

Islamic Doctrines Simplified



Chapter 1

Introduction

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful."

Holy Qur'an (1:1)

This phrase is spoken millions of times every day! Is this not amazing?

Not only is this benediction repeated a MINIMUM of 20 times each day by every Muslim as he says his daily prayers, but it is expressed many more times each day by Muslims at the beginning of meetings, lectures, speeches and social gatherings. Consider that there are more than one billion Muslims in our world today and realize how many times this one phrase is uttered. That's amazing!

What does it mean? Who is Allah? What does He do that makes us to begin every task, every thought, every action in His name? How can we know Him? How can we see His signs? How can we understand what He wants from us?

This booklet, the first of a series, gives us some answers to these and many other questions that arise in our hearts everyday about Allah, Most High.

We pray that this booklet will help our dear readers and that it will guide them on their journey through life to accomplish their task of obeying the Will of Allah in every aspect of their behaviour.

With Allah comes success.

Al-Balagh Foundation

Chapter 2

Allah, Our Lord

If we see a beautiful picture painted on good canvas, do we not think that an artist produced it?

If we see an automatic machine, regularly manufacturing articles, are we not led to think that there is an engineer who made, designed and invented its system?

If we see a book written in any scientific field, surely we are aware that an author wrote it?

Surely the picture could not have been created without an artist!

Surely the machine could not work without an engineer!

Surely the book could not be written without an author!

Is it possible to say that this book in your hand was written by chance? Would you believe it if someone told you that it happened that the paper was scattered by wind, and ink was spilt on it, and thus the book was written?

Basic human sense does not believe such a supposition but rather, makes fun of it.

Thus everything needs a maker or a creator; nothing can come into existence without there being an originator: the creator.

Look at the sky and do you not wonder how the bright and beautiful sun sends down its light and heat to the people on earth? Look at the land upon which we live and ask how do plants grow on it?

Look at the water we drink, the air we breathe; the sun when it sets and the night when it comes; then, look at the beautiful stars which are impossible to count, and the light of the moon.

Look, and then think how were these wonders created and who then created them? Are they created by themselves or do they have a creator who made them?

They are as in need of a maker or a creator, as a house which needs a builder to be built; or a chair, on which we sit, needs a carpenter to be

made; or a picture needs an artist in order to be painted, or a book needs an author to be written. And certainly Allah is their Creator and Maker Who created everything.

Let us ponder about ourselves and our bodies, and ask:

Who created us in this unique way?

Who gave us two eyes with which to see?

And the tongue with which we talk?

And two hands with which we work?

And two legs with which we walk?

And two ears with which we hear?

Who created the food we eat and the water we drink?

Not the farmer who cultivated the crops nor the plumber who connected the pipes.

Without food and water, one will surely die.

Who gave us the air which we breathe?

Without air, surely we will suffocate and die.

Indeed, our Creator is He Who created the heavens, the earth, water, air and the stars. And He is All-Great and All-Powerful. It is He Who created and provided us with all these amenities of life.

Chapter 3

Thanking the Creator

If one of your parents or relatives gives you a present, surely you will be happy and thank them for it. Any one who does good to us deserves our gratitude and should be thanked for his goodness and favour.

We are given many favours from our parents who bring us up and who spend nights awake for our sake; from our teachers, who educate us and impart good manners, from our friends who give us their help. We thank these people and accept their favours and kindness. We consider it a virtue to do good, and in return we praise them for their goodness.

Then do we not think our Creator, Who created us and provided us with our parents and gave us so many blessings, deserves many thanks and worship from us?

It is Allah and He Who alone created us, Who provides for us and blesses us and it is to Him and Him alone for Whom should be reserved the ultimate praise.

Anyone who fails in his duty and neither worships Allah nor thanks Him can only be arrogant and evil.

No sane person can reject goodness and be ungrateful towards One Who provides favours, offers help and is merciful towards him.

My Lord! Inspire me to thank You for Your Favour which You bestowed upon me and on my parents, that I may do righteousness such as will please You.

Chapter 4

Allah's Love

You have seen how a mother embraces and suckles her little baby, how she expresses her feelings towards the infant. She does this due to her love and emotion for the baby.

You will also have seen how birds care for their young, how they bring food and water and put morsels in their mouths. They protect their young if they are attacked by other birds, by a snake or by other predators.

And even though they suffer as a consequence, birds surely love their young, show them great mercy and forbid evil being committed against them. This kind of mercy that fathers, mothers, and people generally, as well as animals, show within themselves, is from the Almighty Allah. It is He Who created such compassion and it is He Who instilled in animals how to love their young.

Allah bestows mercy into the souls of humans and animals. He is the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful, showing His love for all His creatures. He created love and mercy in the soul so that people and animals may have compassion for each other. Verily His love and mercy to us is far more than can be bestowed by our parents and families.

It is He Who created and provided us with the amenities for life on earth including the necessities for the time we were in our mother's womb.

He sent us the prophets to teach us the right path, to keep us far from evil and corruption, so we may enter paradise and be saved from fire and torment.

Surely He is the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful; constantly demonstrating His love and His sympathy for His creatures. In return, we should love our Creator by thanking and worshipping Him. He Who has such love and mercy for us deserves great praise and gratitude.

Chapter 5

The Oneness of Allah

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

"Say: He is Allah, the One and Only Allah, the Eternal, Absolute. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like Him."

Holy Qur'an (112:1-4)

During the time of ignorance in the pre-Islamic period (Jahiliyah), polytheists used to worship idols which they themselves made out of iron, stone, wood and other materials. They believed that the idols themselves had the ability to provide, give benefit and inflict harm. They would offer presents or carry out sacrifices for their idols, whom they asked to meet their needs. For instance, the sick would ask to be cured, the poor for sustenance and childless couples for a child.

The people at that time were polytheists, who worshipped other than Allah; Who thus sent Prophet Muhammad [s][1] to bid them to stop adoring idols and tell them that these statues were merely stones, which could neither benefit nor harm them.

The above-mentioned surah (chapter) of the Holy Qur'an was sent down to explain to people that the only god whom they should worship is the One God and there is no god save Him. It is He alone Who creates, provides, gives life and causes death, and it is He towards Whom people should turn for help.

Indeed Allah is not like any other creature; He has neither father nor mother, nor wife nor children. It is people who are in need of a father, mother and children because they themselves are created and have needs to produce young. Some are similar to others, but Allah the Creator is One and has no equal.

None of Allah's creatures are like Him. He, Who alone is Ever-Lasting and All-Powerful. It is He Who creates, provides and knows everything,

no one can be characterised with such great attributes except Him. It is He alone Who deserves praise, obedience, and thanks.

Notes:

[1] [s] is an abbreviation for an Arabic phrase "sallallahu aleihi wa alihi wa salam" meaning "peace be upon him and his holy family". It is recommended for all Muslim's to invoke this salutation when mentioning the name of Apostle Muhammad [s] or referring to him.

Chapter 6

The Bestower of Provision

Allah, the Almighty says:

"Surely Allah is the Bestower of provision, Lord of Power, the Almighty".

Holy Qur'an (52:58)

People, birds, fish, animals, insects and reptiles are all creatures, which need food, air and water. Allah has bestowed His sustenance on each and every creature on earth and all must work and search for their provision.

Allah, the Most High says:

"And He set on the earth firm mountains standing above its surface, and He blessed the earth and measured therein nourishment for all things, in four periods: in accordance with the needs of the seekers".

Holy Qur'an (41:10)

People are the seekers of sustenance, for food, water and money, on this earth. In our organized society we get them through working in different fields such as: agriculture, industry, cattle-rearing, commerce and other kinds of employment such as carpentry, science, medicine, engineering, tailoring, etc.

Consider the food which you eat at every meal and think from where it came?

The vegetables, grain, fruit, meat, fish, poultry, milk, eggs or dairy products and so on.

Who brought forth the crops which farmers grow to be processed into delicious food?

Who created animals whose flesh may be cooked to give us sustenance, or from which milk is obtained?

Only our Creator is the Maker of provisions for us on this earth. And surely, to gain these we need to work. Indeed prophets themselves have striven for the sake of obtaining sustenance.

Prophet Moses [a][2] used to graze cattle and so did Prophet David [a]. Prophet Noah [a] worked as a carpenter, as did Prophet Muhammad [s], who also used to graze cattle, and who worked in commerce in Mecca for a certain time.

The acquisition of provision needs supplies, demand and surety. Allah has provided such basic requirements as oxygen, sunlight and rain in order that land can be irrigated, plants cultivated and animals reared. For man to survive and be healthy and strong in both body and mind he needs to think, work and to organise his life around him.

Those Deprived

Allah's blessings upon us are numerous and uncountable. He provides basic provisions and favours for all mankind. So why, it can be asked, do we see that some poor people starve, and have no material benefits or dwellings? Verily the reason behind this can be seen very clearly.

At one end of the scale, some people are lazy and have no inclination to work for the sake of earning their provision. And indeed Allah dislikes them.

At the other end of the scale, some people behave as oppressors and tyrants, amassing fortunes out of their own greed and not for the good of society. They use the poor and needy for their own ends and neglect their welfare.

This is despite the fact that Allah has made it obligatory to help the poor so that no one remains in need.

Therefore, the real reason for people's poverty in most cases is the deprivation of their rights by the rich, upon whom Allah has placed responsibility to alleviate their burden.

Surely Allah is the Bestower of Provision, the Lord of Power, the Almighty.

[2] [a] is an abbreviation for the Arabic phrase "aleihi/aleiha/ aleihim salam" meaning "peace be upon him/her/them". It is recommended for all Muslims to invoke this salutation when mentioning the names of the fourteen members of the Ahlul Bayt [a] or any of the prophets, messengers or pure saints [a].

Allah, the Omniscient

Allah, the Almighty, says:

"Say: Do you instruct Allah about your religion? But Allah knows all that is in the heavens and on the earth; Allah is Knowing of all things'.

Holy Qur'an (49:16)

When we look at an airplane, we are aware that the engineers who designed must it have had great knowledge and understanding of aerodynamics and other fields of science to make it fly in the sky. Without such capabilities, the achievement could never have been accomplished.

If you read an interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, you will realise that he who wrote and composed it was a scholar of Islamic theology. Otherwise he would be unable to produce such a great book.

A man suffers with his sight and is unable to see. And then a doctor cures him. His eyes recover, so he becomes able to see again. What can you say concerning this doctor?

Surely that he has knowledge regarding medicine, otherwise he would not have been able to treat such a patient.

You will recognize that these achievements indicate the ability of scientists who have knowledge and skill in their field.

In that case, what can we say about the creation of man, his body, mind and vision, which he has been given? It can only be concluded that He Who created man and gave him this wisdom is Allah, the Almighty, Who knows all things.

"Read! In the name of your Lord Who created. Created man of a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Bountiful, who taught man what he knew not... "

Holy Qur'an (96:1-5)

Now think and further ponder about the creation of the heavens, the earth, the seas and the stars. Do not these indicate that He Who created

them is Omniscient? Indeed they demonstrate for all to know that He Who created them has ultimate knowledge and acquaintance of existence.

Otherwise He would not have been able to make and create them.

"Indeed, their creator can only be Omniscient, the Able One".

We realise that scientists, engineers and designers who make aeroplanes, televisions, and cars, and doctors with medical knowledge, have gained and learned their subjects through schools, books and research. But their vast knowledge is limited and they are not able to know everything or even have in-depth understanding in several fields.

An engineer, who makes aeroplanes, is not familiar with the medical sciences, and eye-specialists have no knowledge of curing stomach sickness or heart complaints. It should also be noted that scientists and doctors depend upon tests and experiments before an invention can be developed, or a patient diagnosed. Their knowledge is based upon what has previously been learnt from higher knowledge that can come only from Allah.

Reading these examples, one is automatically led to understand that Allah's knowledge differs immensely from that of people.

And it is obvious that Allah, the Almighty, is Omniscient and needs no one to teach Him. It is He Who teaches man.

Allah the Omniscient knows everything in the heavens, what is on the earth and what is in the depths of seas.

Verily He knows the unseen, what will happen tomorrow, after tomorrow and in the distant future, because He is the Creator of man and all creatures altogether. He knows what is known, what will be known and what never will be known by man because He created them, knowing everything in them, like an engineer who knows the machine which he himself made.

Allah knows what is going on in the human soul, though He speaks not. He knows all secrets and whatever man does of good and bad deeds.

There are no mysteries for the Omniscient regarding what man does not understand about the world, about its atmosphere and about its life: why there is tranquillity, why there is war; how many different species make up a harmonious planet and what causes disaster and destruction.

Chapter 8

Allah's Wisdom

"O mankind, the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord; so believe, it is better for you. And if you disbelieve, to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise."

Holy Qur'an (4:170)

We have spoken about birds and how they care for their young and protect them from attack by predators.

You have also seen how they build their nests in distant and remote places as a safeguard. Different creatures respond in various ways to danger, like a mouse which automatically runs away when it sees a cat. But who taught them this behaviour?

Animals are neither able to think nor understand in a way similar to humans. But Allah, Who created them, has provided them with natural knowledge, the instinct to reproduce, to fear uncertain situations and threats, to know their enemies, where to build their homes, and numerous other abilities, differing according to their needs.

It is an impulse which exists in them, which certainly, Allah, the Almighty created, so that animals can live and guard their lives, and without which they would be unable to survive.

Certain animals, such as the chameleon, are even able to change colours according to the place in which they live in order to hide themselves so that those wanting to prey on them cannot distinguish them from the plants and stones around them.

For man, Allah the Most High created the thumb on our hands and made it parallel to four fingers. This thumb is made of two joints and without its styling, man would not be able to catch anything nor do many other tasks. Progress in different fields would be strictly limited but for the unique system given to the hand. All these wonders are the result of Allah's wisdom. He is All-Wise. The meaning of wisdom is

having sound judgement in using knowledge. Allah does not work in vain and without reason or purpose for what He creates.

Everything created is for the sake of this existence and nothing is defective as He never creates anything incomplete.

Therefore we say: 'Surely, Allah is All-Wise" because He created all for the use, and in the interests of, His creation.

To Allah belongs what is in the East and the West.

Chapter 9

The Just

Truly Allah created mankind on this earth, giving people wisdom with which to think, and to differentiate right from wrong, and to know useful things from harmful ones, and having the ability to do good or evil. Thus man is able to worship Allah, pray, fast, help the poor, reconcile among people in case of a conflict, behave well towards his parents, relatives and neighbours and do other good deeds.

All these actions can be distinguished as good and righteous as opposed to bad, through man's use of his mind.

On the one hand, man is able to do good deeds, and on the other hand he is able to do evil and wicked ones. He is able to steal, lie, cheat, kill, hurt people, disbelieve in Allah, and obey the oppressor, while his wisdom is able to differentiate that these actions are wicked and evil.

Man can do good or evil deeds through his own will and choice and he himself decides between the two. Allah gave him this ability so it is up to man how he behaves.

Allah, the Almighty, bids man to do good and pious deeds and forbids him to commit wicked and evil actions.

Thus, He sent the prophets to mankind to make clear to people what is bad and harmful and what is forbidden. He also clarified for them what is useful and lawful and obligatory for people to follow. Verily, the Almighty, will charge us on the Day of Resurrection regarding our deeds which we do in our life. Those who do evil and disobey Him are cast into hell and those who do good and obey Him enter the Garden of Paradise.

Surely Allah in His wisdom and justice does not make the doer of good and evil equal.

According to their deeds, each will be either rewarded or punished on Judgement Day.

Among Allah's justice is that He does not place any burden upon a person, which is beyond their ability to bear. For instance, no sick or old

person will be blamed for not fasting because it would harm their health. Obligations, however, are quite modest, like prayer being only five short duties a day, which virtually no one should find difficult to perform.

O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Progeny.

Chapter 10

Prophethood

Who is a Prophet?

A Prophet is a human being whom Allah chooses among His people and teaches him through the Angel Gabriel [a]. Each has been sent to mankind, at a particular time, to guide the people to religion.

Attributes of a Prophet:

When Allah chooses to send a Messenger to people to instruct and teach them to put trust in One God, to worship Him and do good deeds, the person selected should be the noblest in thought, speech, deeds and behaviour, so that people believe, respect and trust him. Therefore, prophets altogether are characterised with good morals and virtues, foresight, intelligence, exemplary behaviour and doing good deeds in their communities.

Prophet Muhammad [s], like other prophets, had these exemplary attributes, which is why people called him, both before and after being called to prophethood, "the truthful and honest one". He was sent for all people and the Holy Qur'an was revealed through him to teach the Islamic religion, which was conveyed to mankind to guide them on the right path.

The Need for Prophets

Allah created man on this earth and provided him with all his needs. He also gave him wisdom. Yet it is necessary for man to know the purpose of his existence and his Lord Who created and provided for him. In return, it is also necessary for him to thank his Creator for the blessings He bestowed upon him, how to praise and worship the Almighty and carry out his duties.

Man himself lives in communities which themselves need love, co-operation, cleanliness, justice, knowing-the truth and helping the poor, as well as harbouring things which are harmful and evil like gambling, falsehood, murder, stealing, accepting falsehood and being oppressive.

These are the indispensable facts that people must know in order to lead them to an honourable and pious life.

Allah loves His creatures and desires for them goodness, therefore He sent them prophets from among them to teach all these things as a guide towards goodness and righteousness:

1. The prophets teach people that Allah is One and there is no god besides Him.
2. The prophets teach people how to worship Allah through following certain obligations placed upon them, like prayer, fasting, performing pilgrimage (hajj)... etc.
3. They teach man how to live with each other on the basis of love, fraternity and co-operation.
4. They forbid them against committing harmful deeds.
5. Allah surely sent the prophets so that man could not pretend to have the excuse on Resurrection Day that he was unfamiliar with his religious duty, nor Allah sent any messages for him, nor any instructions.
6. Consequently, the prophets are like leading lights for mankind, acting as reformers.

Chapter 11

Prophet Muhammad [s]

"Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the prophets..."

Holy Qur'an (33:40)

Allah sent Prophet Muhammad [s] as a Messenger to all mankind and revealed through him the Holy Qur'an.

It was the Angel Gabriel [a], who brought the holy verses of the Qur'an to the Prophet by reciting parts until it was completed, which took twenty three years.

Allah tells us through the Holy Qur'an that Prophet Muhammad [s] is the last, and the seal, of all the prophets, that no prophet will come after him. The religion conveyed to the whole of mankind is Islam, being the seal of all religions.

Allah sent various prophets, whose number is reckoned to be one hundred and twenty four thousand, in order to guide and teach people their religion, in each period of time. So Allah, the Most Exalted, did not leave His servants without any messenger to advise them of their duties and the divine path to follow.

The first prophet whom Allah sent down to people was Adam [a], the father of all mankind, and the last Prophet sent was Prophet Muhammad [s]. The Holy Qur'an mentions the names of only the great prophets but not all the others. It quotes the names of twenty five: Adam, Idris, Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, Abraham, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob, Shu'aib, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Job, Dhul Kifl, Jonah, Elias, Zacharia, John, Jesus, Muhammad (May Allah's blessings be upon them all).

Muslims believe in all the messengers sent by Allah culminating with Prophet Muhammad [s], the last Prophet, who brought forth Islam, the ultimate religion. Allah, therefore, does not accept any religion other than Islam and the followers of Prophet Muhammad [s].

Chapter 12

Miracles

Allah sent the prophets to teach people their religion, guide them towards righteous deeds and forbid them to do evil and spread corruption. But most people did not believe them. Instead, they asked for some evidence to prove their truthfulness and prophethood.

Thus, Allah bestowed upon His prophets certain powers which were difficult or impossible for others to perform. This was to make people realize that such things were the work of Allah and could only happen because of His Omnipotence.

Allah is the One Who makes miracles.

The miracles of the prophets include:

The Miracle of the Prophet Abraham [a]: When he called his people to give up their idols and to worship Allah, they disbelieved him and their ruthless king decided to burn him. After collecting firewood and putting Abraham [a] in the middle, they set it on fire. The fire remained burning for a long period, but Abraham [a] was not burnt as he was saved by Allah's permission and Omnipotence.

Abraham [a] came out of this fire alive instead of being burnt to ashes. Yet, how was he saved against such fire? Only by a miracle performed by Allah to let people know that Abraham [a] was a messenger of the Almighty.

Another miracle is that concerning Prophet Muhammad [s] and his midnight journey to the seven heavens. His means were not by any form of transport, only the Omnipotence of Allah made him transcend. Another miracle of Prophet Muhammad [s] is the Holy Qur'an sent down to him by Allah, the Most High. It is impossible for others to compose anything like it, not even a single sentence of the profound text, neither during the Prophet's lifetime nor afterwards.

People, therefore, on hearing this great miracle (the Qur'an) not only believed him but also believed that it could only be the Word of Allah

and not of man. If it was not so, other people could surely write something like it. But being Allah's, no one can bring anything to resemble the Qur'an. Only Allah, the Exalted.

Miracles are something extraordinary which no one is capable of doing and Allah specifies that the miracles of His prophets are only to make people trust and believe them.

Chapter 13

The Everlasting Miracle

All the prophets' miracles, which they brought to their people, were immediate examples. They were temporary for certain people, except the miracle of the Holy Qur'an, which remains perpetual and everlasting for all. It can neither disappear nor be altered. It is protected by Allah's permission. The Holy Qur'an will remain safe till the end of mankind. Allah, the Almighty, says:

'Surely We have sent down the Reminder (Qur'an) and We will most surely be its guardian.'

Holy Qur'an (15:9)

Allah, the Most Exalted, preserves it and no one can change it by bringing any chapters or verses, attempting to alter Allah's words. It was brought through Prophet Muhammad until eternity for all mankind.

As Prophet Muhammad [s] is the Seal of all prophets and no prophet will come after him, his message perfected all previous messages. It is everlasting for all mankind, with its principles for everyone to learn from its goodness and righteousness, to know the right path and believe and worship Allah alone, associating no one with Him.

Chapter 14

Imamate

Islam pays particular importance to leadership (*Imamate*). During the Prophet's glorious life, he himself was the leader and chief of the Muslims, in addition to his being a Prophet and a preacher of Allah, the Most High.

Allah, the Almighty says:

"Only Allah, your Guardian and His Messenger and those who have faith, those who keep up prayer and pay poor-rates (zakat) while they bow."[3]

Holy Qur'an (5:55)

Many scholars and other exegetes and compilers of the Prophet's traditions, among them Zamakhshari and Wahidi, have stated that this verse was revealed in favour of Imam Ali [a], and declares his appointment by making it clear that he is the vicegerent of Muslims. The Messenger of Allah [s], on his farewell pilgrimage, when holding Imam Ali's hand told ten thousand Muslims who were present there: *"Do I not have more authority over you than you on yourselves?"* When they replied: *"Yes, surely"*, then the Holy Prophet declared: *"O faithful! For whomever I am his master and the authority whom he obeys: Ali will be his master. O Allah! Be friendly towards the friends of Ali; help those who help him, and hinder those who hinder him, and may the truth always be with him."*[4]

This opinion is further supported by the Messenger's sermon: *"I leave two great, precious things among you, the Book of Allah and my Household (Ahlul Bayt). If you keep hold of both of them, you will never go astray after me. One of them is greater than the other the Book of Allah is like a rope hanging from heaven to earth. The other is my Family and Household. Remember these two will never be separated from each other until they encounter me at Kawther (in Paradise)."*

The followers of this opinion thus see that the Imamate concerned is only Imam Ali [a] and his infallible progeny.

Leadership Qualities:

It is clear that an Islamic state and Muslim communities are in need of a just Islamic government led by a just (president) who sets up correct laws and preserves the interests of Muslims. Indeed, the existence of an Islamic state headed by an Imam (leader) committed to Islamic principles is not only a necessity but is also a legal obligation. It is the duty of Muslims to strive for the establishment of an Islamic state, led by a just Imam, following the principles of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (*sunnah*) so that Muslims can live in its protective shadow of security, happiness and prosperity.

Characteristics of a Muslim Imam (leader) are:

1. He should be familiar with Islamic rules, legislation and laws.
2. He should be just, God-fearing, pious, and adhere to Islam.
3. He should be adequate to run Muslim affairs politically, socially, economically ... etc.

Adopting an Islamic system with all its obligations, needs a deep and accurate knowledge and a clear assimilation of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions. Such cannot be achieved unless the Imam is a jurist-prudent with extensive understanding of Islamic laws.

To be just is also an essential prerequisite for the Imam in order to keep away corruption and deviation.

Allah, the Almighty, says:

"And do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the Fire touches you..."

Holy Qur'an (11:113)

And also says:

"... and if any fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah has revealed, they are (no better than) the infidels."

[3] While Imam Ali [a] was in prayer in the Holy Prophet's Mosque in Madina, a man came seeking charity. No one took any notice and he was about to leave disappointed when Imam Ali [a] pointed his finger towards him while he was bowing in prayer. The man took the ring from the Imam's finger. While this was happening in the Mosque, this verse was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad [s].

[4] Sunan ibn Maja / Merits of Imam Ali [a]

Chapter 15

Life After Death

Allah created man and fashioned him for set tasks. In the same manner He created plants and animals. But if man or animals die, surely Allah is able to give them life as surely as He created them in the first instance.

Surely all men die, and just as surely Allah gives them life with His ability, and judges them on their deeds and actions. We know Allah is the Creator and can recreate us, because if one can do something he has the ability to do it again.

For instance, if your teacher asks you to draw a picture on the black-board and colour it. Then if after you have drawn it with beautiful colours, the teacher asks you to rub it out and do it again, could you repeat the same drawing again?

Of course you would be able to repeat the picture. It is what you created and are capable of doing again.

From this example, we can understand Allah is Able to give life to the dead because it is He Who created them in the beginning. Allah can surely give life to the dead. He judges them on their deeds. On Resurrection Day He will re-create the dead for judgement, and then allow the doer of good to enter paradise but cast the evil-doer into hell.

As it is said: "Surely Allah gives life to the dead."

Chapter 16

Allah's Capability

Allah, the Most High, says:

"Or the like of him (Uzair) who passed by a town, in ruins to the very roofs. He said: 'How will Allah (ever) give it life after its death?' So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life. He (Allah) said: 'How long have you tarried?' He said: 'I have tarried a day, or a part of a day'. Said He: 'No! you have tarried a hundred years; but look at your food and drink - years have not passed over it. And look at your ass! And that We may make you a sign to people, and took further at the bones, how We bring them together, and clothe them with flesh; so when it became clear to him, he said: 'I know that Allah is All-Powerful over all things."

Holy Qur'an (2: 259)

In the above verse, the Holy Qur'an tells us the story of a prophet, who when riding his donkey, passed by a town in which all the inhabitants had long ago died and their dwellings were in ruins. Then, he started asking himself how could it be possible for Allah to re-create those dead people and give them life. He doubted Allah's capability in this.

Therefore, Allah wanted to make clear His capability both to him and his people. So, He caused the prophet to die at the beginning of the day and remain there with his donkey as being dead for a hundred years. Then He brought him back to life at the end of that day.

Upon being resurrected, he was asked how long he had been remained dead. At first, he thought that he had slept only a day or a part of a day, but he was told that he had tarried for a hundred years, but he should look at his food and his donkey.

Then he looked at his food; he found it fresh and unchanged but he did not understand. This proof showed Allah's ability because the food would have been spoiled if it had remained for more than a day. It could only remain fresh for one hundred years by power beyond man's capability.

Then he looked at his donkey, and he saw that it had long ago died and its bones were scattered. Wild animals had eaten its flesh as it decomposed, during a hundred years.

Allah wanted to demonstrate His ability to give life to the dead and so He returned the bones to their proper positions and flesh appeared on them as before. Life was restored to the donkey once more.

Seeing this divine miracle the Prophet said: *"Surely I know now that Allah is All-Powerful over everything, but I wanted proof of Allah's greatness, and His capability in re-creating the dead."*

"And guard yourselves against the Day on which you shall be returned to Allah."

Chapter 17

The Hereafter

If we look at a land upon which rain never falls, not even a drop, we consider that land barren, an empty desert. But if rain falls upon it or some other water reaches it, after a short time, we will see it changing, plants will grow. It would become a beautiful sight.

Who would have caused plants to grow and give life to this dead land?

Certainly, it is more than just water: It is He who gives life, Allah, the Almighty. It leads to thinking that He who can make plants grow out of dead soil has the capability to re-create man after his death.

It is clear that man has no existence before being fashioned in his mother's womb i.e. he was 'dead', then Allah created him by giving life. He Who created him for the first time is also able to re-create him after his death again.

Once, a polytheist came to Prophet Muhammad [s], carrying in his hand a bone from an old camel, and said: "How will your Lord re-create this rotting bone?" Then, Allah revealed through His Prophet the following answer:

*"Says he: Who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?
Say: He will give life to them Who brought them into existence the first time, for He is well-versed in of all creation.*

Holy Qur'an (36:78-79)

Thus, we know that He Who creates our world can certainly re-create the Hereafter.

Allah, the Most Glorious, gives life to people after their death and judges them on their deeds. Whoever does good deeds, Allah will allow him to enter Paradise and live there happy ever after, but whoever does evil deeds and disobeys Him, He will cast him/her into hell to live there tormented.

Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the dawn, from the evil of what he was created.

Chapter 18

Paradise And Hell

Whoever does evil, he shall not be recompensed (with aught) but the like of it, and does good, male and female, and is a faithful, these shall enter the Garden, in which they shall be given sustenance without measure."

Holy Qur'an (40:40)

"And (as for) those who reject Our signs and turn away from them haughtily - these are the inhabitants of the Fire, dwelling there forever."

Holy Qur'an (7:36)

We mentioned in the previous chapter the world of the Hereafter... and we know that Allah, the Almighty, will give life to the dead on Resurrection Day. Souls will return to their bodies and people will be judged according to their deeds.

Man's existence in the Hereafter will be similar to his life in the present world. He will eat, drink, be happy or sad, think of and remember things which he did in his previous life.

Chapter 19

Paradise

Paradise is the dwelling place for the obedient believers of Allah in the Hereafter.

Indeed, Allah has described for us life in Paradise by saying:

Surely the Paradise which He created for His obedient servants is as wide as the width of the heavens and the earth. In it there will be trees and fruits, of which their abundance will not be curtailed; springs flowing with delicious liquids such as nectar and ginger; rivers flowing with pure sweet water, honey and milk; different kinds of foods and meats, which mankind likes and enjoys.

There will exist everything which the believers desire, including beautiful sights and views that are a comforting to the hearts.

Their dwellings will be beautiful: great palaces and elegant mansions, furnished with exquisite carpet with various decorations.

There, the believers, with their companions, will sit on comfortable chairs. In their meetings, they will exchange conversation with each other, giving thanks and praise to Allah, the Almighty. They will be content with the blessings and peace that Allah has bestowed upon them. Their clothes will be made of luxurious green silk, and they will have bracelets of gold and silver.

Everything that exists in Paradise, including food, drink and palaces, has no equal or likeness in our present world.

In Paradise, there will be neither summer heat nor winter cold; neither is there day or night.

The dwellers will not suffer from illness nor be hurt nor sad. There will be no enmity or problems occurring among the dwellers. Thus, they will live in happiness, love and bliss and be served by servants the like of whom are not found on this earth.

Therefore, the dwellers of Paradise will live in blissful peace as a result of their righteous deeds and their sincerity to Allah, the Most High.

Life in Paradise will be everlasting. Thus man never dies there nor is transferred to another world.

Chapter 20

Hell

Hell is the dwelling place for the disobedient servant of Allah in the Hereafter.

Verily, the justice of Allah, the Most Glorious, is that He will treat every man according to his or her deeds. While the dwellers of Paradise have earned their destiny as a result of their righteous deeds, the corrupted and disobedient have their recompense in Hell where they will be imprisoned like a criminal jailed in this world. Some, such as disbelievers and polytheists will remain there forever; others will remain for long periods those who believed in Allah but disobeyed Him or committed crimes, or sins such as giving up praying.

Allah, the Most Glorious, describes the life in the Hereafter: Surely the dwellers of Hell will be tormented with unimaginable kinds of punishment which cannot be described. There is no likeness of such torment and suffering in our present world. They will be bound with long chains and cast into a blazing fire; such fire cannot be found in this world. This fire will blaze forever, guarded by angels. The food of the inhabitants will be made of zaqqum tree oil (a cursed tree growing in Hell's lowest depths); their drink will be boiling water, they will be forced to drink the filthy pus oozing from their bodies - the result of intense punishment. There, such people will wish to die to cease their suffering but will find none to save them from such punishment. Allah will keep them alive and suffering, and whenever their skins are burned away, they will be replaced by another to be burned afresh.

Surely, the dwellers of Hell will cry out from the intense punishment but will find none to help. There is no escape and instead it will be said to them: 'Fie! You have no right to say a word.'

Chapter 21

Need to Worship

The Almighty Allah has said:

And I have not created the jinn and the people except that they should worship Me."

Holy Qur'an (51:56)

"... there is no god but I; therefore worship Me (only) and keep up prayer in My remembrance."

Holy Qur'an (20:14)

Whoever thinks and ponders about this world and Allah's blessings will recognize not only the Greatness of the Creator and His might, but also the great favours of Allah, the Most High, has bestowed upon man. Intellect, hearing, seeing, and endurance are but a few attributes. He prepared this earth for man with all its contents. He made everything in this life suitable and helpful to him, such as the sun, and the moon, and stars, the land and the sea, heat, and cold, humidity, air, food, water, animals and plants.

When thinking of Allah's greatness and His blessings, one recognizes the following:

Allah is certainly the Creator and the Owner of all creation.

He is the Manager and the Director of everything in this world, including plants, stars, land, man and animals... etc.

He is the Bestower of blessings upon man.

This knowledge makes us grateful to our Creator for creating us and bestowing His blessings upon us. Human sense and inner consciousness dictate it is obligatory to thank the benefactor. Therefore whosoever bestows any favours upon us or does us any goodness deserves our thanks and glorifying.

Indeed, Allah, the Most Glorious, is the source of all goodness and blessings. Among His great blessings upon us is that He created us and brought us into existence out of nothing. He gave us everything we need

in this life, consequently He deserves the greatest thanks and worshipping.

Thus, one of the motives behind our worship of Him is because of His blessings upon us. Such benevolence should be met with gratitude, so we thank Him through our hearts and tongues and obey Him through our deeds.

We know that the All-Capable Creator has indeed created our world and the Hereafter. The Hereafter will be the world of judgement; of reward and punishment. We pray we will be worthy of Paradise and its blessings. So, worshipping and obeying Allah is not a choice, it is obligatory. It is the cause of saving man from punishment and torment. Man, when fearing any danger or harm, strives with all his might to save himself from such a threat, and certainly there can be no more important fate to prevent than the threat of Hell.

Surely, if man recognises Allah and believes in Him, his heart will be filled with love of Him, he will want to befriend Him and have a growing attachment to Him. Indeed, this love obliges man to obey and worship Him.

A lover neither angers his beloved nor does anything which dissatisfies him.

Hence, the following are the three reasons which make it compelling for us to thank, worship and obey Allah, the Almighty:

1. The need to thank the Blessor.
2. The need to safeguard oneself against harm in the Hereafter.
3. The love of Allah and being filled with desire to be close to Him.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

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IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION

IGNORANCE IS A CHOICE

*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)