. Allah, the Most Exalted says:

“I shall turn away from My signs those who are arrogant on the earth without right, who if they see every a sign, they will not believe in it, and if they see the way of guidance, will not take it as a way, while

if they see the way of destruction, they take it as a way. That is because they denied our signs and were unmindful of them.” [-]

Running after the material advantages of this world and fulfillment of his desires will be his main goal. Then he will sink deeper and deeper in unbelief, wickedness, and hypocrisy to the point of no return.

Iman at Death is Rejected

Many people when they are near death they regret their unrighteous past and repent but their repentance will no longer avail them. Allah, the Most Exalted says:

“Forgiveness is not for those who do ill deeds until when death faces one of them he says, ‘Now I have repented indeed’...” [4-18]

And the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, also said:

“Allah accepts the repentance of His slave as long as the soul has not reaches the throat”.

At death, the unrighteous will wish if they can have another chance to confess their belief and do righteous work, but it will be too late then. The time for repentance have passed. Their request will mean nothing. It will be treated merely as an empty word of excuse. They had plenty of chances in this life. Not only did they reject them, but they did not even believe in Allah or ask for His guidance.

Iman out of Compulsion

There is no value in belief in things that you are compelled to acknowledge when they actually happen. Iman is belief in things which you do not see with your own eyes (*Iman-bil-ghayb*) but you understand with your spiritual reasoning.

Iman out of compulsion at the time of death is unprofitable for its people. Because it is not based on their free choice; they had to believe after seeing the actual consequences of their evil doings, and facing the terrible Reality.

Furthermore, they will ask that it were possible for them to go back to the life of this world to accept the truth and make up for their mistakes. They say this due to their utter despair and misery, and if they are given a chance they will do exactly the same as they did in their previous life. They forgot that they were too arrogant to follow the truth in their life; they had neglected the truth or abused it and rejected Allah’s Guidance all the time.

10- Indulgence in Bid’ah

Bid’ah is usually defined as Bid’ah is that innovation in religious matters; it is an invented belief or practice which is in contradiction with the Qur’aan, Sunnah, actions and agreement of the Companions of the Prophet, or principles of Islam.

Islam is completed and perfected and there is no need for addition or alteration. Allah the Exalted says:

“This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion” [-3]

Messenger of Allah stated clearly the new innovations in religion are rejected:

“He who innovates something in this matter of ours that is not of it will have it rejected.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

In another *Hadeeth* he said:

“He who does an act which our matter is not (in agreement) with will have it rejected.” (Muslim)

These traditions show that what the Prophet meant by innovation is a strictly an invented act related to religious matters. If a new act is not introduced as part of the religion then it is not considered an innovation.

Bid’ah is an error, a deviation from the straight path and it will certainly lead to misguidance. Messenger of Allah warned against innovation in religion

“I warn you of the newly invented matters (in the religion), and every newly invented matter is Bid’ah, and every Bid’ah is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Hellfire.” (Al-Nasa’ee)

Bid’ah is the product of ignorance, diseases of the heart, following one’s own desires, blind imitation, and deviation from Sunnah. Bid’ah is an additions into, and omissions from, the religion. That is why every Bid’ah is a lie concerning the religion. Bid’ah corrupts the religion and leads to the lose of Sunnah, and therefore it destroys Iman.

Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned that Bid’ah was the main cause of corruption of previous nations, he said: “In fact, the disbelief of Jews and Christians is because of Bid’ah. They introduced new things into the religion and those things took them completely away from the true messages of Moses and Jesus”.

The dangers of Bid’ah were not only restricted simply to the person who practices it but also spread to people around him, his community, and maybe it may infect the entire Muslim nation if it is left without control.

11- Indulgence in Misdeeds and Heinous Sins

As it is pointed before, Iman increases by good deeds and decreases with wrong deeds. Heinous sins diminish Iman as the Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam, said:

“No adulterer commits adultery while he is having Iman, no drinker drinks wine while he is having Iman, and no thief commits theft while he is having Iman” ^{Muslim}

Thus, Iman is corrupted by disobedience of Allah until it might be completely nullified. Therefore, the Believer should be aware of the seriousness of disobeying Allah, Subhanahu Wata’la, .

Neglecting Obligations

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, mentioned that the five obligatory prayers are the limit between Iman and disbelief. If one

abandons them he will be no longer counted as a Believer. He will be recorded among the neglectful, and in his neglect lies the destruction of his Iman.

Neglecting other religious obligations such as Zakat, fast, Hajj as well as our duties toward our families, relatives, neighbors, our communities, and our Muslim Ummah will also weaken our Iman.

By disobeying Allah, we wrong ourselves and make ourselves deserving of His punishment; and we distance ourselves from obedience; thus deprive ourselves of His guidance, blessings, and mercy.

Qur’aan tells that the previous nations were destroyed due to their persistence in sins and their failure to respond to the call of the Messengers of Allah.

“There has succeeded them a generation which has neglected its prayers and followed lusts, and so they shall meet destruction - except those who repented, and believed and did good deeds, for such shall enter Paradise, and they shall not be wronged at all.” ^[19: 59-63]

Sins invite Afflictions and Misfortunes

Evil deeds are the causes of afflictions in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah the Exalted says,

“And whatever of misfortune befalls you, it is because of what your hands have earned. And He pardons much.”

^[42 - 30]

And He says,

“Evil (sins and disobedience of Allaah) has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned (by oppression and evil deeds), that He (Allaah) may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return (by repenting to Allaah, and begging His Pardon).”

^[30 - 41]

Minor Sins

Small sins may ruin a person if they accumulate. The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said, “Be aware of the minor sins, because the simile of the minor sin is like the people who went to a desert; every one of them brought a stick of wood until they had kindled a huge fire (just as the minor sins add up little by little until they become a major sin). The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said to his wife Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her,

“O Aisha ! Take special care to guard yourself against sins that are regarded minor for even these will be brought to account by God.” Ibn Maja and Baihaqi

The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, advised his noble pure family to be careful with respect to small sins. It indicates that we, ordinary Muslims, should be extra cautious and not to ignore our mistakes, thinking of them as trivial or unimportant as compared to the major ones.

No sin is small; all sins invite the displeasure of Allah. The difference between them is the same as the difference between a more poisonous substance a less poisonous one. Al-Fadl said, “The smaller a sin is in your eyes, the more serious it is before Allah, and the more serious it is in your eyes, the less it is before Allah.”

To conclude, we must always beware of the evil consequences of sins, both major and minor. To protect our Iman, and gain happiness and prosperity in both worlds we must avoid sins altogether. We should get into the habit of renewing our repentance and keeping ourselves constantly engaged in good works as best as we can to expiate for our sins. The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said,

“All the sons of Adam are sinners and the best among the sinners are those who repent.” (Ahmad and others)

12- Negligence of Good Deeds

The majority of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'a scholars agreed that good deeds are essential for the preservation and well-being of Iman. If Iman is confessed by the tongue and affirmed by belief in

the heart but it is not followed by good actions confirming it such as: prayers, fast, giving Zakat, ... etc. then this Iman is weak, fruitless, and ineffective. The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, said,

“Iman is seventy and some branches, the highest of which is saying “la illaha illallah” (There is no god save Allah). And the lowest of it is to remove something harmful from the road. [Muslim, Abu Dawud and Nasa’i]. In Al-Bukhari version he added: “And Hay’a (modesty) is a part of Iman.”

The *Hadeeth* states that good deeds are branches of Iman. The testimony that: “*There is no god save Allah*” is the most magnificent and the most superior of all branches of Iman. Removing harmful obstacles from the road is the lowest part of Iman. The degree of importance of other good deeds lies in between these two i.e. the Shahadah and removing obstacle from the road.

Iman Wears Out:

Iman decreases due to negligence of good deeds. Iman goes through high and low levels. The Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, told that Al-Iman wears out in everyone of you like a garment wears out. And he advised Muslims to ask Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, to continue renewing their Iman in their hearts.

It is the duty of every Muslim to hasten to strengthen his Iman by striving in good deeds and improving his conduct by acquiring high qualities. Neglecting good deeds lead to the loss of Iman and Allah's blessings as well. Surat *Al-Asr* says:

- 1. By the time!**
- 2. Surely man is in loss,**
- 3. Except those who have Iman and do good, and exhort one another to Truth, and exhort one another to patience.**

Passing of time causes many people to suffer great losses in the two worlds because they are unaware of their final destination and goals in life. Only those whose Iman is followed with good deeds; and encourage one another to stick to the Truth, and exercise patience will be saved.

The Messenger of Allah, sallallahu `alayhi wa-sallam, promoted the Believer to strive in good deeds to save himself from said :

“Be prompt in doing good deeds (before you are overtaken) by turmoil which would be like a part of the dark night. During (that stormy period) a man would be a Muslim in the morning and an unbeliever in the evening or he would be a believer in the evening and an unbeliever in the morning, and would sell his faith for worldly goods.”

[Muslim]

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- 7- Al-Iman Wa Al-Hayah, Dr. Yuosef Al-Qaradawi - (Arabic).
- 8- Hayaa is a Branch of Iman, Dr. Muhammed Mutwalli - (Arabic).

Test Your Knowledge

- Q1. What does Iman mean in Arabic and Islamic terminology?
- Q2. Explain the meaning of the Hadeeth.
- Q3. What is the difference between Islam and Iman?
- Q4. Is every Muslim a Believer ?
- Q5. Could Iman survive without good deeds, in the light of the Hadeeth ?
- Q6, Does this Hadeeth support the opinion of those who think Iman is just believing in heart?
- Q7. This Hadeeth says that Iman consists of more than sixty branches; another Hadeeth says that Iman consists of more than seventy branches. How can you remove the apparent inconsistency between the two traditions?
- Q8. What is the meaning of Haya'?
- Q9. Why does the Hadeeth specify Haya' from amongst all other good qualities that Islam calls for?
- Q10. Could Haya' be translated as Shyness? And why?
- Q11. What is the highest rank of Haya' ? How can we reach this rank of Haya'?
- Q12. What are the lessons we learn from the Hadeeth.

Books of the Author

Published

- 1- The Islamic Concept of God in the light of the greatest verse in Quran (Ayat-UI-Kursi) -Second Edition - Revised
- 2- Sincerity and Our Deeds - Second Edition - Revised
- 3- The True Muslim - First Edition
- 4- Giving Da'wah to Non-Moslems - First Edition
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3. Evidences of Mohammad's Prophethood
4. The Beautiful Names of Allah
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6. Watching Our Tongues
7. Oppression and its Evil Consequences
8. The Power of Duaa'
9. Repentance ... Returning back to Allah
10. The Day of Judgment

Respected Dear Readers

Please pray for forgiveness and mercy of Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, for the author, her parents, her family, all Muslims, particularly the misfortunate and the less privileged around the world.

I constantly pray to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, to bring Muslims from darkness to light, to cover our faults and mistakes in this life, and forgive us for them in the Next life, to seal our work with the best good deeds, and let the best of our days be the day when we shall meet with Him, and make the best part of our lives the end of it.

I also pray to Allah, Subhanahu Wata'la, from all my heart to accept this work and make it sincerely for His sake.

***“Say : Truly, my prayers, my services of sacrifice, my life, and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. There is no partners with him. This am I commanded, and I am the first of Moslems (of those who submit to His will)”
(Quran 6- 162, 163)***

And let the last of our prayers be All praises are due to Allah the Lord of all the worlds»

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